Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced today that the Department of the Interior has started work on its 4,000th American Recovery and Reinvestment Act project, a $7.2 million school improvement project at the St. Francis Indian School in South Dakota. Larry Echo Hawk, Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, will visit the school next week, where he will represent Secretary Salazar in a groundbreaking ceremony.

“The Recovery Act has given us a great opportunity to meet some of our longstanding infrastructure challenges in Indian Country, including refurbishing schools,” said Secretary Salazar. “We are thrilled to be able to fund this project that will improve the learning environment for Native American school children at the St. Francis Indian School.”

The 4,000th project will provide St. Francis Indian School with a new gymnasium and kitchen facilities that were not included in the original replacement school project (completed previously with non Recovery Act funds). St. Francis Indian School serves more than 550 students for Grades 7-12 for the Rosebud Sioux Tribe on one of the poorest reservations in the nation.

More than 18,000 Bureau of Indian Education students will benefit from improved or new schools due to Recovery investments that include construction of three new schools and provide major additions to four others.

“The $3 billion in funding allocated as part of President Obama’s economic recovery plan for tribal communities has created jobs and stimulated businesses in communities across America,” Echo Hawk added. “With children going back to school this month, the Recovery Act is helping create new opportunities and great places to learn in Indian Country.”

Indian Affairs is investing $500 million in Recovery Act funding nationwide, including projects to build new homes for nearly 200 American Indian and Alaska Native families and provide employment opportunities through On- the- Job Workforce training programs to more than 300 tribal members.

Through aggressive management of the Recovery Act’s large construction projects, Indian Affairs has saved $33 million, or 11 percent, of their construction allocation under the Recovery Act. Indian Affairs has used these savings to undertake three school construction projects in addition to those originally planned, including the St. Francis Indian School, putting more people to work in ways that will also benefit students and Indian Country communities. In total, the Department of the Interior has saved over $200 million on Recovery Act projects, which it has directed towards completing additional high-priority projects and putting more people to work.

The Recovery Act is an important component of the President's plan to jumpstart the economy and put a down payment on addressing long-neglected challenges so the country can thrive in the 21st century. Under the Recovery Act, Interior is making an investment in conserving America's timeless treasures – our stunning natural landscapes, our monuments to liberty, the icons of our culture and heritage – while helping American families and their communities prosper again. Interior is also focusing on renewable

energy projects, the needs of Native Americans, employing youth and promoting community service.

Secretary Salazar has pledged unprecedented levels of transparency and accountability in the implementation of the Department's economic recovery projects. The public has been able to follow the progress of each project on www.recovery.gov and on www.interior.gov/recovery. Secretary Salazar has appointed a Senior Advisor for Economic Recovery, Chris Henderson, and an Interior Economic Recovery Task Force who has worked closely with Interior's Inspector General to ensure the recovery program is meeting the high standards for accountability, responsibility, and transparency set by President Obama.
