Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON, D.C.— Deputy Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs for Policy and Economic Development Jodi Gillette and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Director Michael Black today were in Minneapolis, Minnesota for the second of six regional government-to-government tribal consultations regarding the Trust Land Consolidation component of the Cobell Settlement. The meetings with tribal leaders represent part of the Obama Administration's commitment to reinvigorating nation-to-nation relationships with tribes.

"The consultations are providing important information on constructing an implementation strategy that will benefit tribal communities in addition to freeing up trust lands," said Gillette. "I am pleased with the consultation process as it respects our government-to-government relationship with the tribes and I am pleased with the input from the regional Tribal Leaders."

Today's participants included leaders and representatives of a number of tribes from the Midwest Region and other Regions.

On May 27, 2011, U.S. Senior District Judge Thomas F. Hogan granted communication between representatives of the United States and Cobell class members only in regards to the Trust Land Consolidation component of the Settlement.

BACKGROUND ON COBELL SETTLEMENT:

The $3.4 billion Cobell settlement was approved by Congress on November 30, 2010 (Claims Resolution Act of 2010) and signed by President Obama on December 8, 2010. The Cobell Settlement will address the Federal Government's responsibility for an historical accounting of Individual Indian trust accounts and trust mismanagement claims on behalf of more than 300,000 individual Indians. A fund of $1.5 billion will be used to compensate class members for their historical accounting, trust administration and asset mismanagement claims.

In addition, to address the continued proliferation of thousands of new trust accounts caused by the "fractionation" of land interests through succeeding generations, the Settlement establishes a $1.9 billion fund for the voluntary buy-back and consolidation of fractionated land interests. The land consolidation program will provide individual American Indians with an opportunity to obtain cash payments for divided land interests and free up the land for the benefit of tribal communities. Up to $60 million of the $1.9 billion will be set aside to provide scholarships for post secondary higher education and vocational training for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

The locations and dates for the remaining regional tribal consultations can be found at: www.doi.gov/cobell.

The Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs discharges the duties of the Secretary of the Interior with the authority and direct responsibility to strengthen the government-to-government relationship with the nation's 565 federally recognized tribes, advocate policies that support Indian self-determination,

protect and preserve Indian trust assets, and administer a wide array of laws, regulations and functions relating to American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, tribal members and individual trust beneficiaries. The Assistant Secretary oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Indian Education. For more information, visit www.indianaffairs.gov.
