Job Creation, Construction and Infrastructure Improvements, Workforce Development Focus of Tribal Community Investments

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BISMARK, N.D. – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today announced that the Department will fund $500 million in new school and housing construction, road and bridge improvements, and workforce development projects for federally recognized tribes across the nation. Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the Department's Indian Affairs office will also offer federally guaranteed loans for American Indian-owned businesses. These investments will significantly improve the quality of life in tribal communities nationwide. Overall, Interior will invest more than $3 billion through President Obama's economic recovery plan.

Salazar, joined by U.S. Senators Byron L. Dorgan (D-ND) and Kent Conrad (D-ND), U.S. Representative Earl Pomeroy (D-ND) and North Dakota Gov. John Hoeven, made the announcement from the campus of the United Tribes Technical College, where they met with leaders from the state's five federally recognized tribes. The Secretary is visiting North Dakota for a series of events concerning the tribes, energy development on public lands, and communities affected by spring flooding.

Later today, he will visit the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation to tour the Department's "one-stop shop" that streamlines oil and gas leasing for the Three Affiliated Tribes and individual landowners. The Tribes are to receive Recovery Act funds to build 10 homes using renewable energy technology through the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Housing Improvement Program and to provide green employment training for tribal youth and adults.

"These and similar projects across Indian Country are investments in America," Salazar said. "They will help us fulfill the goals President Obama and this Department have established to empower Native American communities, create jobs, and build our nation's new energy future."

Indian Affairs programs funded through Interior's ARRA investments include:

- School Improvement and Repairs - $143.1 million
- Road Maintenance - $142.5 million
- School Replacement Construction - $134.6 million
- Housing Improvement Program (HIP) - $19 million
- Construction Workforce On-the-Job Training in Maintenance - $13.3 million
- Workforce Training - $5.7 million
- Detention Center Maintenance and Repairs – $7.3 million
- Indian Guaranteed Loan Program - $9.5 million

Overall, up to $19.6 million of Recovery Act funding will go to North Dakota tribes for:

- New home construction;
- School maintenance, repairs, and improvement;
- Road and bridge maintenance, repairs, and improvement;
- Improvement of one tribal detention facility;
- Workforce training associated with these projects.

The group of Housing Improvement Program (HIP) homes slated to be built on the Fort Berthold Reservation is just one of several tribal projects in North Dakota that will receive Indian Affairs Recovery Act funding. The tribes that also will receive funds are the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation, the Spirit Lake Tribe, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of North and South Dakota, and the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians of North Dakota.

“These investments will stimulate job creation by bringing much-needed attention to repairing and rebuilding Indian Country’s fraying infrastructure and by providing capital to American Indian-owned businesses,” Salazar said. “We can bridge the gap between making short-term repairs to creating lasting improvements in tribal communities by utilizing green design and renewable energy technology for new and existing homes and schools, correcting health and safety deficiencies in tribal detention facilities, training tribal youth and unskilled workers for lifetime employment, and expanding economic opportunity through loans to Indian businesses.”

An additional $25 million for administrative costs associated with the contracting, awarding, tracking, monitoring, reporting, and oversight of fund expenditures will be placed in a separate account from project funding to maintain transparency and control of such costs. The Indian Affairs projects were selected in a rigorous merit-based process based on the longstanding priorities of the agency, as will all projects included in the Department’s Recovery Act funding.

Secretary Salazar has pledged unprecedented levels of transparency and accountability in the implementation of the Department of the Interior’s economic recovery projects. The public will be 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. Henderson and the Task Force will work closely with the Department of the Interior’s Inspector General to ensure that the recovery program is meeting the high standards for accountability, responsibility, and transparency that President Obama has set.
