Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – Interior Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Neal A. McCaleb today announced that the Joint DOI/Tribal Leaders Task Force will hold its next meeting on May 19- 21, 2002 in Minneapolis, Minn. The Task Force was established in February of 2002 to review plans on improving the Department's management of individual Indian and tribal trust assets.

In addition to Assistant Secretary McCaleb, Interior Deputy Secretary J. Steven Griles, Associate Deputy Secretary James E. Cason and Indian Trust Transition Director Ross O. Swimmer will be in attendance at the meeting, which is the fourth since the task force's inception.

On November 15, 2001, Secretary Gale Norton announced her proposal to transfer and consolidate Indian trust asset management functions currently administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and other Interior agencies within a new Bureau of Indian Trust Assets Management (BITAM). She also announced the establishment of an Assistant Secretary for Indian Trust Assets Management to oversee BITAM and a new Office of Indian Trust Transition (OITT) to implement her transfer and consolidation plan. After holding an extensive series of consultation meetings with tribal leaders on her trust reform efforts, Secretary Norton formed the task force to review her proposal along with alternative plans submitted by tribes.

The task force held its first meeting in Shepherdstown, W.Va., on February 1-4, 2002. Subsequent meetings were held in Phoenix, Ariz., in March and in San Diego, Calif., in April.