Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Bureau of Indian Affairs has announced that it is reinstituting comprehensive stock reduction efforts, including impoundment when necessary, in the former Navajo-Hopi Joint Use area.

Impoundment as a means of livestock reduction was discontinued May 11, at the request of Navajo Tribal Chairman Peter MacDonald for a discussion of procedures and issues. The BIA is responsible, under a mandate of the Navajo-Hopi Land Settlement Act (P.L. 93-531), for keeping the number of livestock within the carrying capacity of the range in the now partitioned areas.

Kenneth L. Payton, Acting Interior Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, told MacDonald in a letter dated August 12 that Hopi Tribal Chairman Abbott Sekaquaptewa "stressed the requirement of the law that livestock within the area be reduced to its carrying capacity by January 8, 1982 and his expectation that the law would be carried out in a manner which would enable the Hopi Tribe to have access to and make use of the land which has been partitioned to them." There are about 6,000 Navajos residing and grazing livestock on land partitioned to the Hopi.

Payton said that the BIA Phoenix area office, responsible for the stock reduction on land partitioned to the Hopi, would accept and process grazing permit applications made by the Navajo Tribe on behalf of individuals unable or unwilling to file their own applications. He said that the carrying capacity of the grazing lands throughout the area would be reappraised as quickly as possible and that at least 48 hours notice would be given to individuals whose livestock would be subject to impoundment. He asked Chairman MacDonald to submit more information for a proposed feed lot plan.

It was his desire, Payton said, that voluntary compliance with regulations would be the chief means of carrying out the mandate of the law.

Payton described the procedures to be followed as consistent with the law and, for the most part, the major concerns expressed by MacDonald. He told MacDonald: "While we recognize that the stock reduction continues to be counter to the wishes and desires of the Navajo Tribe and the people impacted by the reduction, I am counting on your cooperation and that of the Navajo Tribal Government in the process" so that the requirements of the law will occur in a way that is least disturbing to all concerned.