Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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An increase in fees which the Bureau of Indian Affairs charges to cover costs of preparing grazing permits on Indian rangeland was announced today by Under Secretary of the Interior Hatfield Chilson.

Higher charges were recommended by the Comptroller General. In a report to Congress the Comptroller General said that the fees structure should be based on the objective of covering the cost of the services rendered, and that the former schedule was wholly inadequate to meet actual administrative costs of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Indian landowners will save money under the new regulations. Formerly they had to contribute toward administrative costs. They were charged on a sliding scale based on the annual rental they received. The owner contribution is now eliminated since the user of the range, rather than its owner, benefits principally from the Bureau services.

The new regulations are effective June 30, 1957. Henceforth the fee charged each user of the Indian range to cover permit administrative costs will be three per cent annually of the minimum appraised annual rental of the range unit he is using. The old, inadequate schedule provided generally for a $5 fee on the first $500 of total rental - for the full term of the permit - plus $1 for each additional $500 or fractional amount.

The services performed by the Bureau, which are compensated by these fees, include not only preparation of the permits but also obtaining consent of the Indian owners and disbursing rentals to them. Since a single Indian range unit frequently includes many different allotments and a single allotment is often owned by literally dozens of heirs, this is a time-consuming and costly service. However, if the range user himself were required to locate the various owners, obtain their consent, and disburse the annual rentals to them; he would undoubtedly be burdened in the great majority of cases with a far heavier expense than the fees charged by the Bureau.