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Acting Secretary of the Interior Hatfield Chilson today authorized the Bureau of Indian Affairs to offer for agricultural development lease as a unit an area of about 65,000 acres of highly fertile irrigable land on the Colorado River Indian Reservation near Parker, Arizona.

The offering is to be made under a 1955 law which authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to lease the land on behalf of the beneficial Indian owners for not more than 25 years. Under this act the lease must be consummated by next August 14.

The area to be offered comprises the undeveloped irrigable lands of the Colorado River Irrigation Project which need to be cleared and leveled and will require completion of the gravity flow irrigation system and drainage system. Specifications for carrying out this work have been drawn up by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and will have to be followed by the lessee in completing the development.

Since no judicial determination has been yet made on the quantity of Colorado River water available for use on the reservation, the proposed uses of water under the lease will be "subject to prior uses of and on the Colorado River Indian Reservation and any limitations of use imposed by operation of law, decrees or orders of Court." The Department provides no assurance of the adequacy of water supply and will assume no liability for inadequacy of water rights.

Water supply for the Arizona portion of the area, comprising the great bulk of the lands offered, will be that of the Colorado River Irrigation Project diverted at Headgate Rock Dam. On the California side, water supply may be pumped from wells or from the river subject to prior uses and statutory or judicial limitations.

The reservation area, Acting Secretary Chilson said, has great potentiality for irrigation agriculture. Its soils respond well to water, fertilizer and good manag8ment practices. With a frost-free period from early March to late November, the lands are capable of producing a wide variety of crops such as alfalfa, cotton, milo, barley, flax, sugar beets, pasture, grapes, melons, and numerous vegetables. Production potential is apparently comparable with that in the Palo Verde and other nearby areas.

Irrigation development on the Colorado River Reservation was first begun in the 1860's and has been carried on intermittently ever since. About 38,000 acres have been developed by the Federal Government leaving an undeveloped irrigable area of approximately 65,000 acres. The Headgate Rock Dam and main canal, which will serve these lands, have already been constructed.

Copies of the prospectus and further information about the leasing offer may be obtained by writing to the Superintendent, Colorado River Agency, Parker, Ariz.