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Over a million acres has been added to the land holdings of Indian tribes throughout the country in the past three years as a result of Congressional enactments and administrative section by the Department of the Interior, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Glenn L. Emmons announced today.

During the same period, he added, 927,926 acres of land owned by individual Indians has been sold by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in response to written requests by the Indian owners, 292,488 acres has been turned over to Indians who applied for fee patents and satisfied the Bureau of their competency to manage their own affairs, and 122,414 acres of mixed tribal and individual Indian land has been taken by the Government for flood control purposes with full compensation to the Indian owners.

“In considering the additions which have been made to the estate of Indian tribes over the past three years," Mr. Emmons pointed out, "it is important to bear in mind that neither the Department of the Interior nor the Bureau of Indian Affairs has any authority to dispose of tribal lands held in trust unless such action is specifically approved in each case by the Congress. In the case of individual Indian lands in trust status, we have disposal authority but it is exercised only when the Indian owners request a sale and such action is considered to be in their best interests. Each individual case of this kind is carefully examined and considered.”

Of the 1,024,349 acres added to tribal holdings in the three-year period, 818,277 acres was restored to ownership of the Colville Tribe of Washington under legislation enacted last year. The restored land was ceded to the Government by the Tribe as a kind of "surplus" many years ago when the reservation was allotted to individual tribal members. Although the original intention was to sell the ceded A land, this was never accomplished and the Tribe subsequently requested the restoration which was consummated by the 1956 legislation, Under this law (F. L. 772) the 818,277 acres is now held in trust by the United States for the tribe on the same basis as other reservation lands.

The second largest addition to tribal holdings was the Navajo Tribe's purchase of the 98,000-acre Brown and Best Ranch near Sanders, Arizona, in 1956. Although this land is held directly by the Tribe in fee simple title, is not in Federal trusteeship and is located apart from the main reservation, it represents a substantial increase in acreage available for use by Navajo tribal members. Since it was paid for by tribal funds in trust status, the action was subject to Secretarial approval.

In addition to the Colville Restoration Act, similar legislation in 1955 and 1956 added 41,216 acres to the Pueblo of Zia and 36,352 to the Pueblo of Jemez, both in New Mexico; 27,086 acres to the Seminole Reservations in Florida; 1,320 acres to the Yavapai Tribe of Arizona; and 600 acres to the Kanosh Band of Utah. Administrative actions by the Department of the Interior during the same period added nearly 400 acres to the estate of the Blackfeet Tribe in Montana, 253 acres to tribal holdings on Montana's Flathead Reservation, and 89,192 acres on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming.

Purchases made by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in trust for individual Indians during the period accounted for nearly 20,000 additional acres.

As of last June 30, the latest date for which full reports are available, the United States was holding in trust for Indian tribal groups approximately 39,500,000 acres and for individual Indians about 13,300,000 acres.