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Acting Secretary of the Interior Elmer F. Bennett today announced he has signed an order transferring to the Navajo Indian Tribe approximately 52,000 acres of public land in the McCracken Mesa area of Utah.

He said the transfer substantially completes a land exchange agreement under which the Navajo people receive additional acreage in Utah's "Four Corners" area in compensation for lands they surrendered to permit construction of Glen Canyon Dam, key feature of the billion-dollar Upper Colorado River Storage Project.

General terms of the exchange were spelled out by Congress in the Act of September 2, 1958 (72 Stat. 1686). The exchange does not include mineral rights.

The Acting Secretary said he has simultaneously rejected a tribal protest against permitting the State to select other public domain lands for several sections of State lands included in the acreage transferred to the Indians. The tribe had argued the State was not entitled to alternate lands, but Mr. Bennett upheld the State's right to selections in lieu of those transferred. The State has already selected other public domain lands, he said.

Acting Secretary Bennett also said he has directed the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Reclamation to proceed expeditiously in compensating the present range users for their investments and loss of grazing privileges.

The McCracken Mesa area, used primarily for grazing, will extend the Navajo Reservation's northern boundary.

The transfer agreement represents a compromise agreed on in negotiations between the Department and the Tribe. Acting Secretary Bennett said the transfer includes more than 20 water developments and range improvements. Valid existing mining claims will continue to be recognized, he added.

The boundary adjustment was accomplished with the least possible disruption of present grazing operations, Mr. Bennett said. He explained that tribal negotiators, who originally sought a boundary revision that would have left islands of public land inside the reservation, compromised on a more compact grouping. At the same time, the needs of the tribe were taken into full account, he said.

The area transferred by the land order extends about 12 miles north of the San Juan River, is about 10 miles east of Bluff, Utah, and is roughly bounded by Recapture and Montezuma Creeks.

A complete description of the affected lands and terms of the transfer will be published in the Federal Register.