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The Department of the Interior favors legislation giving the White Mountain Apache Indian Tribe of Arizona beneficial ownership of 7,579 acres of Federal land on the Fort Apache Reservation, Assistant Secretary Roger Ernst announced today.

The acreage involved was originally set aside many years ago as the Fort Apache Military Post and has more recently been used as the site of an Indian Bureau school. The lands, exclusive of improvements, were appraised in 1958 at an estimated value of $141,000.

In a report on S. 2268, a bill to effect the transfer, Mr. Ernst pointed out that the Indians have been using most of the land that is not used for the Theodore Roosevelt Indian School. Under the bill's terms the land would be held in trust for the Tribe by the United States.

The Department recommended a technical amendment of the bill to provide explicitly that the Tribe's beneficial ownership of the property would be "subject to the right of the Secretary of the Interior to use any part of the lands and improvements for administrative or school purposes for as long as they are needed for those purposes."