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The Department of the Interior has submitted to Congress a proposal for legislation that would adjust Indian and non-Indian land use on some 266,000 acres near the Navajo Reservation in northwestern New Mexico, Assistant Secretary Roger Ernst announced today.

Jurisdictions of three Federal agencies--the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management, and the United States Forest Service--are involved in the proposal. The basic aim is to eliminate the present confusing and intermingled pattern of jurisdiction in the area and to promote more effective land use and better conservation practices.

The proposal calls for transferring to the Navajo Tribe, in Federal trust, approximately 100,000 acres of public domain, about 3,000 acres of National Forest land, nearly 61,000 acres of sub marginal lands purchased in the 1930's that have been administered for the benefit of the Tribe, and some 80,000 acres of reconvened railroad grant lands that are being administered for the Tribe's benefit under a 1939 Secretarial order pending the enactment of legislation.

In addition, some 17,000 acres held in trust for the Navajo Tribe and about 5,000 acres of sub marginal land administered for its benefit would be transferred to the public domain and approximately 2,000 acres of the sub marginal land would be transferred to the Cibola National Forest.

The minerals in the tribal lands that would be added to the public domain and in the Federal lands transferred to the Tribe would be excluded from the transfers.

This legislative proposal was prepared with the active collaboration of the Navajo Tribe, and it has the Tribe's support.

Enactment of the proposed bill, Mr. Ernst pointed out, will not result in dispossession of any present users of the area. Although some non-Indians are in the area to be consolidated for use by the Navajo Indians, substantially all of the grazing resources of the area are now in Navajo use.