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Assistant Secretary of the Interior Roger Ernst announced today that the Bureau of Indian Affairs has contracted with the University of Idaho for a comprehensive survey of the human and physical resources of the Fort Hall Indian Reservation in southeastern Idaho.

In commenting on the significance of the contract, Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs H. Rex Lee pointed out that for several years the Bureau has been seeking a more effective way to help the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation in improving their economic and social status.

“In this connection,” he said, "we felt the need of having an appraisal of the Reservation resources and population made by a competent agency outside of Government."

On a trip to Idaho during the week of June 8, Mr. Lee explored the possibility of such a survey with officials of the State University and then discussed the proposal with the Indians in a meeting at Fort Hall on June 12. In a resolution adopted that same day the tribes endorsed the proposal and agreed to cooperate in carrying out the study.

Purpose of the study is to provide basic information that can be used by the tribes and the Bureau in developing programs for more effective use of the Indians' lands and other resources as well as .for economic and social advancement of the tribal members.

The survey will be divided into four main parts. Specific projects under these headings will be agreed upon from time to time by the Bureau and the University.

The first part will be a study of the nature and extent of the physical resources of the Reservation and how these can be most effectively used for the Indians' benefit.

Second will be a study of the credit, employment and industrial possibilities, taking into consideration the financial feasibility of projects and the capabilities of individuals.

Third will be a survey of the human resources including such items as family composition, employment skills and preferences, and social conditions of the Indian people.

Fourth will be a study of the attitudes of non-Indians in the local and surrounding communities with suggestions for cooperative undertakings that would benefit both the Indian people and the surrounding communities.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has obligated $60,000 for the total survey. Actual costs, however, will be determined as specific projects are agreed upon by the Bureau and the University. They are expected to run considerably less than the $60,000 maximum.

Acting Commissioner Lee indicated that the survey may take two years and possibly longer.