Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Department of the Interior today announced a proposed revision of Federal regulations to remove restrictions against road construction that have applied for more than 20 years on 2,935,000 acres of the Navajo Indian Reservation in Arizona and Utah.

The acreage affected is in three parts of the reservation--Painted Desert, Rainbow Bridge, and Black Mesa--which were designated as "roadless areas" by administrative action of the Department, in 1937, without consulting the Indians. All three areas consist not of Federal land but of tribally owned property held in trust by the United States.

The proposed removal of the areas from the roadless category is in line with the wishes of the Navajo Tribal Council which has pointed out that 922 families with 3,600 school-age children live in the three areas and need better roads for educational and health protection purposes. Mining activity is already intense throughout much of the affected acreage.

Interested parties may submit their comments to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Washington 25, D. C., within 30 days after publication of the proposed revision in the Federal Register.