Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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For Immediate Release: December 1, 1961
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Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall announced today that Paul Jones, Tribal Chairman of the Navajo Indians, has agreed to enter into negotiation looking toward the exchange of nearly 300,000 acres of tribal land surrounding Rainbow Bridge National Monument in Utah for public domain lands.

Secretary Udall said: “The acreage lying south and west of Navajo Mountain comprises one of the magnificent scenic areas outside the National Park System." Rainbow Bridge has long been the focal point of interest in this fantastically eroded red sandstone country.

Secretary Udall said that the wilderness quality of the tribal area has over the years been protected by the extremely rugged topography which makes it inaccessible to all but the hardiest visitor. The new park, Secretary Udall pointed out, could become one of the finest wilderness parks in the national system. Aside from a 14-mile horse trail to the Bridge, little has changed since 1910 in this area, Secretary Udall said.

Rainbow Bridge National Monument, established on May 30, 1910, at present comprises 160 acres centering on the largest of the world's known natural bridges--a symmetrical arch of salmon pink sandstone, curving in the form of a rainbow 309 feet above the bottom of the gorge.