

Modernization and the Office of Special Trustee

March 3, 2008 – 9 am to Noon
Westin Washington, 1400 M Street, NW, Washington, DC

Assistant Secretary Carl Artman has initiated a dialogue with tribal leaders over potential changes at the Department of Interior to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Indian programs and services. At meetings around the country, tribal leaders have requested that the Office of Special Trustee be included in this review. The OST was originally created in 1994 to have oversight, coordination and strategic planning responsibility for trust systems and policies and procedures in the Department of Interior. The 1994 Act anticipates that the OST would eventually terminate. However, the OST has increasingly taken on direct management responsibilities for programs and services, and grown into a large bureaucracy with a 200 million budget that has moved funds away from BIA reservation level services. OST took over trust funds management in 1996, and has recently taken over appraisals and land consolidation. OST has proposed to eliminate the land consolidation budget for the FY09 budget cycle.

1) Welcome and Introductions - NCAI President Joe Garcia

2) Brief Overview of the Modernization Effort and Upcoming Meetings

3) The 1994 Trust Reform Act and the Purpose of the Office of Special Trustee

Eric Eberhard, former Staff Director and Counsel, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs – 1989 to 1995

4) Panel Discussion: What are the current functions of the OST, how has it deviated from its original purpose, and what is the OST's future role in trust reform and trust management?

Carl Artman, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs

Ross Swimmer, Special Trustee for American Indians

Ernie Stensgar, President, Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians and Councilman, Coeur D'Alene Tribe (invited)

Ron His Horses Thunder, Chairman, Great Plains Tribal Leaders Assoc., and Standing Rock Sioux Tribe

5) Question and Answer

6) Panel Discussion: Congressional Views on the Office of Special Trustee

Marie Howard, Staff Director House Resources Committee Office of Indian Affairs

David Mullon, Minority Staff Director and Chief Counsel, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs

7) Question and Answer

8) Next Steps and Conclusion – NCAI President Joe Garcia