



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Washington, DC 20240

APR 06 2009



IN REPLY REFER TO:
Office of Trust Services

Dear Tribal Leader:



The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the American Indian Law Center will hold the first of what BIA plans to be an annual forum (Forum) on its Fee-to-Trust Handbook. I hope that you will consider your tribe's participation in the forum and provide your tribe's insight. The Forum will take place on April 30, 2009, at the BIA National Indian Training Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The BIA Director, Jerry Gidner, released the BIA Fee-to-Trust Handbook (Handbook) in October 2008, and directed all BIA staff to use the Handbook in the administration of fee-to-trust applications. The Handbook is a compilation of the best practices that have existed throughout the BIA regions and conform to the BIA's existing fee-to-trust policies. The current version of the Handbook addresses the business practices for the BIA's review of applications for on-reservation acquisitions and will expand to describe business practices for off-reservation and mandatory acquisitions.

I am happy that the American Indian Law Center (AIRC) has agreed to be a partner with the BIA in this endeavor. The AIRC is uniquely situated to provide support and expertise to help this gathering of practitioners to become an annual event. The AIRC will be an invaluable partner in continuing the subsequent dialogs and working groups that will take place after the April 30, 2009, Forum and will serve as a repository for information related to the Forum.

Optimizing the land-to-trust application review process's ability to serve the needs and capacity of Indian country and the BIA begins with regular and constructive dialogs. This forum will help to meet those needs. Please visit the AIRC website for a registration form and flyer about the event, to download the Handbook, and to provide input on the Forum. You may also contact Vicki Forrest, Deputy Bureau Director for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, at (202) 208-5831 for more information.

Sincerely,

Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs

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