

NEWS RELEASE

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PILOT PROJECT TO IMPROVE INDIAN MINERAL SERVICES FOR NAVAJO ALLOTTEES

Project Director Named

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) today announced a two-year pilot project to better serve Navajo Indian mineral owners in the Farmington, New Mexico area. Operating as a single office under one manager, the Farmington Indian Minerals Office will provide services previously carried out by three separate Interior Department agencies: the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and MMS. The office will provide administrative and financial services associated with nearly 200 natural gas and oil leases, which annually generate about \$2 million in royalties for more than 3,000 Navajo allottees.

In 1995, a special study team assembled by the Indian Minerals Steering Committee, which is comprised of representatives from the three bureaus and the Office of Special Trustee, concluded that the delivery of trust services to Indian landowners in the area would be improved by placing the office under a single line of authority.

"Staff members will continue to be employed by their respective agencies, but now they report to a project director, who will be guided by the Indian Minerals Steering Committee," explained MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman. "With freedom from existing bureau guidelines, the office will focus on meeting the unique needs of the Navajo allottees. If successful, this single-office concept may be continued and expanded to other areas. While the three bureaus cooperated on various efforts, they generally carried out their respective responsibilities independently. This is a unique example of truly reinventing government -- with three separate bureaus working together in the best interest of their customers."

"This pilot project integrates and unifies services to the Navajo allottees," said Ed Cohen, chairman of the Indian Minerals Steering Committee, and the Interior Department's Deputy Solicitor. "It shows the commitment of the Interior Department to be not only a more effective trustee, but a more responsive one as well."

Quarterman also announced that Kevin Gambrell, a former mining financial analyst for the Navajo Nation Minerals Department, has been selected as Project Director. "With an M.S. degree in mineral economics from the Colorado School of Mines, and impressive and extensive work experience, Kevin will do an outstanding job," said Quarterman. "Under the direction of the Steering Committee and Kevin's leadership, we hope to provide a simpler, seamless service office that, for our customers, will always be the right place to go," she said.

MMS is the federal agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil, and other mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf, and collects, verifies, and disburses about \$4 billion yearly in revenues from offshore federal mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for the management of 270 million acres of public lands and 570 million acres of federal mineral estate.

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