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Indian Affairs announces new regulations to improve fee-to-trust process

WASHINGTON – The Department of the Interior’s Office of the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs today announced a [final rule](#) to update the federal regulations governing fee-to-trust, or land-into-trust, acquisitions that transfer land title to the United States to be held in trust for the benefit of a Tribe or individual Tribal citizen.

Consistent with President Biden’s commitment to make it easier for Tribes to place land into trust, this final rule will make this process simpler, more efficient, and less expensive.

“Placing land into trust is critical to Tribal sovereignty, self-determination, preservation of history and culture, economic development, and the well-being of Tribal citizens,” said **Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland**. “We have received overwhelming support from Tribes for these updates throughout the process. Today’s announcement delivers on our commitment to improving the fee-to-trust process.”

Acquisition of land in trust is essential to Tribal self-determination and to maximize Tribes’ eligibility for federal services and programs. This process also helps right the wrongs of past policies such as [allotment](#), which removed millions of acres of land from Tribal ownership and federal protection. Federal policies dating back more than a century have eroded the land base of Indian Tribes across the United States.

By placing lands into trust status through the Department, Tribes can reacquire lands, establish a land base for Tribal communities, and clarify jurisdiction over their lands. Tribes have previously faced delays and increasing costs in efforts to develop housing projects, manage law enforcement agencies, engage in agriculture and conservation practices, and develop local economies as a result of inefficiencies and delays in the land-into-trust process.

The final rule, which will update 25 C.F.R. Part 151, reflects input and recommendations provided by Tribes during two listening sessions and four formal consultation sessions as well as written comments from Tribes and the public submitted to the Department. The new regulations will be effective 30 days after being published in the *Federal Register*, which is expected in the coming days.

The announcement was made during the 2023 White House Tribal Nations Summit, which provides an opportunity for the Biden-Harris administration and Tribal leaders from the 574 federally recognized Tribes to discuss ways the federal government can invest in and strengthen nation-to-nation relationships as well as ensure that progress in Indian Country endures for years to come.

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The Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs advises the Secretary of the Interior on Indian Affairs policy issues; communicates policy to and oversees the programs of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Indian Education, and the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration; provides leadership in consultations with Tribes; and serves as the DOI official for intra- and inter-departmental coordination and liaison within the Executive Branch on matters concerning American Indians and Alaska Natives and the federally recognized Tribes in the United States.

The BIA Office of Trust Services administers the Part 151 regulations.