



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

APR 30 2014

Dear Tribal Leader:

Supporting tribal self-governance and restoring tribal homelands are among the highest Indian country priorities of the Obama Administration and they are very closely related. Tribal self-governance is most effective when tribal nations have lands over which they can exercise sovereign authority. For 228 of the 229 federally recognized tribes in Alaska (except Metlakatla Indian Community), however, the opportunity to apply for land in trust has long been denied. Federal regulations have prohibited taking land into trust for tribes in Alaska.

Today, I am announcing publication of a proposed rule that would remove from our regulations the prohibition on taking land into trust in Alaska. This proposal is driven by a number of recent developments. Two recent blue ribbon panels, the Congressionally-created Indian Law and Order Commission and the Secretarial Commission on Indian Trust Administration and Reform, have recommended that the prohibition on land into trust in Alaska be removed. In addition, in a recent legal action brought by an Alaska Native and four Alaska tribes, the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. ruled that the Secretary of the Interior has statutory authority to take land into trust for Alaska tribes. *See Akiachak Native Cmty. v. Salazar*, 935 F. Supp. 2d 195 (D.D.C. 2013). The proposed rule would open the land-into-trust process, set out in 25 CFR 151, not just to the tribal parties to the *Akiachak* litigation but to all Alaska tribes.

We will host a consultation session at the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Mid-Year Conference, June 8-11, 2014, in Anchorage, Alaska. Details on time and location will be provided in a separate letter discussing the Departmental consultation sessions we plan to host during the NCAI Mid-Year Conference. We also welcome written comments via email at [consultation@bia.gov](mailto:consultation@bia.gov), or via mail to Mr. Kevin Washburn, Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, 1849 C Street NW, MS 7328-MIB, Washington, DC 20240. You may view the proposed rule online at: <http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/Consultation/index.htm>.

We look forward to your input. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Elizabeth Appel, Director, Office of Regulatory Affairs & Collaborative Action, at (202) 208-7163. Thank you for your interest and participation.

Sincerely,

Kevin K. Washburn  
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs