



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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#### INTERIOR DEPARTMENT SEEKS TO CLARIFY GOVERNMENT'S TITLE TO U. S. TRACTS

The Federal Government is moving to clear up title difficulties on hundreds of tracts of national forest and national park lands, Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton announced today.

In a notice to be published in the Federal Register, Secretary Seaton said the Department has set up the procedures by which people who transferred lands to the Government many years ago without full payment may now file a claim for compensation. The action, which will settle many title problems on lands in the national parks and national forests, is based on a law passed July 6, 1960. (Public Law 86-596).

Secretary Seaton explained that at the turn of the century certain private lands within the boundaries of national forests and parks were transferred to the United States. The owners were given the right to select an equal acreage from vacant public lands then open to settlement. Later laws made it possible to cut and remove national forest timber as payment for the conveyed lands, or in some cases to secure a reconveyance of the land.

Most land title cases were settled by those laws, the Secretary said. However, in some cases lieu selections were not filed or not carried through to completion or the privileges of later laws were not exercised. As a result, the status of certain tracts scattered over national forests and parks has become obscured. The lands in this category are on the public records in the name of the United States, but the titles have not been confirmed.

Secretary Seaton said the acreage involved in these scattered tracts is not large. However, some of the tracts have strategic value for administrative purposes, including locations essential to necessary road rights-of-way and important recreation and public service sites.

The new law is designed to clear the titles of these tracts. Under the law any person having a compensable claim for lands conveyed to the United States has one year from July 6, 1960, in which to submit that claim to the Government. Claims must be presented in writing to the Secretary of the Interior or to the Director of the Bureau of Land Management. If no claims are received before the end of the year titles to such tracts will automatically go to the United States and the lands will become a part of the national forest or park in which they are situated.

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