

interests. We hereby adopt the *Bracker* analysis from the preamble to the surface leasing regulations, 77 FR at 72447–48, as supplemented by the analysis below.

The strong Federal and tribal interests against State and local taxation of improvements, leaseholds, and activities on land leased under the Department's leasing regulations apply equally to improvements, leaseholds, and activities on land leased pursuant to tribal leasing regulations approved under the HEARTH Act. Congress's overarching intent was to "allow tribes to exercise greater control over their own land, support self-determination, and eliminate bureaucratic delays that stand in the way of homeownership and economic development in tribal communities." 158 Cong. Rec. H. 2682 (May 15, 2012). The HEARTH Act was intended to afford tribes "flexibility to adapt lease terms to suit [their] business and cultural needs" and to "enable [tribes] to approve leases quickly and efficiently." *Id.* at 5–6.

Assessment of State and local taxes would obstruct these express Federal policies supporting tribal economic development and self-determination, and also threaten substantial tribal interests in effective tribal government, economic self-sufficiency, and territorial autonomy. *See Michigan v. Bay Mills Indian Community*, 134 S. Ct. 2024, 2043 (2014) (Sotomayor, J., concurring) (determining that "[a] key goal of the Federal Government is to render Tribes more self-sufficient, and better positioned to fund their own sovereign functions, rather than relying on Federal funding"). The additional costs of State and local taxation have a chilling effect on potential lessees, as well as on a tribe that, as a result, might refrain from exercising its own sovereign right to impose a tribal tax to support its infrastructure needs. *See id.* at 2043–44 (finding that State and local taxes greatly discourage tribes from raising tax revenue from the same sources because the imposition of double taxation would impede tribal economic growth).

Just like BIA's surface leasing regulations, tribal regulations under the HEARTH Act pervasively cover all aspects of leasing. *See* Guidance for the Approval of Tribal Leasing Regulations under the HEARTH Act, NPM–TRUS–29 (effective Jan. 16, 2013) (providing guidance on Federal review process to ensure consistency of proposed tribal regulations with Part 162 regulations and listing required tribal regulatory provisions). Furthermore, the Federal government remains involved in the tribal land leasing process by approving the tribal leasing regulations in the first

instance and providing technical assistance, upon request by a tribe, for the development of an environmental review process. The Secretary also retains authority to take any necessary actions to remedy violations of a lease or of the tribal regulations, including terminating the lease or rescinding approval of the tribal regulations and reassuming lease approval responsibilities. Moreover, the Secretary continues to review, approve, and monitor individual Indian land leases and other types of leases not covered under the tribal regulations according to the Part 162 regulations.

Accordingly, the Federal and tribal interests weigh heavily in favor of preemption of State and local taxes on lease-related activities and interests, regardless of whether the lease is governed by tribal leasing regulations or Part 162. Improvements, activities, and leasehold or possessory interests may be subject to taxation by the Squaxin Island Tribe.

Through the Congressionally-authorized Land Buy Back Program for Tribal Nations, the Squaxin Island Tribe has recovered the equivalent of more than 155 acres of land in trust. This initiative reflects the Federal policy of reducing the problem of fractionated interests in land and restoring tribal homelands. The approval of tribal leasing regulations has the potential to expand tribal sovereignty and increase tribal economic development on some of these newly consolidated lands.

Dated: August 20, 2015.

Kevin K. Washburn,

Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Affairs

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HEARTH Act Approval of Makah Indian Tribe of the Makah Indian Reservation Regulations

AGENCY: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Interior.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: On August 18, 2015, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) approved the Makah Indian Tribe of the Makah Indian Reservation leasing regulations under the HEARTH Act. With this approval, the Tribe is authorized to enter into the following type of leases without BIA approval: Residential,

business, wind and solar development, and other authorized purposes.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Cynthia Morales, Office of Trust Services—Division of Realty, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Telephone (202) 768–4166; Email cynthia.morales@bia.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Summary of the HEARTH Act

The HEARTH (Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Homeownership) Act of 2012 (the Act) makes a voluntary, alternative land leasing process available to tribes, by amending the Indian Long-Term Leasing Act of 1955, 25 U.S.C. 415. The Act authorizes tribes to negotiate and enter into agricultural and business leases of tribal trust lands with a primary term of 25 years, and up to two renewal terms of 25 years each, without the approval of the Secretary of the Interior. The Act also authorizes tribes to enter into leases for residential, recreational, religious or educational purposes for a primary term of up to 75 years without the approval of the Secretary. Participating tribes develop tribal leasing regulations, including an environmental review process, and then must obtain the Secretary's approval of those regulations prior to entering into leases. The Act requires the Secretary to approve tribal regulations if the tribal regulations are consistent with the Department's leasing regulations at 25 CFR part 162 and provide for an environmental review process that meets requirements set forth in the Act. This notice announces that the Secretary, through the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, has approved the tribal regulations for the Makah Indian Tribe of the Makah Indian Reservation.

II. Federal Preemption of State and Local Taxes

The Department's regulations governing the surface leasing of trust and restricted Indian lands specify that, subject to applicable Federal law, permanent improvements on leased land, leasehold or possessory interests, and activities under the lease are not subject to State and local taxation and may be subject to taxation by the Indian tribe with jurisdiction. *See* 25 CFR 162.017. As explained further in the preamble to the final regulations, the Federal government has a strong interest in promoting economic development, self-determination, and tribal sovereignty. 77 FR 72,440, 72,447–48 (December 5, 2012). The principles supporting the Federal preemption of State law in the field of Indian leasing and the taxation of lease-related

interests and activities applies with equal force to leases entered into under tribal leasing regulations approved by the Federal government pursuant to the HEARTH Act.

Section 5 of the Indian Reorganization Act, 25 U.S.C. 465, preempts State and local taxation of permanent improvements on trust land. *Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation v. Thurston County*, 724 F.3d 1153, 1157 (9th Cir. 2013) (citing *Mescalero Apache Tribe v. Jones*, 411 U.S. 145 (1973)). In addition, as explained in the preamble to the revised leasing regulations at 25 CFR part 162, Federal courts have applied a balancing test to determine whether State and local taxation of non-Indians on the reservation is preempted. *White Mountain Apache Tribe v. Bracker*, 448 U.S. 136, 143 (1980). The *Bracker* balancing test, which is conducted against a backdrop of “traditional notions of Indian self-government,” requires a particularized examination of the relevant State, Federal, and tribal interests. We hereby adopt the *Bracker* analysis from the preamble to the surface leasing regulations, 77 FR at 72447–48, as supplemented by the analysis below.

The strong Federal and tribal interests against State and local taxation of improvements, leaseholds, and activities on land leased under the Department’s leasing regulations apply equally to improvements, leaseholds, and activities on land leased pursuant to tribal leasing regulations approved under the HEARTH Act. Congress’s overarching intent was to “allow tribes to exercise greater control over their own land, support self-determination, and eliminate bureaucratic delays that stand in the way of homeownership and economic development in tribal communities.” 158 Cong. Rec. H. 2682 (May 15, 2012). The HEARTH Act was intended to afford tribes “flexibility to adapt lease terms to suit [their] business and cultural needs” and to “enable [tribes] to approve leases quickly and efficiently.” *Id.* at 5–6.

Assessment of State and local taxes would obstruct these express Federal policies supporting tribal economic development and self-determination, and also threaten substantial tribal interests in effective tribal government, economic self-sufficiency, and territorial autonomy. See *Michigan v. Bay Mills Indian Community*, 134 S. Ct. 2024, 2043 (2014) (Sotomayor, J., concurring) (determining that “[a] key goal of the Federal Government is to render Tribes more self-sufficient, and better positioned to fund their own sovereign functions, rather than relying on Federal

funding”). The additional costs of State and local taxation have a chilling effect on potential lessees, as well as on a tribe that, as a result, might refrain from exercising its own sovereign right to impose a tribal tax to support its infrastructure needs. See *id.* at 2043–44 (finding that State and local taxes greatly discourage tribes from raising tax revenue from the same sources because the imposition of double taxation would impede tribal economic growth).

Just like BIA’s surface leasing regulations, tribal regulations under the HEARTH Act pervasively cover all aspects of leasing. See Guidance for the Approval of Tribal Leasing Regulations under the HEARTH Act, NPM–TRUS–29 (effective Jan. 16, 2013) (providing guidance on Federal review process to ensure consistency of proposed tribal regulations with Part 162 regulations and listing required tribal regulatory provisions). Furthermore, the Federal government remains involved in the tribal land leasing process by approving the tribal leasing regulations in the first instance and providing technical assistance, upon request by a tribe, for the development of an environmental review process. The Secretary also retains authority to take any necessary actions to remedy violations of a lease or of the tribal regulations, including terminating the lease or rescinding approval of the tribal regulations and reassuming lease approval responsibilities. Moreover, the Secretary continues to review, approve, and monitor individual Indian land leases and other types of leases not covered under the tribal regulations according to the Part 162 regulations.

Accordingly, the Federal and tribal interests weigh heavily in favor of preemption of State and local taxes on lease-related activities and interests, regardless of whether the lease is governed by tribal leasing regulations or Part 162. Improvements, activities, and leasehold or possessory interests may be subject to taxation by the Makah Indian Tribe of the Makah Indian Reservation. We note that the Makah Indian Reservation possesses a fractionated lands problem, but through the Land Buy Back Program authorized by Congress, fractional interests in trust land equivalent to approximately 64 acres of land have been repurchased and restored to the Makah Indian Tribe. The Land Buy Back Program represents a Federal policy initiative to restore tribal homelands. It is Federal policy to support tribal sovereignty and self-government to the maximum extent possible on tribal trust lands.

Dated: August 18, 2015.

Kevin K. Washburn,

Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

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Notice of Public Meeting, Idaho Falls District Resource Advisory Council Meeting

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of public meetings.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972 (FACA), the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Idaho Falls District Resource Advisory Council (RAC), will meet as indicated below.

DATES: The Idaho Falls District RAC will meet in Challis, Idaho, September 22–23, 2015, for a two-day meeting at the Challis Field Office, 1151 Blue Mountain Road, Challis, Idaho 83226. The first day will begin at 10:00 a.m. and adjourn at 4:30 p.m. The second day will begin at 8:00 a.m. and adjourn at 2:30 p.m. Members of the public are invited to attend. A comment period will be held following the introductions from 10:00–10:30 a.m. All meetings are open to the public.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The 15-member Council advises the Secretary of the Interior, through the Bureau of Land Management, on a variety of planning and management issues associated with public land management in the BLM Idaho Falls District (IFD), which covers eastern Idaho. Items on the agenda include an overview and tour of the new wilderness area.

The Recreation RAC will convene at approximately 11:15 a.m. to discuss the Caribou-Targhee National Forest proposal to increase Christmas tree permits to \$15.00, and the Salmon Challis National Forest’s proposal to begin using the Copper Basin Guard Station (located approximately 35 miles from Mackay, Idaho) as a rental cabin. Following the morning part of the meeting, the group will discuss several riparian projects the Challis Field Office is undertaking to improve fish habitat and learn more about permitting Special Recreational Permits (SRPs) in Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). The