



Mescalero Apache Tribe Proposed Land Exchange With the New Mexico State Land Office

Frequently Asked Questions

Given that the majority of lands the state currently stewards were once Indigenous lands, Commissioner Garcia Richard reached out to all Pueblos, Nations, and Tribes in New Mexico to gauge interest in potential land exchanges of importance to their communities. The Mescalero Apache Tribe approached the New Mexico State Land Office (NMSLO) to propose a land exchange that would return to the Tribe some ancestral lands near Las Cruces.

Who proposed the land to be considered for exchange? The Mescalero Apache Tribe based in Mescalero, New Mexico.

What is the location and size of this proposed land exchange? The area under consideration is located southeast of Las Cruces in Township 23 South, Range 2 East, Section 36 and encompasses approximately 330 acres in the northern portion of the section east of Sonoma Ranch Boulevard. See the attached map.

Why is the Mescalero Apache Tribe interested in this land? This falls within the traditional homelands of the Apache peoples, and this land holds cultural significance to the Tribe. This location also provides opportunities for economic development projects beneficial to the Tribe and to the surrounding community.

Will the exchange abut local neighborhoods? The proposed footprint of the land that would be conveyed to the Tribe is at least a half-mile from the nearest neighborhood. Furthermore, a large portion of the proposed exchange area is classified as flood zone in which development would need to be avoided.

What is being planned for this land? Will it be a casino? The Mescalero Apache Tribe has stated that they do not intend to pursue gaming at this location but has not otherwise determined what its development plan is for this land. They would like to develop something that is a benefit to Las Cruces and surrounding communities.

Will there be a loss of control over local zoning? Any future project on this land would need to work collaboratively with the County and City to make development possible.

How will this exchange impact noise, aesthetics, light pollution, and traffic? A specific development project has not yet been proposed, but these important factors would be addressed during consideration of any future project.

What would happen with the southern portion of the section? The portion of state trust land not included in this exchange, including most of the 320-acre southern half of Section 36, would still be available for leasing opportunities to generate revenue for the benefit of public institutions like schools, universities, and hospitals.

If this land is conveyed in an exchange, will it become sovereign tribal territory? As currently contemplated, the land would be conveyed to the Tribe without involvement of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The land will not automatically become sovereign territory, and will be a private holding of the Mescalero Apache Tribe. However, in the future, the Tribe may seek to have the federal government take the land into trust for the benefit of the Tribe.

Is the land currently open space or protected from development? No, the lands in question are state trust lands available for lease. State trust lands are intended to be used to generate revenue for the benefit of public institutions such as public schools, universities, and hospitals.

What land would the State Land Office get in exchange for these lands? The state trust land would be appraised and the Tribe would purchase other land selected by the NMSLO that is of equal or greater value with commercial potential. The land to be acquired by the state could be located anywhere in the in New Mexico.

Will the floodplain/water runoff be negatively impacted? No, any future development will need to take the flood zones into consideration. The Tribe does not have current plans to develop within the flood zones.

Will this impact recreational access? Currently, recreation is only allowed on NMSLO state trust lands with a valid Recreation Access Permit. However, the footprint of the land proposed to be conveyed to the Tribe has been configured to ensure existing trails and access remains for this user group.

Will there be a public meeting? This proposed exchange is still in early process, and the NMSLO is conducting initial due diligence with the Mescalero Apache Tribe, the Doña Ana County, and the City of Las Cruces. The NMSLO is committed to meaningful public engagement to hear from residents.

Neighborhood-Focused Public Meeting

WHEN: Friday, November 7; 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

WHERE: New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum; 4100 Dripping Springs Road
Las Cruces, N.M. 88011

General Public Meeting

WHEN: Monday, November 24; 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

WHERE: New Mexico Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum; 4100 Dripping Springs Road
Las Cruces, N.M. 88011

Where can I find more information about the public meetings? The NMSLO has created a webpage dedicated to sharing information about this proposed land exchange.

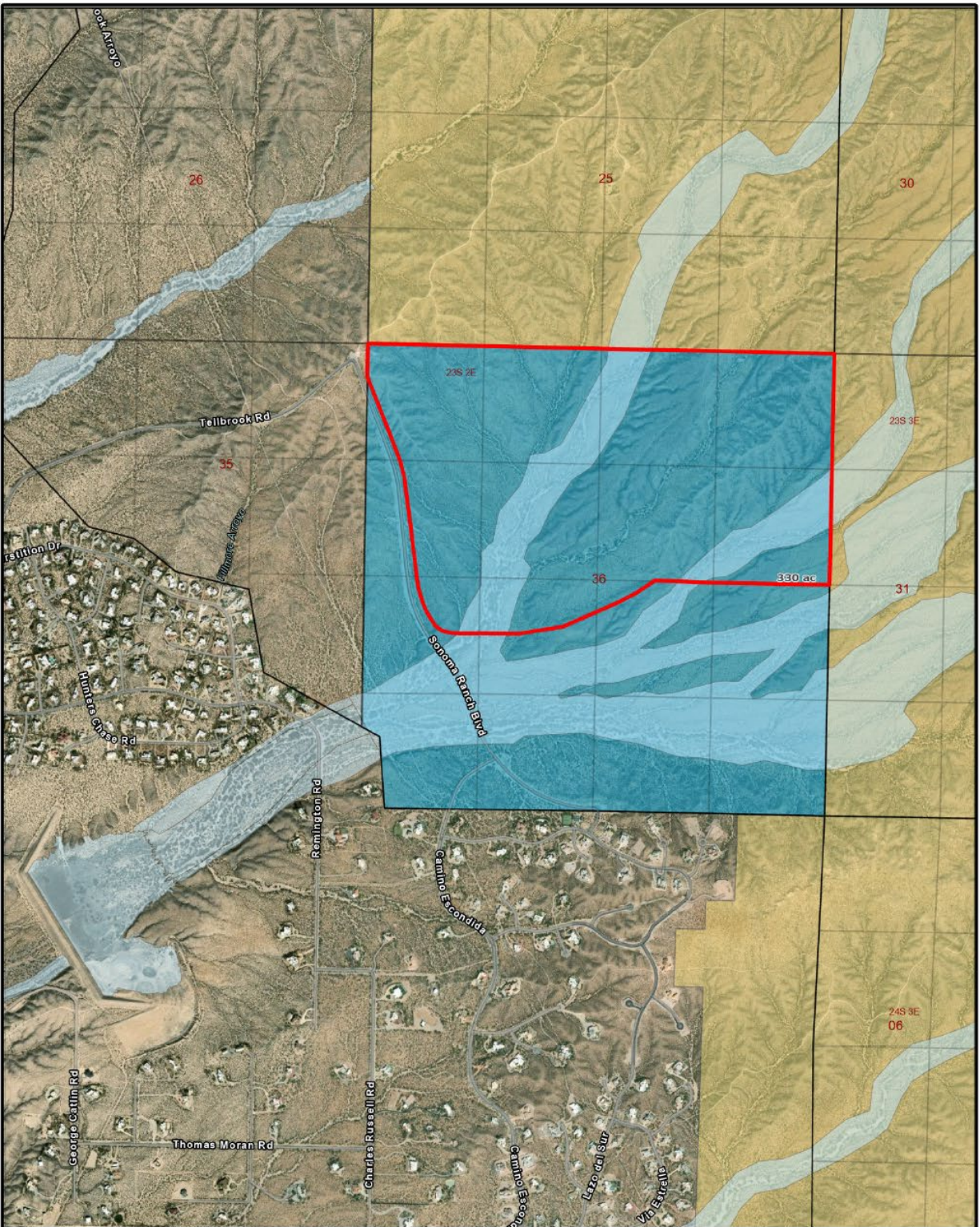
<https://www.nmstatelands.org/proposed-mescalero-apache-tribe-land-exchange/>

Can I share my comment prior to the public meeting?

Yes, you can submit a public comment

- Follow the link below or scan the QR code to share your perspective:
- <https://www.nmstatelands.org/public-comment/>
- Or mail to: P.O. Box 1148, Santa Fe, NM 87504





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Land Ownership

- Land Under Consideration for Exchange
- NM State Trust Land
- Bureau of Land Management Land

FEMA Flood Zones

- Flood Zone Area



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