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§ 225.4 Authority and responsibility of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The functions of the Bureau of Land Management are found in 43 CFR part 3160—Onshore Oil and Gas Operations, 43 CFR part 3180—Onshore Oil and Gas Unit Agreements: Unproven Areas, 43 CFR part 3260—Geothermal Resources Operations, 43 CFR part 3280—Geothermal Resources Unit Agreements: Unproven Areas, 43 CFR part 3480—Coal Exploration and Mining Operations, and 43 CFR part 3590—Solid Minerals (Other Than Coal) Exploration and Mining Operations. These functions include, but are not limited to, resource evaluation, approval of drilling permits, approval of mining, reclamation, and production plans, mineral appraisals, inspection and enforcement, and production verification. These regulations, as amended, apply to minerals agreements approved under this part.

§ 225.5 Authority and responsibility of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE).

The OSMRE is the regulatory authority for surface coal mining and reclamation operations on Indian lands pursuant to the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (30 U.S.C. 1201 *et seq.*). The relevant regulations for surface mining and reclamation operations are found in 30 CFR part 750 and 25 CFR part 216. These regulations, as amended, apply to minerals agreements approved under this part.

§ 225.6 Authority and responsibility of the Minerals Management Service (MMS).

The functions of the MMS for reporting, accounting, and auditing are found in 30 CFR chapter II, subchapters A and C. These regulations, unless specifically stated otherwise in this part or in other regulations, apply to all minerals agreements approved under this part. To the extent the parties to a minerals agreement are able to provide reasonable provisions satisfactorily addressing the issues or functions governed by the MMS regulations relating to valuation of mineral product, method of payment, accounting procedures, and

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auditing procedures, the Secretary may approve alternate provisions in a minerals agreement.

Subpart B—Minerals Agreements

§ 225.20 Authority to contract.

(a) Any Indian tribe, subject to the approval of the Secretary and any limitation or provision contained in its constitution or charter, may enter into a minerals agreement with respect to mineral resources in which the tribe owns a beneficial or restricted interest.

(b) Any individual Indian owning a beneficial or restricted interest in mineral resources may include those resources in a tribal minerals agreement subject to the concurrence of the parties and a finding by the Secretary that inclusion of the resources is in the best interest of the individual Indian mineral owner.

§ 225.21 Negotiation procedures.

(a) An Indian mineral owner that wishes to enter into a minerals agreement may ask the Secretary for advice, assistance, and information during the negotiation process. The Secretary shall provide advice, assistance, and information to the extent allowed by available resources.

(b) No particular form of minerals agreement is prescribed. In preparing the minerals agreement the Indian mineral owner shall, if applicable, address provisions including, but not limited to, the following:

(1) A general statement identifying the parties to the minerals agreement, the legal description of the lands, including, if applicable, rock intervals or thicknesses subject to the minerals agreement, and the purposes of the minerals agreement;

(2) A statement setting forth the duration of the minerals agreement;

(3) A statement providing indemnification to the Indian mineral owner(s) and the United States from all claims, liabilities and causes of action that may be made by persons not a party to the minerals agreement;

(4) Provisions setting forth the obligations of the contracting parties;

(5) Provisions describing the methods of disposition of production;

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(6) Provisions outlining the method of payment and amount of compensation to be paid;

(7) Provisions establishing accounting and mineral valuation procedures;

(8) Provisions establishing operating and management procedures;

(9) Provisions establishing any limitations on assignment of interests, including any right of first refusal by the Indian mineral owner in the event of a proposed assignment;

(10) Bond requirements;

(11) Insurance requirements;

(12) Provisions establishing audit procedures;

(13) Provisions for resolving disputes;

(14) A force majeure provision;

(15) Provisions describing the rights of the parties to terminate or suspend the minerals agreement, and the procedures to be followed in the event of termination or suspension;

(16) Provisions describing the nature and schedule of the activities to be conducted by the parties;

(17) Provisions describing the proposed manner and time of performance of future abandonment, reclamation and restoration activities;

(18) Provisions for reporting production and sales;

(19) Provisions for unitizing or communitizing of lands included in a minerals agreement for the purpose of promoting conservation and efficient utilization of natural resources;

(20) Provisions for protection of the minerals agreement lands from drainage and/or unauthorized taking of mineral resources; and

(21) Provisions for record keeping.

(c) In order to avoid delays in obtaining approval, the Indian mineral owner is encouraged to confer with the Secretary prior to formally executing the minerals agreement, and seek advice as to whether the minerals agreement appears to satisfy the requirements of § 225.22, or whether additions or corrections may be required in order to obtain Secretarial approval.

(d) The executed minerals agreement, together with a copy of a tribal resolution authorizing tribal officers to enter into the minerals agreement, shall be forwarded by the tribal representative to the appropriate Superintendent, or

in the absence of a Superintendent to the Area Director, for approval.

§ 225.22 Approval of minerals agreements.

(a) A minerals agreement submitted for approval pursuant to § 225.21(d) shall be approved or disapproved within:

(1) One hundred and eighty (180) days after submission, or

(2) Sixty (60) days after compliance, if required, with section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(C)) or any other requirement of Federal law, whichever is later.

(b) At least thirty (30) days prior to approval or disapproval of any minerals agreement, the affected Indian mineral owners shall be provided with written findings forming the basis of the Secretary's intent to approve or disapprove the minerals agreement.

(1) The written findings shall include an environmental study which meets the requirements of § 225.24 and an economic assessment, as described in § 225.23.

(2) The Secretary shall include in the written findings any recommendations for changes to the minerals agreement needed to qualify it for approval.

(3) The 30-day period shall commence to run as of the date the written findings are received by the Indian mineral owner.

(4) Notwithstanding any other law, such findings and all projections, studies, data or other information (other than the environmental study required by § 225.24) possessed by the Department of the Interior regarding the terms and conditions of the minerals agreement; the financial return to the Indian parties thereto; the extent, nature, value or disposition of the mineral resources; or the production, products or proceeds thereof, shall be held by the Department of the Interior as privileged and proprietary information of the affected Indian mineral owners. The letter containing the written findings should be headed with: PRIVILEGED PROPRIETARY INFORMATION OF THE (names of Indian mineral owners).

(c) A minerals agreement shall be approved if, at the Secretary's discretion,

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it is determined that the following conditions are met:

(1) The minerals agreement is in the best interest of the Indian mineral owner;

(2) The minerals agreement does not have adverse cultural, social, or environmental impacts sufficient to outweigh its expected benefits to the Indian mineral owners; and,

(3) The minerals agreement complies with the requirements of this part and all other applicable regulations and the provisions of applicable Federal law.

(d) The determinations required by paragraph (c) of this section shall be based on the written findings required by paragraph (b) and paragraphs (b)(1) through (b)(4), inclusive, of this section. The question of “best interest” within the meaning of paragraph (c)(1) of this section shall be determined by the Secretary based on information obtained from the parties, and any other information considered relevant by the Secretary, including, but not limited to, a review of comparable contemporary contractual arrangements or offers for the development of similar mineral resources received by Indian mineral owners, by non-Indian mineral owners, or by the Federal Government, insofar as that information is readily available.

(e) If a Superintendent or Area Director believes that a minerals agreement should not be approved, a written statement of the reasons why the minerals agreement should not be approved shall be prepared and forwarded, together with the minerals agreement, the written findings required by paragraph (b) and subparagraphs (b)(1) through (b)(4), inclusive, of this section, and all other pertinent documents, to the Secretary for a decision with a copy to the affected Indian mineral owner.

(f) The Secretary shall review any minerals agreement referred with a recommendation that it be disapproved, and the Secretary’s decision to disapprove a minerals agreement shall be deemed a final Federal agency action (25 U.S.C. 2103(d)).

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§ 225.23 Economic assessments.

The Secretary shall prepare or cause to be prepared an economic assessment that shall address, among other things:

(a) Whether there are assurances in the minerals agreement that operations shall be conducted with appropriate diligence;

(b) Whether the production royalties or other form of return on mineral resources is adequate; and

(c) Whether the minerals agreement is likely to provide the Indian mineral owner with a return on the production comparable to what the owner might otherwise obtain through competitive bidding, when such a comparison can reasonably be made.

§ 225.24 Environmental studies.

(a) The Secretary shall ensure that all environmental studies are prepared as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and the regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) found at 40 CFR parts 1500–1508.

(b) The Secretary shall ensure that all necessary surveys are performed and clearances obtained in accordance with 36 CFR parts 60, 63, and 800 and with the requirements of the Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 469 *et seq.*), the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*), the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (42 U.S.C. 1996), and Executive Order 11593 (3 CFR 1971–1975 Comp., p. 559, May 13, 1971). If these surveys indicate that a mineral development will have an adverse effect on a property listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the Secretary shall:

(1) Seek the comments of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, in accordance with 36 CFR part 800;

(2) Ensure that the property is avoided, that the adverse effect is mitigated, or that appropriate excavations or other related research is conducted; and

(3) Ensure that complete data describing the historic property is preserved.

§ 225.25 Resolution of disputes.

A minerals agreement shall contain provisions for resolving disputes that

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may arise between the parties. However, no such provision shall limit the Secretary's authority or ability to ensure that the rights of an Indian mineral owner are protected in the event of a violation of the provisions of the minerals agreement by any other party to the minerals agreement.

§ 225.26 Auditing and accounting.

The Secretary may conduct audits relating to the scope, nature and extent of compliance with the minerals agreement and with applicable regulations and orders to lessees, operators, revenue payors, and other persons with rental, royalty, net profit share and other payment requirements arising from the provisions of a minerals agreement. Procedures and standards used for accounting and auditing of minerals agreements will be in accordance with audit standards established by the Comptroller General of the United States, in "Standards for Auditing of Governmental Organizations, Programs, Activities, and Functions, 1981," and standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

§ 225.27 Forms and reports.

Any forms required to be filed pursuant to a minerals agreement may be obtained from the Superintendent or Area Director. Prescribed forms for filing geothermal production reports required by the BLM (43 CFR part 3260, §§ 3264.1, 3264.2-4 and 3264.2-5) may be obtained from the Superintendent, Area Director, or the Authorized Officer. Applicable reports required by the MMS shall be filed using the forms prescribed in 30 CFR part 210, which are available from MMS. Guidance on how to prepare and submit required information, collection reports, and forms to MMS is available from: Minerals Management Service, Attention: Lessee (or Reporter) Contact Branch, P.O. Box 5760, Denver, Colorado 80217. Additional reporting requirements may be required by the Secretary.

§ 225.28 Approval of amendments to minerals agreements.

An amendment, modification or supplement to a minerals agreement entered into pursuant to the regulations

in this part, whether the minerals agreement was approved before or after the effective date of these regulations, must be approved in writing by all parties before being submitted to the Secretary for approval. The provisions of § 225.22 apply to approvals of amendments, modifications, or supplements to minerals agreements entered into under the regulations in this part. However, amendments, modifications, or supplements that do not substantially alter or affect the factors listed in § 225.22(c), may be approved by referencing materials previously submitted for the initial review and approval of the minerals agreement. The Secretary may approve an amendment, modification, or supplement if it is determined that the underlying minerals agreement, as amended, modified, or supplemented meets the criteria for approval set forth in § 225.22(c).

§ 225.29 Corporate qualifications and requests for information.

(a) The signing in a representative capacity of minerals agreements or assignments, bonds, or other instruments required by a minerals agreement or these regulations, constitutes certification that the individual signing (except a surety agent) is authorized to act in such a capacity. An agent for a surety shall furnish a power of attorney.

(b) A prospective corporate operator proposing to acquire an interest in a minerals agreement shall have on file with the Superintendent a statement showing:

(1) The State(s) in which the corporation is incorporated, and a notarized statement that the corporation is authorized to hold such interests in the State where the land described in the minerals agreement is situated; and

(2) A notarized statement that it has power to conduct all business and operations as described in the minerals agreement.

(c) The Secretary may, either before or after the approval of a minerals agreement, assignment, or bond, call for any reasonable additional information necessary to carry out the regulations in this part, or other applicable laws and regulations.

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§ 225.30 Bonds.

(a) Bonds required by provisions of a minerals agreement should be in an amount sufficient to ensure compliance with all of the requirements of the minerals agreement and the statutes and regulations applicable to the minerals agreement. Surety bonds shall be issued by a qualified company approved by the Department of the Treasury (see Department of the Treasury Circular No. 570).

(b) An operator may file a \$75,000 bond for all geothermal, mining, or oil and gas minerals agreements in any one State, which may also include areas on that part of an Indian reservation extending into any contiguous State. Statewide bonds shall be filed for approval with the Secretary.

(c) An operator may file a \$150,000 bond for full nationwide coverage to cover all geothermal or oil and gas minerals agreements without geographic or acreage limitation to which the operator is or may become a party. Nationwide bonds shall be filed for approval with the Secretary.

(d) Personal bonds shall be accompanied by:

(1) Certificate of deposit issued by a financial institution, the deposits of which are Federally insured, explicitly granting the Secretary full authority to demand immediate payment in case of default in the performance of the provisions and conditions of the minerals agreement. The certificate shall explicitly indicate on its face that Secretarial approval is required prior to redemption of the certificate of deposit by any party;

(2) Cashier's check;

(3) Certified check;

(4) Negotiable Treasury securities of the United States of a value equal to the amount specified in the bond. Negotiable Treasury securities shall be accompanied by a proper conveyance to the Secretary of full authority to sell such securities in case of default in the performance of the provisions and conditions of a minerals agreement; or

(5) Letter of credit issued by a financial institution authorized to do business in the United States and whose deposits are Federally insured, and identifying the Secretary as sole payee with full authority to demand imme-

mediate payment in the case of default in the performance of the provisions and conditions of a minerals agreement.

(i) The letter of credit shall be irrevocable during its term.

(ii) The letter of credit shall be payable to the Bureau of Indian Affairs on demand, in part or in full, upon receipt from the Secretary of a notice of attachment stating the basis thereof (e.g., default in compliance with the minerals agreement provisions and conditions or failure to file a replacement in accordance with subparagraph (d)(5)(v) of this section).

(iii) The initial expiration date of the letter of credit shall be at least one (1) year following the date it is filed in the proper Bureau of Indian Affairs office.

(iv) The letter of credit shall contain a provision for automatic renewal for periods of not less than one (1) year in the absence of notice to the proper Bureau of Indian Affairs office at least ninety (90) days prior to the originally stated or any extended expiration date.

(v) A letter of credit used as security for any minerals agreement upon which operations have taken place and final approval for abandonment has not been given, or as security for a statewide or nationwide bond, shall be forfeited and shall be collected by the Secretary if not replaced by other suitable bond or letter of credit at least thirty (30) days before its expiration date.

(e) The required amount of a bond may be increased in any particular case at the discretion of the Secretary.

[59 FR 14971, Mar. 30, 1994; 60 FR 10474, Feb. 24, 1995]

§ 225.31 Manner of payments.

Unless specified otherwise in the minerals agreement, after production has been established, all payments due for royalties, bonuses, rentals and other payments under a minerals agreement shall be made to the Secretary or such other party as may be designated, and shall be made at such time as provided in 30 CFR chapter II, subchapters A and C. Prior to production, all bonus and rental payments, shall be made to the Superintendent or Area Director.

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§ 225.32 Permission to start operations.

(a) No exploration, drilling, or mining operations are permitted on any Indian lands before the Secretary has granted written approval of the minerals agreement pursuant to the regulations. After a minerals agreement is approved, written permission to start operations must be secured by applying for the permits referred to in paragraph (b) of this section.

(b) Applicable permits in accordance with rules and regulations in 30 CFR part 750, 43 CFR parts 3160, 3260, 3480, 3590, and Orders or Notices to Lessees (NTL) issued thereunder shall be required before actual operations are conducted on the minerals agreement acreage.

§ 225.33 Assignment of minerals agreements.

An assignment of a minerals agreement, or any interest therein, shall not be valid without the approval of the Secretary and, if required in the minerals agreement, the Indian mineral owner. The assignee must be qualified to hold the minerals agreement and shall furnish a satisfactory bond conditioned on the faithful performance of the covenants and conditions thereof as stipulated in the minerals agreement. A fully executed copy of the assignment shall be filed with the Secretary within five (5) working days after execution by all parties. The Secretary may permit the release of any bonds executed by the assignor upon submission of satisfactory bonds to the Bureau of Indian Affairs by the assignee, and a determination that the assignor has satisfied all accrued obligations.

§ 225.34 [Reserved]

§ 225.35 Inspection of premises; books and accounts.

(a) Operators shall allow Indian mineral owners, their authorized representatives, or any authorized representatives of the Secretary to enter all parts of the minerals agreement area for the purpose of inspection. Operators shall keep a full and correct account of all operations and submit all related reports required by the min-

erals agreement and applicable regulations. Books and records shall be available for inspection during regular business hours.

(b) Operators shall provide records to the Minerals Management Service (MMS) in accordance with MMS regulations and guidelines. All records pertaining to a minerals agreement shall be maintained by an operator in accordance with 30 CFR part 212.

(c) Operators shall provide records to the Authorized Officer in accordance with BLM regulations and guidelines.

(d) Operators shall provide records to the Director's Representative in accordance with OSMRE regulations and guidelines.

§ 225.36 Minerals agreement cancellation; Bureau of Indian Affairs notice of noncompliance.

(a) If the Secretary determines that an operator has failed to comply with the regulations in this part; other applicable laws or regulations; the terms of the minerals agreement; the requirements of an approved exploration, drilling or mining plan; Secretarial orders; or the orders of the Authorized Officer, the Director's Representative, or the MMS Official, the Secretary may:

(1) Serve a notice of noncompliance;

or

(2) Serve a notice of proposed cancellation.

(b) The notice of noncompliance shall specify in what respect the operator has failed to comply with the requirements referenced in paragraph (a), and shall specify what actions, if any, must be taken to correct the noncompliance.

(c) The notice of proposed cancellation shall set forth the reasons why cancellation is proposed.

(d) The notice of proposed cancellation or noncompliance shall be served upon the operator by delivery in person or by certified mail to the operator at the operator's last known address. When certified mail is used, the date of service shall be deemed to be when received or five (5) working days after the date it is mailed, whichever is earlier.

(e) The operator shall have thirty (30) days (or such longer time as specified in the notice) from the date that the

Bureau of Indian Affairs notice of proposed cancellation or noncompliance is served to respond, in writing, to the Superintendent or Area Director actually issuing the notice.

(f) If an operator fails to take any action that may be prescribed in the notice of proposed cancellation, fails to file a timely written response to the notice, or files a written response that does not, in the discretion of the Secretary, adequately justify the operator's failure to comply, then the Secretary may cancel the minerals agreement, specifying the basis for the cancellation. Cancellation of a minerals agreement shall not relieve the operator of any continuing obligation under the minerals agreement.

(g) If an operator fails to take corrective action or to file a timely written response adequately justifying the operator's actions pursuant to a notice of noncompliance, the Secretary may issue an order of cessation. If the operator fails to comply with the order of cessation, or fails to timely file an appeal of the order of cessation pursuant to paragraph (k) of this section, the Secretary may issue an order of minerals agreement cancellation.

(h) This section does not limit any other remedies of the Indian mineral owner as set forth in the minerals agreement.

(i) Nothing in this section is intended to limit the authority of the Authorized Officer, the Director's Representative, or the MMS Official to take any enforcement action authorized pursuant to statute or regulation.

(j) The Authorized Officer, the Director's Representative, the MMS Official, and the Superintendent or Area Director should consult with one another before taking any enforcement actions.

(k) If orders of cessation or minerals agreement cancellation issued pursuant to this section are issued by a designee of the Secretary other than the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, the orders may be appealed under 25 CFR part 2. If the orders are issued by the Secretary or the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, and not one of their delegates or subordinates, the orders are the final orders of the Department.

§ 225.37 Penalties.

(a) In addition to or in lieu of cancellation under § 225.36, violations of the terms and conditions of any minerals agreement, the regulations in this part, other applicable laws or regulations, or failure to comply with a notice of noncompliance or a cessation order issued by the Secretary may subject an operator to a penalty of not more than \$2,057 per day for each day that such a violation or noncompliance continues beyond the time limits prescribed for corrective action.

(b) A notice of a proposed penalty shall be served on the operator either personally or by certified mail to the operator at the operator's last known address. The date of service by certified mail shall be deemed to be the date received or five (5) working days after the date mailed, whichever is earlier.

(c) The notice shall specify the nature of the violation and the proposed penalty, and shall specifically advise the operator of the operator's right to either request a hearing within thirty (30) days of receipt of the notice or pay the proposed penalty. Hearings shall be held before the Superintendent or Area Director whose findings shall be conclusive, unless an appeal is taken pursuant to 25 CFR part 2. If within thirty (30) days of receipt of the notice of proposed penalty the operator has not requested a hearing or paid the amount of the proposed penalty, a final notice of penalty shall be served.

(d) If the person served with a notice of proposed penalty requests a hearing, penalties shall accrue each day the violations or noncompliance set forth in the notice continue beyond the time limits presented for corrective action. The Secretary may issue a written suspension of the requirement to correct the violations pending completion of the hearings provided by this section only upon a determination, at the discretion of the Secretary, that such a suspension will not be detrimental to the Indian mineral owner and upon submission and acceptance of a bond deemed adequate to indemnify the Indian mineral owner from loss or damage. The amount of the bond must be sufficient to cover the cost of correcting the violations set forth in the

notice or any disputed amounts plus accrued penalties and interest.

(e) Payment of penalties in full more than ten (10) days after a final decision imposing a penalty shall subject the operator to late payment charges. Late payment charges shall be calculated on the basis of a percentage assessment rate of the amount unpaid per month for each month or fraction thereof until payment is received by the Secretary. In the absence of a specific minerals agreement provision prescribing a different rate, the interest rate on late payments and underpayments shall be a rate applicable under section 6621(a)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. Interest shall be charged only on the amount of payment not received and only for the number of days the payment is late.

(f) None of the provisions of this section shall be interpreted as:

(1) Replacing or superseding the independent authority of the Authorized Officer, the Director's Representative, or the MMS Official to impose penalties under applicable statutory or regulatory authorities;

(2) Replacing, superseding, or replicating any penalty provision in the terms and conditions of a minerals agreement approved by the Secretary pursuant to this part; or

(3) Authorizing the imposition of a penalty for violations of minerals agreement provisions for which the Authorized Officer, Director's Representative, or MMS Official has either statutory or regulatory authority to assess a penalty.

[59 FR 14971, Mar. 30, 1994, as amended at 81 FR 42481, June 30, 2016; 82 FR 7652, Jan. 23, 2017; 83 FR 5195, Feb. 6, 2018; 84 FR 15101, Apr. 15, 2019; 85 FR 9369, Feb. 19, 2020; 86 FR 7348, Jan. 28, 2021; 87 FR 13156, Mar. 9, 2022; 88 FR 13022, Mar. 2, 2023; 89 FR 18363, Mar. 13, 2024]

§ 225.38 Appeals.

Appeals from decisions of Officials of the Bureau of Indian Affairs under this part may be taken pursuant to 25 CFR part 2.

§ 225.39 Fees.

(a) Unless otherwise authorized by the Secretary, each minerals agreement or assignment thereof, shall be

accompanied by a filing fee of \$75.00 at the time of filing.

(b) An Indian mineral owner shall not be required to pay a filing fee if the Indian mineral owner, pursuant to a provision in the existing minerals agreement, acquires an additional interest in that minerals agreement.

§ 225.40 Government employees cannot acquire minerals agreements.

U.S. Government employees are prevented from acquiring any interest(s) in minerals agreements by the provisions of 25 CFR part 140 and 43 CFR part 20 pertaining to conflicts of interest and ownership of an interest in trust land.

PART 226—LEASING OF OSAGE RESERVATION LANDS FOR OIL AND GAS MINING

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