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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UTE INDIAN TRIBE FILING TWO COMPLAINTS IN FEDERAL COURT REGARDING THE UNITED STATES THEFT OF THE UNCOMPAGRE RESERVATION LANDS

(Ft. Duchesne, UT) –This week, the Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation has commenced litigation against the United States of America for its blatant mismanagement of the Tribe’s Uncompahgre Reservation lands. The Tribe has filed two federal complaints—one in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims and one in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The former complaint primarily seeks significant monetary relief to compensate the Tribe for the United States’ sale and use of its Uncompahgre Reservation lands, while the latter complaint seeks quiet title to the lands of the Uncompahgre Reservation, among other things. Both cases are titled *Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation v. United States of America*.

Under the Act of June 15, 1880, (“1880 Act”) Congress forced the Uncompahgre Band of Ute Indians to cede their reservation lands in Colorado for a replacement reservation along the Grand River in Colorado or within Utah. On January 5, 1882, the Uncompahgre Reservation, located in northeastern Utah, was established by Executive Order for the Uncompahgre Utes, pursuant to the 1880 Act. The Uncompahgre Reservation was later opened to allotment by means of the Act of June 7, 1897, (“1897 Act”). Despite the United States’ obligation to pay the Uncompahgre Band or the Ute Tribe for the unallotted surplus lands of the Uncompahgre Reservation that were disposed of after 1897, pursuant to several Congressional Acts including the 1880 and 1897 Acts, the United States has never made such payments.

The Tribe has never received any payment from the United States for the BLM’s leasing and other utilization of the Uncompahgre lands it manages. It is estimated that the BLM has received and continues to receive hundreds of millions of dollars from leases of minerals and grazing within the Uncompahgre Reservation.

Before filing this litigation, the Tribe first submitted a formal restoration request to the Secretary

of Interior on September 19, 2016, requesting that the remaining surplus Uncompahgre Reservation lands be restored to tribal ownership pursuant to Section 3 of the IRA. The Deputy Secretary denied this request on March 2, 2018.

In response to the United States' refusal to recognize that the surplus Uncompahgre Reservation lands were already restored to the Tribe, its mismanagement of the Uncompahgre Reservation lands, the lack of payment for the sale and use of those lands, and the Secretary's recent refusal to restore the Uncompahgre Reservation lands to trust status, the Tribe has brought this litigation to hold the United States accountable to the solemn promises it made to the Tribe pursuant to its treaty obligations that it is now trying to break by taking the position the Tribe's reservation no longer exists.

The Ute Tribal Business Committee stated, "The Ute Indian Tribe has had to bring these lawsuits against the United States because of its refusal to recognize the Tribe's ongoing title and interest in the Uncompahgre Reservation lands currently managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The Department of Interior has failed to comply with federal law and has breached its treaty obligations under the 1880 Treaty and 1882 Executive Order, under which it set aside these lands as a permanent homeland for the Uncompahgre Utes."

According to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals in the 1985 case, *Ute Indian Tribe v. Utah*, "the Uncompahgre Reservation has not been disestablished or diminished."

About the Ute Indian Tribe-The Ute Indian Tribe resides on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation in northeastern Utah. Three bands of Utes comprise the Ute Indian Tribe: the Whiteriver Band, the Uncompahgre Band and the Uintah Band. The Tribe has a membership of more than three thousand individuals, with over half living on the Uintah and Ouray Reservation. The Ute Indian Tribe operates its own tribal government and oversees approximately 1.3 million acres of trust land which contains significant oil and gas deposits. The Tribal Business Committee is the governing council of the Tribe.

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