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National Park Service Signs Agreements with Owners on Land for Flight 93 Memorial

Washington, DC – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today announced that the federal government has reached agreement with all of the landowners for all properties needed for the construction of the Flight 93 Memorial in western Pennsylvania.

“The fields of western Pennsylvania, where the heroes of Flight 93 perished, are hallowed ground for a grateful nation,” said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. “Thanks to the collaborative efforts of the landowners, the Families of Flight 93 and the employees of the National Park Service, we have reached this important milestone in properly honoring the courage and sacrifice of the men and women who gave their lives that day. The Flight 93 Memorial will soon stand in their honor.”

In June, at the invitation of Senator Specter, Salazar traveled to Somerset County where they met with the landowners as well as the Families of Flight 93. Following the meetings, Secretary Salazar delayed earlier Park Service plans to condemn the properties in favor of continued negotiations with the landowners. A few weeks later, Salazar traveled back to Somerset County to meet with the landowners again to help further the negotiations.

As a result of these negotiations, the National Park Service (NPS) has signed agreements with the 8 landowners whose land was needed to complete the first phase of the memorial. According to Acting NPS Director Dan Wenk, the NPS was successful in reaching negotiated settlements with 7 of 8 property owners. In January, the eighth property owner Svonavec Incorporated, came to a mutual agreement with the NPS to allow the courts to establish fair compensation for the property. The NPS expects that the U.S. Department of Justice will file the court documents for the Svonavec property within the next two weeks.

“We expect closings on the remaining properties to be complete by mid-October, which allows construction to begin immediately after our groundbreaking in November,” Wenk said. “This keeps us on-track to complete the Memorial by September 11, 2011.”

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