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In Reply Refer To:
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To: All State Directors
From: Director, National Applied Resource Sciences Center
Subject: Continuation of Micrographics Services

In 1995, a study team led by Peter Culp, State Director of the Eastern States Office, prepared a report entitled "Service Center Mapping Sciences and Micrographics Review," dated July 31, 1995. This contained a series of recommendations concerning options for preserving future cadastral survey records and discussed transition of the Micrographics Project Office upon completion of filming of historical cadastral survey records and notes. The BLM Assistant Director for Resource Assessment and Planning subsequently approved decisions to develop plans to move the micrographics function to the States, to initiate a cadastral records reengineering prototype project, and to maintain a residual micrographics staff at the National Applied Resource Sciences Center (NARSC) until an alternate document retrieval system was in place. It was assumed in 1995 that most States would have the capability to perform maintenance and handle the volume of incoming notes for scanning and abstracting. NARSC prepared an Implementation Plan in March 1996 which further discussed options for study of alternate technologies, phase-down of the Micrographics staff upon completion of the historical filming, and eventual transition of the function to the field.

In November 1996 at a national meeting of the Cadastral Survey Chiefs, we gave informal notice that we would cease processing incoming cadastral survey notes from State Offices at the end of FY 97. We also talked about the phase-down and eventual closure of the Micrographics Project Office. Considerable concern was expressed about the decision to discontinue micrographics services to the State Offices and to close the Micrographics Project Office without having an alternate technology in place. Subsequently, a questionnaire was sent to the State Offices on January 10, 1997, soliciting additional recommendations regarding transition of the micrographics function. Based on responses from the States and considering previous discussions, we have made several decisions.

We will continue to provide micrographics services to the field until an

alternate technology has been identified and deployed. We will complete updates and filming of backlogged notes that have been held in abeyance, continue to accept new notes for abstracting and filming, and continue to process orders for duplication of microfiche. We also will initiate a study of potential successor technologies to the current microfilming system to include representatives from cadastral survey, records management, and appropriate information systems interests. A request for participation on this study group will be sent out in the near future. A primary goal will be to develop a transition plan which accommodates the needs of the field offices and our other customers. And finally, the Micrographics Project Office will continue to be base-funded through the cadastral subactivity from Headquarters as in the past. This is necessary for us to ensure uninterrupted micrographics services to our customers in the BLM, state and local government agencies, private companies, and the public. However, we also acknowledge that other funding strategies may be feasible in the long term, and so we will evaluate funding options as part of the study of alternate technologies.

The States pointed out that preservation and dissemination of land records is one of the Department of the Interior's critical missions. This function has been delegated to the BLM as a core responsibility. We have spent almost 20 years filming and preserving the original cadastral survey records for the public lands. Completion of filming for Wyoming will bring to a close this massive, long-term effort. Some of the original microfilming already shows signs of aging, and it is essential that we move forward to the next generation of records preservation. In that spirit, we will establish a study group and develop a transition to new technology as soon as possible.

If you have any questions or further comments, please contact John Matis, Information and Communications Group Supervisor, at (303) 236-1613 or Betty Riley, Project Manager, Micrographics Project Office, at (303) 236-6357.

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