

What is Trust Land?

Trust Land refers to land where the legal title is held by the United States government for the benefit of a Native American tribe or individual. While the government holds title, the beneficial interest remains with the tribe or individual, meaning they are the true users and beneficiaries of the land.

Trust Land at a Glance

- Held in Trust – Title is held by the U.S. government, but the beneficial rights belong to tribes or individuals.
- Restricted Transfer – Any sale, lease, or transfer must be approved by the federal government and is unlikely.
- Tax-Exempt – Trust land is generally exempt from state and local property taxes.
- Supports Tribal Sovereignty – Trust status helps preserve tribal lands and self-determination.

Trust Land

- Title held by U.S. government for tribe/individual
- Requires federal approval for sale/transfer
- Exempt from property taxes
- Governed by federal and tribal law

Fee Land

- Owned outright by individual or entity
- Can be sold, mortgaged, or transferred without federal approval
- Subject to property taxes
- Governed by local/state law

Why It's Important

Understanding the role of trust land is essential for:

- Tribal sovereignty and governance
- Protecting Native cultural and land rights
- Property taxation and jurisdiction
- Economic development and land use planning

Questions? Would you like a map of your trust land?

Feel free to contact the Pala GIS Department:

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Sources

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3. National Conference of State Legislatures. Summary: Trust Land. NCSL
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