

Testimony of Ron Suppah
The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation
Before the House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Interior
and Related Agencies
Hearing on FY 2013 Appropriations
April 24, 2013

SUMMARY

Mr. Chairman, I am Ron Suppah, Vice-Chairman of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon. For the Warm Springs, I offer the following recommendations for FY 2014 Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Budget.

- 1) Indian Health Service: Support overall increase in funding:**
- 2) BIA TPA Forestry: support the Administration's \$5.1 million increase, and further the increase by \$5 million to begin moving BIA Forestry toward parity with similar federal forestry budgets**
- 3) DOI Wildland Fire Management:**
 - a) Restore hazard fuels funding to \$216 million, and**
 - b) remove the BIA/tribal fuel funding from the DoI HFPAS formula and set a minimum allocation at 25% of the DoI hazard fuel allocation but no less than \$50 million annually;**
- 4) Trust Reform – Inter-Tribal Monitoring Association.**
- 5) Support the proposed \$9.8 million increase in Contract Support.**
- 6) Public Safety – Detention Facilities**
- 7) Treaty Fisheries Management**

Chairman Simpson, and Ranking Member Moran: Our people are the Warm Springs, Wasco and Paiute tribes. Our over 640,000 acre Reservation in central Oregon ranges from the snow-capped Mt. Jefferson to the salmon-bearing Deschutes River; with forests, farmland and high desert between.

The vast majority of our tribal members live on the Reservation, where we are suffering from almost 60% unemployment. A recent study ranked the town of Warm Springs as having the second highest incidence of poverty in Oregon. Putting our people to work and providing basic social services –especially health care and education -- for our members is extremely challenging at Warm Springs. Possibly more challenging than anywhere in Indian Country, or the nation at large.

Our federal appropriations priorities reflect the circumstances we face, and I deeply appreciate your invitation to speak before you today.

1) Indian Health Service:

- Joint Venture: In 1992 Congress authorized a Joint Venture agreement between the IHS and Warm Springs. The Tribe financed construction of a new clinic and the IHS agreed to fully fund and staff the facility. Unfortunately, federal funding has been far short of its commitment. The Warm Springs support the proposed \$4.430 billion in budget authority and \$5.662 program level for IHS, for a total increase of \$234.6 million over the FY 2012 enacted level. This would be an historic funding level. Of that amount, the Warm Springs request a \$1.9 million increase in funding for IHS Hospitals and Clinics to provide full direct services for the Warm Springs Joint Venture. We request full restoration of funding for Community Health programs.

2) Tribal Forest Management: The Warm Springs Tribe, pursuant to contract with the BIA, manages the forest land on the Warm Springs Reservation. Management of our forests has traditionally employed tribal members at our lumber mill, which closed last summer. The significant threat from and costs of wildfire make urgent a steady commitment to forest management. Hundreds of thousands of acres of the Warm Springs Reservation has been destroyed by wildfire in the last several years. Many of these fires came from adjacent federal lands.

Congressional oversight and funding is needed to effectively implement the Tribal Forest Protection Act (“TFPA”). On a policy matter, Warm Springs asks that Congress review and enact proposed changes to the TFPA identified by a review committee. Testimony from the Inter-Tribal Timber Council will go into further detail.

Warm Springs urges this Subcommittee to adopt the \$5.1 million increase for BIA Forestry proposed for FY 2014, and to further add an additional \$5 million to begin moving BIA Forestry toward parity with other federal forestry budgets. The independent 1993 and 2003 IFMAT reports documented that the BIA Forestry per-acre management funding is far less than what is provided for National Forests, and state and private forests.

Supporting the proposed \$5.1 million BIA Forestry increase and supplementing that with an additional \$5 million will start to shore-up the eroded federal trust responsibility, make a needed investment in the single most productive federal timber program, and provide jobs and countless social and economic benefits for tribal communities.

3) DOI Hazardous Fuels Prioritization and Allocation System: Warm Springs aligns itself with the comments of the Inter-Tribal Timber Council in requesting that BIA wildland fire budget be removed from the HFPAS formula, which does not adequately prioritize tribal resources.

4) Trust Reform (ITMA):

The Bureau of Indian Affairs and Office of the Special Trustee have been confronted

with trust mismanagement claims from individual Indian allottees and Tribes for mismanaging both monetary assets and non-monetary or natural resource assets that span many decades. The Inter-Tribal Monitoring Association has provided a very valuable central source of policy-level information and analysis; technical assistance, legal research, and help in facilitating interactions between tribes and federal officials to engender more trust effective relationship and resolutions.

6) BIA/IHS Contract Support: Since 1975, Tribal Self-Determination pursuant to P.L. 93-638 has been the keystone of federal Indian policy. Unfortunately, BIA and IHS budgets have failed to completely reimburse tribes for unavoidable administrative expenses. At Warm Springs, we have about \$17 million under BIA and IHS P.L. 93-638 contracts. With declining tribal revenues, we are less able to implement federal policy. As such, we support the \$231 million in the budget for contract support costs, an increase of \$9.8 million over FY 2012. However, that total is still below the target \$242 million requirement for BIA contract support for FY 2014

7) Public Safety – Detention Facilities

The Warm Springs Detention Center is owned by the BIA. It was upgraded in response to a lawsuit from the U.S. Department of Justice. The useful life of that facility upgrade has exceeded the twenty-five year expectancy and the facility has once again fallen into serious disrepair, community justice and safety cannot be assured nor can inmate life, health and safety be protected. Additionally, the BIA has forbidden its use for housing juvenile offenders which has resulted in having to contract with costly off-reservation juvenile detention facilities and services for criminal acts. The facility replacement and cost must be addressed as a joint obligation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Office of Law Enforcement Services and the collateral entities of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Warm Springs supports the proposed \$19 million increase for BIA public safety and justice.

8) Treaty Fisheries Management: The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs is a founding member of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, our policy and technical coordinating agency for treaty fisheries management for Columbia River and International Fisheries. We support the testimony given today from CRITFC.