

**TESTIMONY OF JIMMIE MITCHELL**  
BEFORE THE  
**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT and RELATED AGENCIES**  
**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
ON  
**APRIL 25, 2013**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Jimmie Mitchell.

It is an honor to address you today as the duly authorized spokesperson for the Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority (CORA). CORA an inter-tribal resource management organization established by five federally recognized Indian tribes: the Bay Mills Indian Community, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, and the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

I have served on the CORA Board for the past ten years, actively participating in treaty and natural resources issues. During that time, the CORA tribes have overcome immense challenges -- in some cases to their very existence as tribes -- to establish their treaty hunting, fishing and gathering rights, rights that are fundamental to who we are as Indian people today and to our children in generations to come.

Each of the CORA tribes is a successor to signatories to the Treaty of March 28, 1836, with the Ottawa and Chippewa. In that treaty our ancestors stipulated for usufructuary rights on ceded lands and waters in the northern Lower Peninsula and eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and in large portions of Lakes Michigan, Huron and Superior. These rights preserve our access to culturally significant resources that are intimately connected to our traditional life ways.

Our treaty rights were affirmed in landmark, hard-fought litigation initiated by the United States in 1973, known as United States v. Michigan. In 2000 the Court entered a Consent Decree that we had negotiated with the United States and the State of Michigan to provide for the allocation and management of the Great Lakes fisheries in the treaty area for a period of 20 years. And, in 2007, the Court entered another Consent Decree that we had negotiated with the United States and the State of Michigan to affirm our inland treaty rights and to provide for the allocation and management of inland natural resources in the treaty area in perpetuity.

Under the Consent Decrees, the CORA Tribes have substantial

obligations to conduct scientific research, to preserve and enhance fish, wildlife and plants, to adopt and revise sound resource management plans, and to promulgate and enforce regulations for our members' exercise of our treaty rights. Our ability to fulfill these obligations -- which is essential to give practical effect to our treaty rights and to preserve the natural resources on which those rights depend -- is heavily dependent on the continued Trust Responsibility of the federal government.

In particular, the CORA Tribes are heavily dependent on federal Rights Protection Implementation (RPI) funds for successful operation of our natural resource programs. Without the successful operation of those programs, our treaty rights would exist on paper only.

In this era of sequestration, reduced revenues and grave financial challenges, CORA wishes to express its sincerest gratitude to this Committee for continuing to acknowledge the importance of RPI funding, not only to Tribal Nations and our future generations, but also to the creation of a sustainable and robust ecosystem to be shared and enjoyed by all.

We also wish to respectfully request that, for the first time, RPI funding be provided to assist us in carrying out our obligations under the 2007 Inland Consent Decree. These obligations include regulation of tribal member hunting, fishing and gathering activities, as well as co-management responsibilities for restoration, reclamation and enhancement of natural resources, throughout the inland portion of the 1836 Ceded Territory, which covers approximately 14 million acres. Despite the importance and breadth of these obligations, we have not yet received any RPI funding to help meet them.

We do want to express our gratitude to the Administration for including RPI funds to implement the 2007 Inland Consent Decree in the President's 2013 budget, and again in the President's 2014 budget. Unfortunately, we did not receive any Inland Consent Decree funds this year because of the adoption of a Continuing Resolution that maintained funding at FY 2012 levels, which did not yet include Inland RPI funding. It is critically important that these funds are provided in 2014, so that we can fulfill our obligations under the 2007 Consent Decree and implement our hard-won treaty rights. We cannot otherwise ensure that precious natural resources will be protected and that our members will be able to exercise their treaty rights and preserve our way of life.

For these reasons, the CORA Board respectfully requests your support for FY 2014 RPI funding for the CORA tribes at a level of \$4,409,294.00 in recurring base funding, as outlined in the RPI portion of the Department of the Interior's Green Book for FY 2014.

Thank you very much for your consideration. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.