



# The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation



Prepared Statement of the Honorable Jim Boyd, Council Member  
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation

House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies

Public Witness Hearing—Native Americans

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Good morning Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and members of the Subcommittee. On behalf of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (“Colville Tribes” or the “CCT”), I thank you for this opportunity to provide the Colville Tribes’ recommendations for the Subcommittee as it drafts its FY 2016 spending bill.

**The CCT recommends that the Subcommittee (1) increase funding for BIA Forestry by \$25 million, to \$76.9 million, as recommended by the InterTribal Timber Council, as a first step to bring parity with other federal forestry programs; (2) provide at least a \$20 million increase to the Criminal Investigations and Police Services account to allow for deployment of more police officers in Indian country; and (3) direct the Indian Health Service (IHS) to more equitably staff IHS facilities when it allocates funding increases.**

## BACKGROUND ON THE COLVILLE TRIBES

Although now considered a single Indian tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation is, as the name states, a confederation of twelve aboriginal tribes and bands from all across eastern Washington State. The Colville Reservation encompasses approximately 1.4 million acres and is located in north central Washington State. The CCT has nearly 9,500 enrolled members, making it one of the largest Indian tribes in the Pacific Northwest. About half of our tribal members live on or near the Colville Reservation. The Colville Reservation has more than 800,000 acres of forest land. Forestry and wood products have been the CCT's traditional source of revenue.

### I. BIA FORESTRY

The CCT requests that the Subcommittee increase BIA forestry by \$25 million as a first step to bringing parity to tribal forests compared to what other federal land managers like the U.S. Forest Service receive to manage the forests on those federal lands. For many Indian tribes, forests are the lifeblood of economic activity. Although the CCT has diversified its economy during the last three decades, timber harvesting and forest management remain a critical part of our tribal and local economy.

As recognized by the InterTribal Timber Council (ITC), of which the CCT is an active member, the chronic underfunding of BIA Forestry contributes to the failure to harvest the full annual allowable cut (AAC) of timber. Failure to meet the AAC targets not only negatively impacts tribal economies but also has potentially catastrophic forest health implications. In the Pacific Northwest, the annual snowpack from this past winter is at historically low levels. There is always a risk of wildfire, but an overgrown forest increases the scope of this risk. Funding for BIA Forestry is therefore critical in ensuring that these risks are kept to a minimum and that our tribal forests are managed properly.

A \$25 million funding increase is an essential step toward providing Indian forests with funding equal to that provided other federal forests, improving tribal economies, and sustaining the health and productivity of tribal forests. In addition to this specific request, the CCT also fully supports the funding recommendations put forward by the ITC.

## **II. FUNDING FOR ADDITIONAL TRIBAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS**

As the Subcommittee is aware, large land-based tribes usually lack a sufficient number of tribal police officers. The Colville Tribes is no different. This often results in police response times in excess of four hours. There are occasions when the Colville Tribes has only a single officer on duty for the entire 1.4 million acre reservation.

To make matters worse, the Colville Tribes has seen a rash of gang violence and drug smuggling activity in recent years, including trafficking activity with ties to Mexican cartels. Other Indian tribes have similar or even more harrowing stories. There is a constant need for additional funding for the Criminal Investigations and Police Services account within the BIA's budget, which funds tribal and BIA police officer salaries. Repeated requests by the Colville Tribes to renegotiate its law enforcement 638 contract with the BIA in recent years have been rejected because of the lack of additional base funding, a point that has been raised in congressional hearings.

The much heralded passage in 2013 of the Violence Against Women's Act reauthorization will provide those tribes with sufficient resources the ability to prosecute non-Indians for domestic violence offenses. But for the majority of tribes, this new authority will mean little if there are not enough police officers on the ground in the first place.

The FY 2016 request includes a minimal \$1.6 million increase for the Criminal Investigations and Police Services account. The Colville Tribes requests that the Subcommittee provide a \$20 million increase to help bridge this gap and get more tribal officers on the ground.

## **III. DIRECT IHS TO MORE EQUITABLY STAFF IHS FACILITIES**

Like other direct service tribes, the CCT lacks sufficient staff at its IHS service unit in Nipselem, WA. From the information that we have been able to obtain from IHS, our historical staffing levels were set in the 1930s when our first health clinic was constructed. While funding levels have increased with IHS's base budget in the intervening decades, the initial staffing ratios have

not changed. In other words, we are trying to provide modern health delivery to approximately 5,000 citizens using 1930s staffing levels. Lack of adequate staffing not only means longer wait times for our tribal members, it also means that our IHS service unit is unable to fully process third party reimbursements because of lack of administrative support.

The CCT asks that the Subcommittee include language in its bill or in the accompanying report that directs IHS to implement a system for allocating any increases it might receive to those tribes with low historic staffing levels. In our discussions with IHS, they themselves seemed uncertain about how the historic funding formulas were developed or why they continue to be used.

This concludes my testimony. At this time I would be happy to answer any questions that members of the Subcommittee may have.

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