

Testimony of the Honorable Farley Youckton

Treasurer

Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation

Public Witness Hearing, Native American Witnesses

Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

March 24, 2015

Good afternoon Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and members of the Subcommittee. On behalf of the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation (“Chehalis Tribe” or the “Tribe”), I appreciate the opportunity to provide the Subcommittee with the Chehalis Tribe’s views on funding for Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and other Indian programs in the FY 2016 appropriations cycle.

The Chehalis Tribe recommends that the Subcommittee:

- (1) support the Administration’s proposed \$6 million increase for BIA social services for the Tiwahe Initiative and provide an additional \$10 million increase for BIA social services generally;
- (2) support the Administration’s request for Natural Resources programs but provide an additional \$10 million increase for the Rights Protection program; and
- (3) provide a \$20 million increase for BIA law enforcement to hire and retain more tribal officers in Indian country.

BACKGROUND ON THE CHEHALIS TRIBE

The Chehalis Tribe is a federally-recognized Indian tribe that governs a reservation at the confluence, and within the floodplain, of the Black and Chehalis Rivers in Southwest Washington State. The Chehalis Reservation constitutes approximately 4,200 acres of the Tribe’s aboriginal homelands and was created by Secretarial Order in 1864 for “the use of the Chehalis Indians.” In addition, the Chehalis Tribe has additional non-contiguous Reservation trust land located in Thurston and Grays Harbor Counties. The Tribe has approximately 800 enrolled members, three hundred of whom are under the age of 18.

The Tribe has been a leader in Indian country for innovative economic development. In 2005, the Tribe and Great Wolf Resorts, Inc., a non-Indian publicly-traded corporation and the nation's leading family of indoor water park resorts, developed 39 acres of a 42.99 acre tribal trust land parcel adjacent to Interstate 5 in Grand Mound, Washington, into a Great Wolf Lodge destination conference center, hotel and water park. The Great Wolf Lodge on the Chehalis Reservation opened in April 2008 and is the only Great Wolf Resorts property located on an Indian reservation.

SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMS

The BIA is responsible for providing a wide range of human services programs in Indian country. In addition to social workers, these programs include the General Assistance program, vocational and job training, and the Indian Child Welfare (ICWA) program.

Traditionally, these programs have not received as much attention as other Indian Affairs programs. The Chehalis Tribe believes, however, that they are among the most important because of their impact on our tribal members and communities.

Funding for the BIA Social Services account has never come close to the actual need. The Chehalis Tribe utilizes its own funds to fully support the General Assistance program, elder assistance, and funding for tribal member emergencies. The Tribe funds 60 percent of the budgets of its ICWA and social services programs.

For these reasons, the Tribe is pleased that the Administration has requested a \$6 million increase to BIA Social Services programs as part of its Tiwahe Initiative in 2016. We understand that the intent of this proposed increase is to show how the integration in the delivery of services to children, youth, and families will preserve the family unit. The initiative appears to be targeted toward Indian children, youth, and families exposed to violence, especially in domestic violence and child endangerment situations.

The Chehalis Tribe appreciates that the BIA social services programs are slated for increases in FY 2016 and fully supports the Tiwahe Initiative. The Tribe believes, however, that in addition to the Tiwahe Initiative, additional increases are warranted to the BIA Social Services account that will benefit all tribes. The Tribe therefore requests that the Subcommittee provide an additional \$10 million increase for this account.

The Tribe also supports the Indian Health Service's request for a \$25 million increase for behavioral health program. IHS behavioral health complements the BIA Social Services programs. Both of these programs work together to serve our tribal citizens.

BIA NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAMS

The Chehalis Tribe invests significant tribal funds to acquire land both within and outside our reservation boundaries. The Tribe currently budgets \$5.1 million for land acquisition and carries out other natural resources management activities on that land, including fish and wildlife regulation. For these reasons, BIA funding for natural resources programs are of great interest to the Tribe.

The Tribe supplements BIA natural resource programs for fisheries and salmon habitat restoration by \$508,630—or about 130 percent—when compared to the funding that the BIA provides. These activities directly affect tribal trust resources. The Tribe recommends that the Subcommittee increase the BIA Rights Protection program by an additional \$10 million account to ensure that these trust resources are adequately managed and protected.

In addition to land purchase, the \$5.1 million that the Tribe budgets for land acquisition also covers activities that should be covered by BIA Real Estate Services, another program within the BIA Natural Resources budget. These activities include surveying, environmental assessments, and associated activities necessary to complete land acquisitions and exchanges. The Tribe received just over \$30,000 from the BIA for these activities in FY 2015. BIA funding for these activities has steadily decreased during the past decade, most notably funding for cadastral surveys, which was eliminated entirely in FY 2013 and has only been partially restored since.

The Tribe is pleased that the Administration has proposed a \$16.2 million increase for Real Estate Services to increase staff to address the large workload generated by trust land transactions. Being able to complete transactions involving Indian trust land in a timely manner is a key to attracting off-reservation economic development. For many years Indian tribes have demonstrated that they can do more with less. Having additional resources will allow tribes and BIA regional offices to complete these transactions more quickly. The Tribe encourages the Subcommittee to support the Administration's proposed \$16.2 million increase for Real Estate Services.

BIA LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Tribe provides nearly 70 percent of its total law enforcement budget, with BIA funding comprising less than a third. Like many other tribes nationally, without the Tribe providing additional resources we would be unable to provide adequate police services on our reservation.

Equipment and vehicles are important, but providing additional base funding to the Criminal Investigations and Police Services account to hire and retain more police

officers in Indian country is critical to ensuring safe tribal communities. We urge the Subcommittee to provide a \$20 million increase to this account.

This concludes my testimony. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and would be happy to answer any questions that the Subcommittee may have.