

**Quinault Indian Nation Appropriations Testimony**  
**House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee**  
**March 2016**

Good afternoon Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum and Members of the Subcommittee. I am Fawn Sharp, President of the Quinault Indian Nation (“Quinault”). The Quinault Reservation (“Reservation”) is located on the southwestern corner of the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State and abuts the Pacific Ocean. I represent nearly 3,000 tribal members. Thank you for holding this hearing to examine the critical funding needs of Indian Country. My testimony focuses on the following priorities: (1) our plan to relocate the Quinault community to higher, safer grounds due to impacts related to natural disasters; (2) the need for additional roads to access our village; (3) our request to restore the Blueback salmon in the Upper Quinault River; and (4) the need for funding to support drug interdiction.

**U.S. Responsibility to Meet its Treaty and Trust Obligations to the Quinault People**

The Quinault were a signatory to the Treaty of Olympia, which was signed on July 1, 1855, and on January 25, 1856 (11 Stat. 971). The lands and waters of the Quinault Reservation consist of 207,150 acres of beautiful forest lands, mountains, rivers, a lake, and 25 miles of relatively undisturbed Pacific coastline. There are two major villages and one housing community located within the Reservation. The village of Taholah, which is where the Quinault government operations are headquartered, is located in the southern portion of the Reservation. The village of Queets is situated in the northern portion of the Reservation.

Under the Treaty of Olympia, the Quinault retained our inherent sovereign rights to govern our lands, properties, resources, and our people. This includes access to our usual and accustomed lands and waters, and the right to co-manage the natural resources outside of our Reservation. Sadly, the United States has fallen short of meeting its treaty obligations as appropriations cuts, sequestration, inflation and other factors impede the federal government’s ability to meet its trust responsibility. As a result, Quinault spends \$4.4 million annually to supplement lapses in Federal funding.

**Dire Need to Move the Quinault People to Higher Ground**

Noskiako’s village, or Lower Village, on the Quinault Reservation is located along the banks of the Quinault River at its juncture with the Pacific Ocean. The area is in a tsunami hazard zone. On multiple occasions, the tribe has had to declare a state of emergency due to seawall breaches. Despite the Army Corps of Engineers rebuilding and reinforcing our seawall after the breach in March, 2014, persistent natural disasters related to climate change, including flooding, sea level rise, storm surges, mud slides, tsunamis, earthquakes and ensuing liquefaction continue to threaten the safety of our people. Compounding the issue of public safety is the lack of auxiliary surface roads for emergency access to and from the villages. The villages of Taholah and Queets each have direct access via only one highway (State Route 109 and US 101 respectively).

The Lower Village is no longer a safe place for the Quinault. We are taking steps to relocate our people to higher ground. In 2013, Quinault received a \$700,000 grant from the Administration for Native Americans to develop a comprehensive master plan to move Quinault people from the historic Lower Village, located below sea level, to the Upper Village, which is mostly protected

from flooding at approximately 120 feet above sea level. Our K-12 Tribal School, our child care center, our Head Start program, and our senior housing center are located in the lower village and have less than a 15-minute evacuation window in the event of an earthquake or tsunami. This puts our children and elders at extreme risk. Further, many of our emergency services such as fire, public safety and EMS/ambulances are also located in the lower village. Quinault cannot take on this endeavor alone, and we urge the Subcommittee to address these important safety issues.

### **Funding Request for Relocation Project**

The Quinault relocation project has five components: (1) Land Acquisition; (2) Master Planning for Upper Village Development and Lower Village Reclamation; (3) Infrastructure Development; (4) Engineering and Architectural Planning; and (5) Workforce Development and Construction. Completion of the project is estimated to be 10 to 20 years. We hope to secure funding for the relocation project through a combination of public and private sources.

The first phase of the plan is the acquisition of 246 acres of individual land allotments in the proposed Upper Village, all of which have fractionated undivided interests. The Quinault Indian Nation will work cooperatively with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (“BIA”) to buy the individual allotments to be taken into tribal trust for uses that will benefit the entire community. The Tribe is working to ensure the Cobell Land Buy-Back Program will help in its plan to acquire these properties. We will know by summer 2016 if this process was successful. If the Program is unsuccessful in acquiring 100% interest in these properties, there will be need for additional efforts and funds to acquire the remaining interests. Phases one and two of the project will occur concurrently.

The new village will accommodate approximately 400 building sites for housing and locations for over 200,000 square-feet of community buildings. The new building sites will accommodate the 175 houses from the lower village, 129 families on the Quinault Housing Authority’s waiting list and additional sites for future community growth. There will be approximately 7 miles of new streets, utilities and related infrastructure. The existing domestic water well and associated pipeline would likely be destroyed during a subduction zone earthquake and related tsunami. Therefore, another water source is being sought. The Master Plan calls for the protection of the existing wastewater treatment plant with an armored berm to shield it from the predicted tsunami.

When completed, the relocated village will fulfill Quinault’s goal of promoting the health, safety, and wellbeing of our people. However, the area planned for development is largely without basic infrastructure. Our master planning incorporates pedestrian and bicycle friendly roadways, transit access, water systems, and green utilities. We also plan to build sustainable and affordable housing for our members, incorporating passive solar heating technology. Our plans also include a new emergency operation center and a mixed-use community facility to accommodate early education, daycare, and workforce training programs. This project will create jobs on our Reservation, which has an unemployment rate significantly higher than the surrounding areas. We will provide the job training and certification necessary for Quinault members to obtain employment during the construction phases of the relocation project.

Quinault supports the efforts of Congressman Kilmer to provide direct funding, via preventative measures, to protect and preserve coastal tribal communities through the Tribal Coastal Resiliency Act. While working to relocate, we must not allow our culture and heritage to be destroyed by natural disaster. The Tribal Coastal Resiliency Act will give tribes the needed resources to ensure their heritage areas are protected.

***We applaud the Department of the Interior for including a \$15.1 million increase over 2016 to help tribes prepare and respond to climate change. We urge the Subcommittee to direct the BIA to prioritize spending for tribes on the front lines of climate change, and include report language that mandates funding criteria, drafted in consultation with the tribes, and be flexible enough to address the needs described above.***

### **Funding Request for an Additional Road to Access Quinault's Village of Taholah**

Exit and entry access to the village of Taholah, where Quinault's government offices are located, is limited to a single highway. Access to the village is cut off during natural disasters and weather events such as downed trees, mudslides, and treacherous conditions that make the road impassible. This is a serious concern for our people. When access is cut off, emergency vehicles are unable to reach or leave the villages. The lack of adequate emergency response recently contributed to the death of an elder. Our community remains vulnerable to similar emergency response failures if we do not address this critical concern.

Quinault proposes to link an 8.2-mile service road, known as BIA Road 29 or McBride Road, primarily used for forest management and harvest activities, to a nearby highway. This will create two exit and entry points to our village. We estimate that this project will cost \$3.5 million for road construction and improvement activities once either the lands or the right-of-ways are acquired.

***We urge the Subcommittee to support the \$26.7 million funding request for the BIA Road Maintenance Program to address the transportation safety concerns of tribal communities. We also urge the Subcommittee to include report language giving funding priority to tribes with safety and emergency access concerns.***

### **Request to Support Blueback Salmon and Upper Quinault River Restoration**

The Quinault Indian Nation is leading the effort to restore the Upper Quinault River and the productivity of sockeye salmon known to the Quinault people as "Blueback." Our most important salmon resource is the Blueback, which spawns only in the Upper Quinault River ("River"). The Blueback, as well as other salmon stocks native to the River, have significantly declined over the past 50 years due primarily to habitat loss associated with instability of the river caused by the removal of floodplain forests and other associated factors. In 2008, we developed a river restoration plan to restore the Upper Quinault River. Numerous Federal and Washington State agencies, and coalition groups support our plan.

Quinault has raised and invested approximately \$8.6 million in river and Blueback restoration over the past decade through a combination of state legislative funding appropriations, grant funding, and tribal dollars. To date we have worked to restore 2.5 miles of salmon habitat, helped to sustain 28 jobs, and provided benefits to private landowners, local businesses, and other local

stakeholders. While we have made significant progress, there is still much to be done to achieve full restoration.

***We urge the Subcommittee to provide \$7.8 million over a period of 5 years to support Upper Quinault River and Blueback Salmon restoration efforts. These funds will allow for the restoration of 7.7 miles of river, 860 acres of new floodplain, 140 engineered logjams, 537 acres of new forest and 61 permanent and seasonal jobs.***

### **Need for Funding for Drug Interdiction Efforts**

The Quinault Nation Reservation is remote and includes more than 200,000 acres of forest land and 25 miles of undeveloped coastline. This setting offers many secluded entry points onto the Reservation for organized criminal enterprises that have plagued our community. Highway 101 passes through the Reservation and is a major route for drug trafficking. In 2012, tribal police, working with federal, state and local officials helped an investigation that uncovered black tar heroin and liquid methamphetamine, and led to 17 arrests of persons with ties to drug cartels.

We continue to work with federal and local law enforcement to intercept those engaging in criminal activity on our Reservation. We have a current case of possible smuggling that we are working with the U.S. Customs and Border patrol on at this time. They and the FBI and DEA have limited resources to assist in long-term interdiction and Quinault is in need of more federal assistance in this area. In addition, the Quinault Nation has a 10-man police department that has no criminal jurisdiction over non-tribal offenders. As we continue to build a closer relationship with the local U.S. Attorney's office and the FBI, our ability to fight drug-related crime has improved. We are currently discussing obtaining authority from the U.S. Attorney's office to allow us to issue violation notices to non-tribal people for minor offenses, which will help with the non-tribal population committing offenses on our lands. However, access to Federal grant programs specifically for drug interdiction are difficult to obtain. While Quinault invests \$970,000 in tribal funds annually into law enforcement activities, including drug interdiction, this is not enough to adequately address and prevent this activity.

***We support fully funding criminal investigations and police services in the FY 2017 Subcommittee bill. However we urge the Subcommittee to increase the line item funding within criminal investigations to combat drug trafficking and crime in Indian Country and ask that report language be included to ensure that these funds can be used by all coastal and border Tribes which are among the most susceptible to drug cartels and smugglers.***

### **Conclusion**

The Quinault Indian Nation is taking steps to build a brighter future for our people. We are guided by our traditions and deep desire to control our own destiny. We are doing our part to improve the lives of our people and to create opportunity on the Reservation, but we can't do it alone. We urge the Subcommittee to honor treaty and trust responsibilities to Quinault and to support our requests. Thank you for allowing me to testify to the Subcommittee today.