

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES
FY 2018 BIA, BLM AND IHS BUDGETS**

**Presented by Ted Howard, Chairman
Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of The Duck Valley Reservation
May 17, 2017**

Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member McCollum, and members of the Subcommittee, my name is Ted Howard. I am Chairman of the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation. Thank you for inviting me to testify today concerning the FY 2018 Budget for the BIA, BLM and IHS. The Shoshone-Paiute Tribes are grateful for this Subcommittee's long standing support of Indian tribes and for sharing its understanding of Indian country with your House colleagues.

The Duck Valley Reservation is a large, rural and very remote reservation comprising 450 square miles adjacent to Nevada and Idaho. The Reservation is 140 miles from Boise, Idaho, and 100 miles from Elko, Nevada. Many of our 2,000 Tribal members make their living as farmers and ranchers, though a number of them are employed by the Tribes. We assume most duties of the BIA and IHS under self-governance compacts, although the BIA continues to provide law enforcement and detention services on our Reservation.

In too many instances, however, our success in these areas is largely dependent on Federal appropriations which, in turn, determine whether economic and social conditions on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation improve or worsen. While we contribute tribal resources to these endeavors as best we can, we look to our federal partner for support. If we fall short in available funding, our tribal citizens suffer. Without sustained growth in these federal programs, we cannot meet the needs of our Reservation.

As you have done for Fiscal Year 2017, I ask that you reject the Administration's Budget Blueprint for FY 2018, which calls for unwarranted reductions in non-defense agency appropriations, including a proposed \$12.6 billion cut to the Department of Health and Human Services and a \$1.5 billion cut to the Department of the Interior. If enacted the budget would cause great harm to tribal communities and to Native Americans who, more than most Americans, rely heavily on federal appropriations across multiple federal agencies, not just Interior and DHHS.

We encourage this Subcommittee to build on the increases in the Fiscal Year 2017 appropriation for these essential Tribal programs.

Our priorities for FY 2018 include:

1. Increase BIA Road Maintenance Program funds (Eastern Nevada BIA Roads Program of the Western Regional Office). We respectfully ask for at least a \$10 million increase in the BIA Road Maintenance Program to the Indian Affairs budget so that the BIA Eastern Nevada Agency Roads Department can purchase a road grader, backhoe, a front-end loader, a D7 Caterpillar dozer and a ten-wheel dump truck. The 1980's blade road grader has broken down again and needs replacing. Likewise, the 1980's backhoe is also outdated, and parts are a challenge to find. The employees are embarrassed to haul the backhoe in for repairs when needed because it is so

old and worn (40 years old – like the grader). The dozer is a 1960's model, and the front-end loader and backhoe are from the 1970's. They need a dump truck because they do not have one. A modern ten-wheel dump truck is needed. Our Region has the largest percentage of BIA-owned roads at 21%. The requested increase we request will help our Region tremendously.

The BIA Eastern Nevada Agency covers the roads maintenance need for the 600 miles of public roads on the Duck Valley Reservation and the road maintenance needs on five other reservations which are hundreds of mile apart throughout northeastern Nevada. The approximately \$70,000 received annually to maintain all of these roads is woefully inadequate. Increased Road Maintenance funding will improve road safety.

2. Increase funding for the BIA Public Safety and Special Initiatives Program. The BIA struggles to provide adequate law enforcement on our Reservation. For that reason, we applaud the final FY 2017 enacted appropriations levels for Public Safety and Justice totaling \$385.735 million, and urge the Committee to continue support modest increases for the next year. We are one of three tribes in a pilot program funded under the BIA's "Law Enforcement Special Initiatives" program. Under this program, we receive \$250,000 in additional recurring funding to reduce recidivism on the Duck Valley Reservation. The Special Initiatives program is essentially funded at the same level for FY 2017 as it was for FY 2016.

We request an increase of funding to the Special Initiatives Program to assist the Tribes with the cost of placing and providing utilities to a number of buildings that the Tribes received from FEMA that will be used to support the Tribes' recidivism pilot program. The buildings will be used for education, support of family members visiting and supporting incarcerated youth, year-round equine activities (which are integral to Native American culture) and emergency medical services, all of which are important components of the Tribes' recidivism pilot program. The cost for the facilities infrastructure work is approximately \$2.5 million.

We further urge the Subcommittee to include statutory language to make clear that "Law Enforcement Special Initiatives" funds may be used for the purchase or lease of temporary trailers or modular units to house personnel associated with law enforcement, corrections, probation, tribal courts and other professionals serving Tribal offenders. For rural communities like Duck Valley, housing is often the linchpin to program success. This request will give us the flexibility we need to use Special Initiatives funding for housing law enforcement personnel.

3. Fund the Owyhee Initiative within the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Owyhee Initiative is a joint effort by ranchers, recreationalists, county and State officials, and the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes to protect what the Tribes know as sacred lands, and to manage and appropriately use public lands in the tri-state area of Nevada, Oregon and Idaho. In 2009, Congress passed the Omnibus Public Land Management Act, Pub. L. 111-1. Since 2010, we have worked jointly with BLM to protect cultural resources and increase public understanding and appreciation of these resources as a part of the Cultural Resources Protection Plan authorized in the legislation referred to as the Owyhee Initiative. Increased recreational use and encroachment by visitors within the Owyhee River Wilderness Area and other federal lands, however, threaten important cultural resources. The BLM's Boise District manages 3 million acres of land in this rough remote area and they have 3-4 Rangers in their entire district. Let us help understaffed BLM officials.

One-time BLM funding a number of years ago allowed us to purchase two Cessna planes and ATV equipment and hire one Chief Ranger to patrol public lands and report violations of cultural and religious sites to BLM officials. I also fly patrols. We work closely with BLM and Owyhee County officials to coordinate compatible recreation use within BLM lands in Owyhee County, especially within the wilderness areas where we seek to protect cultural resource sites important to our Tribes. The Ranger and I also spot and report wildfires to BLM officials before the fires can do great damage to sensitive, remote public lands.

We seek *recurring* BLM funds to continue this important work to protect cultural sites and establish a Reserve Ranger Program to engage tribal youth in cultural and related activities during the summer. The Chief Ranger is near retirement, and since I was elected Chairman, I have less time to fly patrols. It is essential that we hire and train replacement staff, including a pilot, to continue this important work. We need funds to hire an Assistant Director, one adult Tribal Ranger and two part-time Youth Rangers, train a qualified applicant as an additional pilot, purchase two more ATVs and two camp trailers to permit tribal personnel to remain in the field and overhaul the two Cessna planes per FAA regulations. We hope to construct a hanger at the Owyhee Airport to centralize our operation and increase surveillance flights. We contribute nearly 50% of the required budget but cannot sustain this important program without federal support. Our plan requires \$600,000 to fully fund the above activities.

We also support the additional funding for BLM Cultural Resources Management and other BLM accounts used to manage and protect archaeological and historic properties on public lands. BLM lands contain the remnants of campsites, villages, hunting blinds and rock inscriptions that tell the story of the Shoshone-Paiute and other tribes. After speaking with Shoshone-Bannock Tribal officials, together with northern tier Nevada tribes (including the Te-Moak, Battle Mountain, South Fork and Goshute tribes), we seek BLM funds to form a tribal work group to spread best practices for cultural resources management and protection that we have learned over the last 20 years. We would be a good candidate for a BLM grant. It would be a wise investment to fund a multi-tribal task force to propose and design strategies for on the ground protection of Native American cultural resources for the Upper Great Basin and High Plateau of the tri-state area of Nevada, Oregon and Idaho.

4. Telecommunications (fiber optics). The Tribes continue to need fiber infrastructure over five miles for connectivity among Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Tribal Headquarters, Detention Center, Fire Station and the Owyhee Community Health Facility. The health center serves as the Wide Area Network (WAN) hub for the Tribes' and health center's computer network. Connectivity among these facilities and programs would alleviate the long-term monthly recurring cost we pay to an Ethernet Circuit provider (\$96,000 annually). We require \$500,000 in federal funding to construct new fiber networks and cover construction inspection fees. We urge the Subcommittee to increase appropriations within the BIA and IHS budgets so that Duck Valley can improve our telecommunications networks. Education IT is not the only program in need of an upgrade.

5. East Fork Owyhee Salmon Steelhead Recovery and Reintroduction Project. We return Chinook salmon and steelhead trout to Duck Valley through an innovative "trap-and-haul" program. Dam construction along the Columbia and Snake Rivers eliminated salmon from our Reservation for 87 years. Duck Valley is unique in that it supports two major tributaries to the Snake River. In 2014, we financed a pilot study that found that habitat in the East Fork of the Owyhee River supports a summer rearing capacity of between 3,300 and 43,000 juvenile steelhead trout and from 3,600 to 41,000 Chinook salmon. In 2015 and 2016 we returned nearly

200 Chinook salmon each summer to Duck Valley and spear fished nearly all of them. It is a joyous event to have salmon return to the Reservation. With \$210,000 in funding for the next three years we can complete our habitat surveys of the East Fork Owyhee River, including obtaining data on non-summer river conditions, as well as an assessment of the Bruneau River habitat.

We propose to transport adult fish from Lower Granite Dam or Hells Canyon Dam and release the fish above China Dam into the East Fort Owyhee River to spawn. Emigrating juvenile fish would later be captured and released downstream from passage carriers on the Snake River to complete their migration to the Pacific Ocean. Adult salmon originating from the East Fork Owyhee River would later be captured in the lower Snake River and transported upstream.

In FY 2017, Congress appropriated \$200.9 million for the BIA's Trust-Natural Resources Management programs, a \$9.1 million increase from FY 2016. We urge the Subcommittee to support an increase in FY 2018 to the BIA's Trust-Natural Resources Management program budget, including the Tribal Management/Development Program and Fish, Wildlife & Parks program. Tribes contract a significant part of the Natural Resources Management funds. An increase to the BIA's budget can help us with this innovative project to return salmon and steelhead trout to the Duck Valley Reservation.

6. Native Plant Program/Greenhouse. In cooperation with BLM, the Tribes gather, propagate and make available seed and other native plant materials that are indigenous to the region. Through a series of assistance agreements with BLM, we built three greenhouses and are growing seedlings (including sagebrush and bitterbrush seedlings) for planting on adjacent public lands. This program assists BLM and other agencies in their efforts to restore lands damaged by wildfires and helps employ tribal members. The Tribes plan to have 80,000 containerized grasses and shrub seedlings available for sale, together with willow and other riparian plant cuttings and local vegetables for sale and distribution through our "Honor Our Elders" program. The Tribes have already sold plants to a mining company and gifted plants to BLM for reclamation work. We seek Interior Department appropriations of \$450,000 in FY 2018 to build additional greenhouses and a facility to house equipment to dry, clean and store seed and to hire part-time greenhouse staff for marketing and finances. The Tribes request \$200,000 in each of FY2019 and FY2020 for staff and operations to expand our program and be a reliable supplier of native plants and seedlings on BLM-managed public lands.

7. IHS. The Tribe appreciates the \$232 million increase Congress provided for FY 2017 for the Indian Health Service (IHS), and we request an increase in, especially in the area of clinical services, including Purchased/Referred Care, Contract Support Costs (CSC) and facilities construction.

The Tribes continue to support full funding of CSC for IHS and BIA, and thank this Subcommittee for its work to date to fully fund contract support costs without jeopardizing program funding. We respectfully urge the Subcommittee to continue with its current approach of employing a separate and indefinite appropriation.

We urge the Committee to build on the FY 2017 budget to meet tribal health and safety needs that strengthen our community. Thank you for affording me the opportunity to testify today.