

**Testimony of Tom Wooten, Chairman, Samish Indian Nation
Before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1225, the Samish Indian Nation Homelands Act of 2013**

JULY 23, 2013

Introduction

Good morning, Chairman Young, Ranking Member Hanabusa, and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Tom Wooten, Chairman of the Samish Indian Nation (“Tribe”), a federally recognized Indian tribe based in Anacortes, Washington, in the San Juan Islands. The Tribe is comprised of 1,500 citizens. Thank you for this opportunity to testify today on H.R. 1225, the Samish Indian Nation Homelands Act of 2013. H.R. 1225 would provide our Tribe with a minimum land base after decades of struggle, so that our government can begin to provide basic services to our citizens, address tribal government administrative needs, and give our citizens more opportunities to participate in the traditions of the Samish people.

I would like to take a moment to thank Congressman Rick Larsen for introducing H.R. 1225. Our quest to obtain a land base for our people has been an extremely long and difficult road, and we greatly appreciate his steadfast commitment to assist the Samish Nation in rebuilding our community. In the past, Congressman Larsen had introduced H.R. 6405 in the 110th Congress and H.R. 2040 in the 111th Congress. These bills would have designated a discrete geographical boundary in the San Juan Islands in which the Tribe would have been able to submit land into trust applications to the Department of the Interior (DOI), utilizing DOI’s on-reservation trust acquisition regulations instead of the very burdensome off-reservation trust application regulations given that none of our lands are adjacent to each other due to our unfortunate historical circumstances, the expensive real estate market in the San Juan Islands, and other factors. However, due to stated DOI opposition to H.R. 2040 in the 111th Congress, Rep. Larsen introduced HR. 5992 in the 112th Congress that would have directed the Secretary of the Interior to take the same parcels contained in H.R. 1225 into trust for the benefit of the Tribe. Because Congress did not enact H.R. 5992 in the 112th Congress, Rep. Larsen at the Tribe’s request re-introduced this bill.

I also would like to thank Mayor Dean Maxwell, the City Council of Anacortes, Washington, the Skagit County Board of Commissioners, and Washington State Representative Jeff Morris for their support of H.R. 1225 as well as the San Juan County Council for working with us and letting us know it has no objections to H.R. 1225. We also appreciate the efforts of our local city, surrounding counties, and state Representatives to work with us as well in the 112th Congress on H.R. 5992 and during other previous times, including the 110th and 111th Congresses. We value our friendships with them.

History of the Samish Indian Nation

The Samish Indian Nation is and always has been an island people. Our Tribe has inhabited the San Juan Islands since pre-European contact. The Samish people in pre-contact times moved from island to island depending on the season and the available harvest with permanent winter

village longhouses. The first recorded instance of European contact in the Northwest occurred in 1792 between Samish inhabitants of Guemes Island and a Spanish sloop, which is memorialized in a painting made by a member of the crew. This painting hangs in the Spanish Naval Museum in Madrid.

The Samish Tribe is a Coast Salish tribe of Indians. Our aboriginal territory stretches over a seven-county region of northwest Washington, which ranges from the Cascades to the western shores of the San Juan Islands. The Samish were a separate tribe of Indians who shared linguistic similarities with some surrounding tribes. Our people harvested marine resources throughout the central San Juan archipelago and hunted game and used plant resources in the islands and surrounding coastal territory. Extensive Samish village and cultural sites are located on Fidalgo, Samish, Guemes, Cypress, and Lopez Islands, near Bay View and Sedro-Woolley on the mainland, and other locations.

We are comprised of the Nu-wha-ha branch of the Samish Tribe. (sometimes called the “Stick-Samish”). Historically, several Samish and Nu-wha-ha villages were located on Fidalgo Island. While active village settlements no longer existed there by 1855 because of attrition from disease and attacks from northern tribes, the Tribe continued to use the area for gathering plants for food and medicine. The Samish did not move as a tribe to any of the reservations established in the 1850’s because of a desire to stay at our traditional sites and because there was not sufficient land available on the designated reservations. After being driven from our villages on Fidalgo Island due to encroachment by settlers and dishonorable dealings of federal officials, Samish villages were located during the latter part of the 1800’s on Samish and Guemes Islands. A 400-foot longhouse on Guemes Island, on land obtained as homesteads by two Samish citizens under the 1874 Indian Homestead Act, became a center for maintenance of traditional Samish culture over the next twenty plus years. However, this homestead land was eventually lost due to claimed arrears in tax payments; and, while many Samish remained on Guemes Island, village activity slowly diminished at that location in the early 1900s.

The Samish Indian Nation then established a settlement next to the Ship Harbor cannery on Fidalgo Island. Maps of the time identify a “Samish village.” This settlement continued in existence until the cannery closed during the Great Depression. While, at that point, a few individual Samish moved to existing nearby reservations, the core of the Tribe and most tribal citizens remained in the Fidalgo Bay area. Our tribal government continued to operate and handle governmental affairs, including the drafting of a new tribal constitution and revision of tribal enrollment records.

Our Tribe never had a land base during this period, but Bureau of Indian Affairs’ (BIA) records consistently identified the Samish as a tribe during this period from the 1920s up to and beyond the 1940s. In a 1934 Court of Claims case, the Samish were held to be a still existing separate tribe of Indians that had lost its lands without compensation, but the court awarded no damages. In 1951, Samish filed a new land claim action before the Indian Claims Commission (ICC) against the U.S., based upon the inadequate compensation the Tribe received to that date for land that was illegally taken. In March 1958, the ICC made a number of significant findings in favor of the Tribe. The ICC, among other things, found that, “The Samish held Samish Island, Guemes Island, eastern Lopez Island, Cypress Island, and Fidalgo Island.” The ICC awarded monetary

compensation to Samish for the loss of its lands. After set-off for discretionary “benefits” allegedly provided to the Tribe by the U.S., the Tribe received an award of \$5,754.96 for the taking of our traditional lands.

Today the Tribe’s headquarters remain in our ancestral area of Fidalgo Island in Anacortes, Washington. Tribal lands owned in fee are all located in the Tribe’s historical and aboriginal territory. The Indian Health Service designated the following 10 Washington counties as Samish’s service delivery area upon its re-recognition: Skagit, San Juan, Whatcom, Island, Snohomish, King, Pierce, Kitsap, Jefferson, and Clallam. The BIA, after an 8-year struggle upon re-recognition, finally designated the following 5 Washington counties as Samish’s service delivery area in 2004: Skagit, San Juan, Whatcom, Snohomish, and Island. These counties are all located in our historical and aboriginal territory.

The tribal government owns a number of parcels in fee in Skagit County and one in San Juan County. Only one 78-acre parcel of land located in Skagit County is currently held in trust for the Tribe. Its use is restricted and it has physical limitations. That property took more than eight years of extensive legal proceedings to have it placed into trust for the benefit of the Tribe.

Arbitrary BIA Action Removed Samish Indian Nation from List

Throughout the period described above, the Tribe continued to exist as an Indian tribe recognized by the U.S. although as a landless tribe. Federal records, including BIA records, demonstrate a continuous course of dealing between the U.S. and the Tribe. However, our Tribe suffered a significant setback in the 1960s when the BIA started its first organized effort to list all the tribes the U.S. recognized and had dealings with. The Samish was included on the first such list drafted by the BIA in 1966. When the list was revised in 1969, a BIA clerk inadvertently dropped the Tribe from the list. The clerk testified to this fact in 1994 during the Tribe’s federal acknowledgment trial. Because of this clerical error, the BIA started treating the Tribe as unrecognized even though no determination had ever been made by Congress or the Administration that the Tribe’s recognition had been terminated. BIA began denying services to the Tribe and our citizens because it was no longer on its 1969 list or its lists created thereafter, forcing us to litigate our status as a federally recognized tribe.

After a 27-year struggle through a lengthy administrative process and costly and contentious litigation to correct this mistake where the Department of the Interior opposed our re-recognition during the litigation, the Tribe gained reinstatement to status as a federally recognized tribe in May of 1996. Additional federal court litigation confirmed the Tribe’s re-recognition in November 1996. The federal court found that “The Department of Interior could not adequately explain why the Samish had been omitted from a list of federally recognized tribes prepared during the 1970s.” Another federal circuit court decision found the BIA’s conduct in dropping the Samish Tribe from the list of federally recognized tribes “arbitrary” and “wrongful”. It concluded that the Tribe “should have been federally recognized between 1969 and 1996.”

Purpose of and Need for H.R. 1225

17 years after correcting the BIA's clerical error and 44 years after first being improperly dropped from DOI's list of federally recognized tribes, our Tribe continues to struggle to undo the adverse impacts of BIA's actions. In addition to denying the Tribe trust and tribal resources, the Tribe has been denied the opportunity to restore our homeland. H.R. 1225 would help begin to right this wrong by restoring a small land base for our community.

Upon re-recognition, our tribal government sought to restore our lands through the BIA's administrative land into trust process. However, the BIA's land into trust process is broken; and, the Tribe in the past has encountered staunch obstacles from entrenched DOI bureaucrats who had opposed Samish in its re-recognition litigation, including one of these officials being held in contempt of court, and our ensuing efforts to take land into trust. Despite the Tribe's significant efforts, it took the BIA nearly 8 years to approve one of the Tribe's trust applications. The BIA did so literally the day before Samish and the BIA were scheduled to testify before this Committee about our land needs and lack of movement on the part of the BIA in June 2009. To date, that 78-acre parcel is the only land that is held in trust for the Tribe. Its use is restricted and it does not come close to meeting the growing needs of our 1500-member community.

Self-determination cannot happen without a land base. The Tribe's goal is to obtain land that is significant and culturally relevant to the Tribe. In addition, like every tribal government, we hope to establish a land base that helps us address the unmet housing, health care, education, cultural preservation, economic development and other needs of our government and our people.

H.R. 1225 would help begin to address our land needs. It would direct the Secretary of the Interior to place 17 parcels of approximately 97 acres of land in San Juan and Skagit Counties into trust for the benefit of the Tribe. All of the parcels are located in Skagit County except for the Mud Bay Flats Parcel located in San Juan County. Skagit and San Juan Counties are part of the Tribe's designated BIA and HIS service delivery areas. Further, all of the parcels are located within a 15-mile radius of our Tribal Administration building in Anacortes on Fidalgo Island. The Tribe currently owns all of these lands in fee simple. H.R. 1225 would ensure that these parcels would be placed into trust by DOI for the Tribe. This is critical for the Tribe for many reasons. For example, in addition to BIA funding often being tied to trust status, other agencies, including EPA, HHS, the Department of Education, USDA, National Endowment for the Humanities, etc., often tie funding and grants to tribes to trust status as well, such as funding for cultural preservation, habitat restoration, and natural resources protection.

Further, H.R. 1225 would help ensure that these parcels will stay in the hands of the Tribe. Due to the U.S.'s misguided federal policies in the past to assimilate and/or terminate Indians depending on the era, it sought to dismantle tribal lands where title was held by the U.S. for the benefit of Indian tribes by forcing individual ownership or private ownership. By converting tribal trust lands to fee simple status, over time, many tribes lost their lands for various reasons, including their titles getting taken for petty or fraudulent reasons. Enactment of H.R. 1225

would ensure that the Samish people would enjoy and own this land in perpetuity barring future federal/congressional action. The Samish people deserve adequate trust lands like other tribes.

The bill includes an express gaming prohibition, similar to language included in recent federal tribal land to trust bills that have been enacted by Congress.

The City of Anacortes and the Skagit County Board of Commissioners have written letters supporting H.R. 1225. Our Washington State Representative Jeff Morris also wrote a letter supporting H.R. 1225. The San Juan County Council recently wrote a letter stating that it has no objections to H.R. 1225.

The Tribe intends to continue the current uses of the lands, which are to provide essential governmental services and cultural activities to address the needs of our citizens. Below is a short description of the parcels that are the subject of H.R. 1225 and an explanation of the current and proposed land uses:

- **Administrative complex** (4 parcels, 1.02 acres) – natural resources, archives, accounting, IT & records, and government administration;
- **Longhouse** (2 parcels, 0.516 acres) – preschool activities and elder care activities/meals;
- **Thomas Creek** (3 parcels, 45.7 acres) – natural resources conservation, salmon habitat enhancement, and agriculture;
- **Campbell Lake** (7 parcels, 45.86 acres) – agriculture, community housing, non-gaming economic development; and
- **Mud Bay Flats** (1 parcel, 3.57 acres) – natural resources and marine agriculture projects.

The Tribe has significant historical and ancestral ties to all of these lands and many others in the surrounding area. These parcels have been identified as areas of Samish occupancy and subsistence use, as documented by renowned ethno-historians and anthropologists. In recognition of the Tribe's occupancy and use of these lands and islands, state and federal agencies frequently consult with the Tribe about archeological and cultural resource management issues in the area pursuant to applicable state and federal laws requiring consultation with the tribal governments on issues that arise on these lands and within the Tribe's historical and aboriginal territory.

Fidalgo Island is the location of our Longhouse, Administration Complex, and Campbell Lake Parcels (total of 13 parcels) that H.R. 1225 would direct that the Secretary of the Interior take into trust for the benefit of the Tribe. Fidalgo Island has many documented Samish village sites. The Tribe conducts and continues to perform archaeology and scientific research on and around Fidalgo Island.

Eastern Lopez Island is the location of the Mud Bay Flats Parcel that H.R. 1225 would direct that the Secretary of the Interior take into trust for the benefit of the Tribe. There are documented Samish connections to this island, including the 1958 ICC's finding that Samish historically held eastern Lopez Island. This parcel is not conducive to growing oysters or any other shellfish because the sea floor is very muddy and full of eelgrass that cannot be disturbed. However, this island is culturally significant to us.

In response to questions about harvest potential on the Mud Bay Flats Parcel specifically and to allay concerns of other tribes that this bill would somehow impact their treaty rights, the Tribe agreed to include the following provision in the bill, “Sec. 4. Hunting, Fishing, Trapping, and Gathering. This Act shall not grant, restore, or diminish any hunting, fishing, trapping or gathering treaty right of any tribe.”

Skagit County is the location of the Thomas Creek Parcels (total of 3 parcels) that H.R. 1225 would direct that the Secretary of the Interior take into trust for the benefit of the Tribe. The Thomas Creek Parcels are located in an area of traditional Samish/Nu-wha-ha occupancy, and Samish families have long-standing ties to the area. The Samish Indian Nation inherited the Thomas Creek Parcels from Ms. Josephine Miller in 2004. A covenant in her will provides that our Tribe cannot transfer title to the land, because she meant for the Tribe to place the land into trust. Ms. Miller intended the Samish to have this land forever. As noted above, the Thomas Creek Parcels will continue to be used solely for agricultural and natural resources conservation purposes. Placing the Thomas Creek Parcels into trust status will permit the Tribe to enhance current agricultural and resource conservation efforts by gaining access to federal programs and services available to trust lands.

The Samish Department of Natural Resources has managed several successful projects on the Thomas Creek Parcels over the past 9 years. Current uses and partnerships include the following:

- The Samish Community Garden is located on the Parcels. It is an all-volunteer effort with some support from the tribal government for supplies and materials. The garden supplements food resources for the Samish Elders nutrition and the pre-school programs. Tribal citizens gather to prepare, plant, and harvest the produce.
See <http://www.facebook.com/samishcommunity.garden>
- USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) through Skagit Conservation District Wetland restoration project – took four acres out of agricultural use for stream restoration and habitat enhancement – this was a demonstration model of wetland restoration and agricultural coexistence.
- Water quality monitoring as a part of the Clean Samish Initiative to protect the Samish River watershed from impurities and prevent toxins from contaminating shellfish beds in Samish Bay.
- Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group – small native plant nursery for restoration projects.
- Samish Watershed Knotweed grant – eradication of invasive species – over 60 acres of Samish watershed have been treated by herbicides and local area landowners were encouraged to partner on private property.
- Partner of the Year Award 2012 from Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group. Highlights are posted on a 15 minute video on the Samish DNR Facebook site:
<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=388908344501745&set=vb.100001477497185&type=2&theater>

We understand that some concerns have been raised with placing the Thomas Creek Parcels into trust for the benefit of the Tribe. As you can see, these Parcels have great cultural, historical, and community significance to us. Conversion of these Parcels from fee to trust status will have no

impacts whatsoever on treaty rights as claimed by some. As stated above, Section 4 of H.R. 1225 clarifies that this Act would not grant, restore, or diminish the treaty rights of other tribes. Further, we own these lands currently and have no intention of changing existing uses but seek to enhance the existing agricultural, community, and natural resources preservation uses. Again, H.R. 1225 contains a gaming prohibition on these Parcels and the other parcels contained in the bill. Moreover, as described above, the Tribe has significant historical and current connections to the area. For example, Skagit County, where the Thomas Creek Parcels are located, is listed by the BIA and IHS as part of the Tribe's service delivery area for our tribal members. Lastly, this same bill was introduced in the 112th Congress, so it should not be a surprise that the Tribe has been working on its enactment. In fact, the Tribe has made every effort to meet with surrounding tribes over the past 8 years to discuss our need for a land base and has made changes to past bills in the 110th, 111th, and 112th Congresses to the extent possible to accommodate legitimate concerns.

Conclusion

It has been a long struggle to bring our tribal government and community to the point we are at today. I ask the Members of the Subcommittee to help the Samish Indian Nation take the next crucial steps toward truly rebuilding our community by enacting H.R. 1225 into law. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am prepared to answer any questions that you may have.

Supporting Materials in Separate Attachment (9 pages)

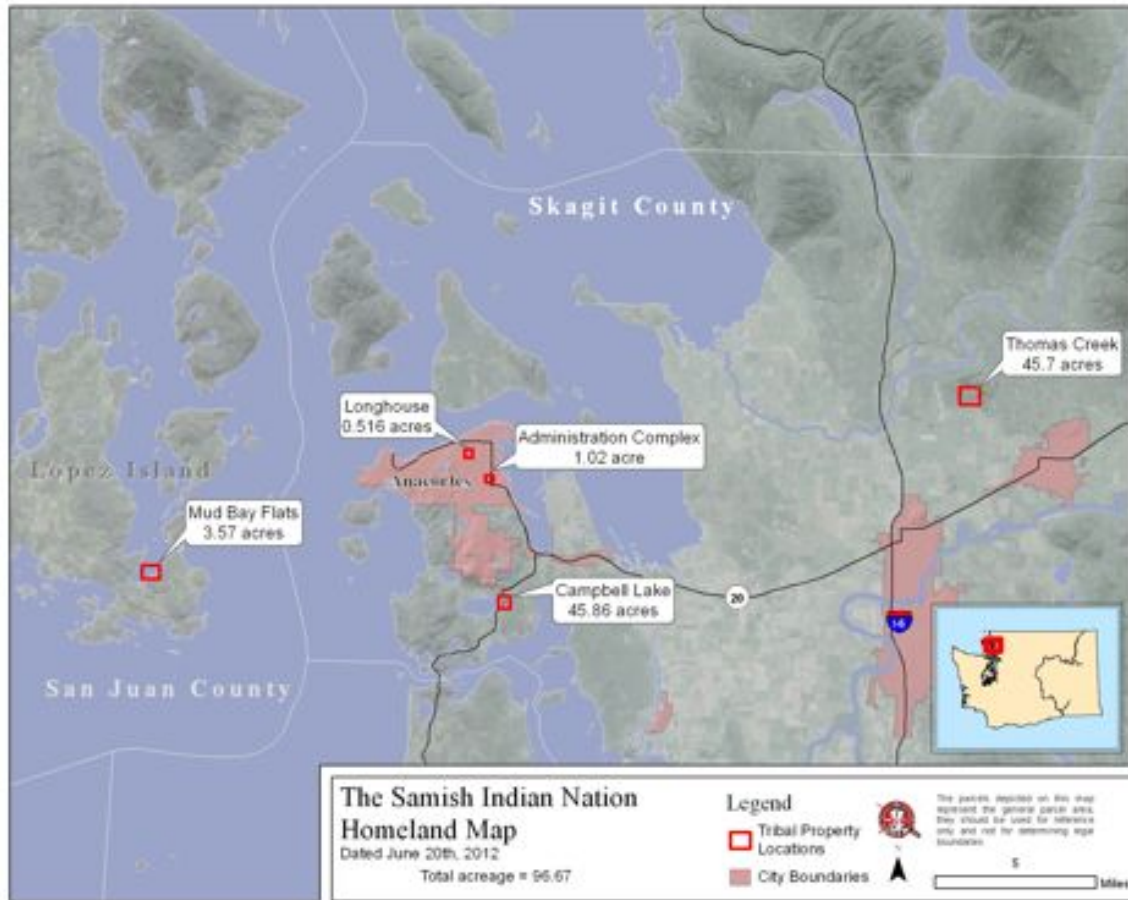
SUPPORTING MATERIALS

**to the Testimony of Tom Wooten, Chairman, Samish Indian Nation
Before the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1225, the Samish Indian Nation Homelands Act of 2013**

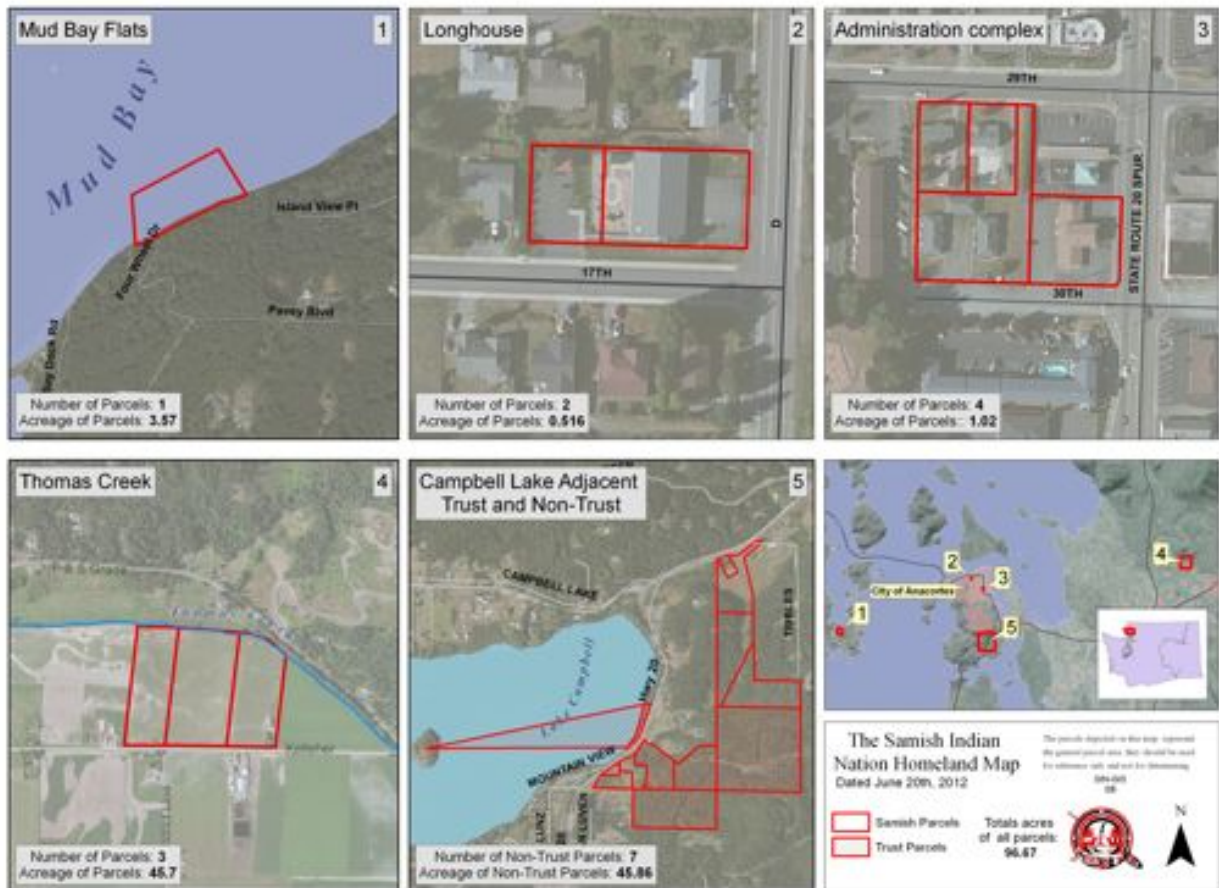
JULY 23, 2013

- 1. Samish Indian Nation Regional Map of Parcels Related to H.R. 1225**
- 2. Samish Indian Nation Map of Individual Parcels Related to H.R. 1225**
- 3. Samish Map of Thomas Creek Property**
- 4. Letter of Support for H.R. 1225 from the City of Anacortes, Washington**
- 5. Letter of Support for H.R. 1225 from the Skagit County Board of Commissioners**
- 6. Letter from the San Juan County Council re: H.R. 1225**
- 7. Letter of Support for H.R. 1225 from WA State Rep. Jeff Morris**
- 8. Collage of Samish Photos: Then and Now**

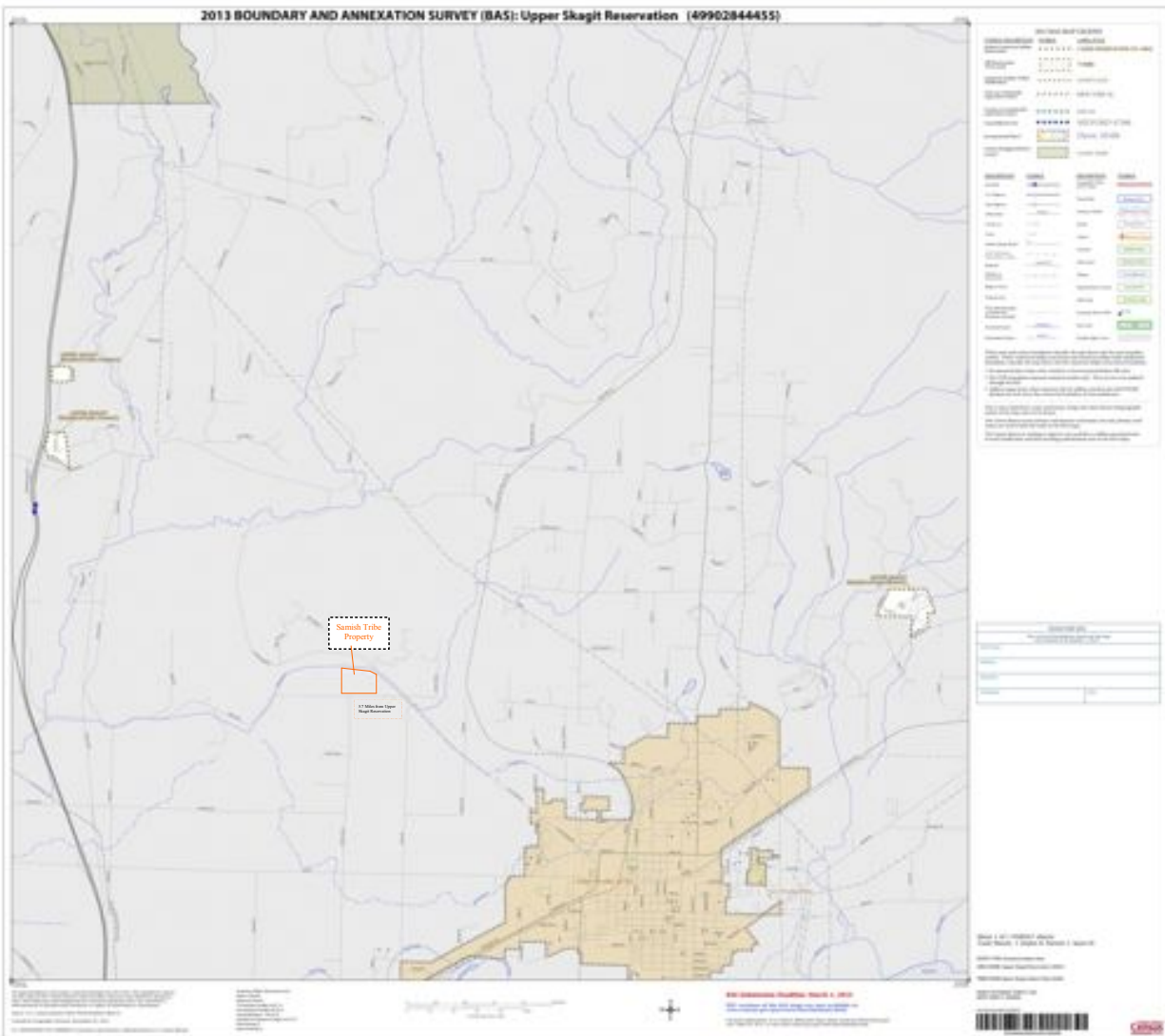
Samish Indian Nation Regional Map of Parcels Related to H.R. 1225



Samish Indian Nation Map of Individual Parcels Related to H.R. 1225



Samish Map of Thomas Creek Property



Letter of Support for H.R. 1225 from the City of Anacortes, Washington



ANACORTES EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

P.O. BOX 547, ANACORTES, WA 98221-0547 PH (360) 299-1950
DEAN MAXWELL, MAYOR FAX (360) 293-1938
E-MAIL: dean@cityofanacortes.org

July 1, 2013

Congressman Rick Larsen
2113 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Subject: Samish Indian Nation – Skagit County

Dear Congressman Larsen:

The City of Anacortes and the Samish Indian Nation have a long-standing history of partnering together on issues affecting both governing bodies through a signed memorandum of agreement. It is with this same partnership that I submit this letter on behalf of the City of Anacortes in support of the Samish Indian Nation converting five parcels of land to non-gaming trust status.

These parcels are included in the "Samish Indian Nation Homelands Act of 2013" that you introduced to Congress. The City is supportive of this bill, H.R. 1225. The Samish Tribe has worked closely with City elected officials to seek consensus on their legislation and we support its progress through the federal legislative process. This legislation would allow the Tribe to acquire acreage into trust for housing, governmental support and services, as well as an economic benefit for the Tribe.

Once again, the City of Anacortes supports the proposed legislation from the Samish Indian Nation to convert five parcels of land to non-gaming trust status. Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Respectfully,

CITY OF ANACORTES

H. Dean Maxwell
Mayor

Cc: Chairman Wooten, Samish Indian Nation
Erica Pickett, Mayor Pro-tem
Brad Adams, Councilmember
Brian Geer, Councilmember
Eric Johnson, Councilmember
Bill Turner, Councilmember
Cynthia Richardson, Councilmember
Ryan Walters, Councilmember

Letter of Support for H.R. 1225 from Skagit County Board of Commissioners



SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

RON WESEN, First District
KENNETH A. DAHLSTEDT, Second District
SHARON D. DILLON, Third District

July 15, 2013

Congressman Rick Larsen
108 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Larsen:

The Skagit County Commissioners would like to thank you for your hard work and support that you have provided to the communities and governments of the Skagit Valley, including Skagit County and the Samish Indian Nation.

Skagit County and the Samish Indian Nation have formed a close and cooperative working relationship since the Samish Tribe was restored to federal recognition in 1996. The Samish Tribe is still surmounting a long uphill battle to regain the same status as other federally recognized Indian tribes, including a homeland for the Tribe and tribal services. The Samish Indian Nation lacks a sufficient land base for housing, cultural preservation, economic development, and other needs important to a Federally-recognized Indian Tribe.

Allowing the Tribe to acquire modest acreage in trust for housing, governmental support and services and economic development will greatly benefit the Samish Indian Nation, and, we believe, have only a minimal overall impact on county and local revenues.

The County and Tribe are currently working on inter-governmental agreements intended to completely eliminate any fiscal impact to the citizens of the County. In addition, we believe that allowing the Tribe to acquire and use these lands will, in the long run, greatly benefit the City of Anacortes and Skagit County as more activity, taxes and spending are generated on these lands. We support the request of the Samish to place 107 acres of land currently owned by the Tribe in fee simple into Trust status. This land is for essential governmental purposes, is government property today, and the bill explicitly bans gambling on the parcels acquired in trust under this legislation.

These parcels are now included in the "Samish Indian Nations Homelands Act of 2013" which is being introduced in Congress. On behalf of Skagit County, we are pleased to express the County's support for the bill. We would be happy to respond to any questions or concerns you may have with regard to the bill's connection to, or impact on, the County. The Samish Tribe has worked closely with all local officials to seek consensus on their legislation, and it is our hope you can see it through this year.

The Samish Tribe has built trust in the community by working cooperatively with the County on important environmental and habitat initiatives, and Skagit County is proud to support the Samish Indian Nation on this important federal legislation.

Respectfully,

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Sharon D. Dillon, Chair

Ron Wesen, Commissioner

Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Commissioner

Letter from San Juan County Council regarding H.R. 1225



San Juan County Council

350 Court Street No. 1
Friday Harbor, WA
98250
(360) 378 - 2898

District 1, Bob Jarman
District 2, Rick Hughes
District 3, Jamie Stephens

July 16, 2013

The Honorable Rick Larsen
2930 Wetmore Avenue, Suite 9F
Everett, WA 98201

Re: Samish Indian Nation Homelands Act of 2013

Dear Congressman Larsen,

Last year, the San Juan County Council heard and had an opportunity to ask questions regarding a presentation by the Samish Nation on the transfer of fee simple lands owned by the Tribe into Trust status. We reaffirm that we do not oppose the request of the Samish to place 3.57 acres of oyster lands located in San Juan County currently owned by the Tribe into Trust status. This parcel is now included in the Samish Indian Nations Homelands Act of 2013 before Congress.

If after further review of the Samish Tribe's proposal and determination that impacts to the local community will be minimal, San Juan County will not oppose this legislation.

Sincerely,

**COUNTY COUNCIL
SAN JUAN COUNTY, WASHINGTON**


Jamie Stephens, Chair
District No. 3


Rick Hughes, Vice Chair
District No. 2


Bob Jarman, Member
District No. 1

c: Leslie Eastwood, General Manager Samish Indian Nation

Letter of Support for H.R. 1225 from State Rep. Jeff Morris

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
40th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
JEFF MORRIS

State of
Washington
House of
Representatives



TECHNOLOGY & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
CHAIR
TRANSPORTATION
ENVIRONMENT

June 24, 2013

Congressman Rick Larsen
108 Cannon House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Congressman Larsen,

First of all, I want to commend you on all of the hard work and support your office have provided in the communities of the Skagit Valley and especially the Samish Nation.

The Samish Indian Nation lacks the sufficient land base for housing, cultural preservation, economic development and other needs for a federally-recognized Indian Tribe. I support the request of the Samish to place 5 parcels of land currently owned by the tribe in fee simple trust status. This land is for essential government purposes, is government property today, and the bill is explicit in not allowing gambling on these parcels.

These parcels are included in the Samish Indian Nations Homelands Act of 2013 now reintroduced before Congress. I am delighted to express to you my support of the bill and my offer to assist locally if there are any concerns. The Samish Tribe has worked closely with all local officials to seek consensus on their legislation and I hope you can see it through this year.

The presence and enormous contributions of the Tribe for their members and non-Indians, and their hard work with the local community and the State of Washington are noteworthy. I am proud to support them and their request for federal legislation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Morris", with a horizontal line extending from the end.

Jeff Morris
State Representative, 40th District

Collage of Samish Photos: Then and Now

7.23.13 Testimony Visual
Chairman Tom Wooten, Samish Indian Nation



Samish canoes circa 1880



Canoe Journey landing



Samish elders sharing their language



Children at Samish Head Start



Campbell Lake



Thomas Creek

Samish canoes circa 1880



Canoe Journey landing



Children at Samish Head Start



Samish Elders Sharing their Language



Thomas Creek



Campbell Lake

