

SCIP Hearing, 9/15/22**Remarks (5 min)**

- Good afternoon. Chairwoman Leger Fernandez, Acting Ranking Member Obernolte, and esteemed Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak on my bill to take lands into trust and reservation status for the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe.
- These lands are located along the Elwha River in the northwest corner of Washington State and have deep cultural, spiritual, and historical significance for the Tribe and all S'Klallam/Klallam peoples, who have lived in the area since time immemorial.
- In the early 1900s, however, two dams were constructed on the river and had a significant, negative impact on the local ecosystem. The dams, for example, did not include fish passages and devastated the salmon and trout populations, which have significant cultural and economic meaning for the Tribe.
- The dams also flooded a settlement site, seasonal camps, and sacred places, including land known as the Creation Site – the location the Creator bathed and blessed the Klallam people. Uncountable generations of Klallam traveled to this location to purify themselves and receive spiritual guidance.
- In recognition on the impact on the ecosystem, Congress passed the Elwha River Ecosystem and Fisheries Restoration Act in 1992 and authorized the National Parks Service to acquire lands necessary to remove the two dams and restore the ecosystem.
- The law also directed the National Parks Service to determine the suitability of DOI taking acquired lands outside the Olympic National Park into trust for the Lower Elwha Klallam.
- As the dam removal process was completed in 2014, this bill completes the process envisioned in the Elwha Act by taking these culturally and spiritually significant lands into trust and reservation status for the benefit of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. The Tribe has also worked closely with National Parks Service on ecosystem restoration and will continue doing so.
- As the Committee considers this legislation, I also want to acknowledge concerns raised by the Port Gamble and Jamestown S'Klallam Tribes, two sister tribes of the Lower Elwha.
- These two Tribes support the goals of the legislation but want to ensure that the bill protects their rights under the Treaty of Point No Point to fish, hunt, and gather in these lands.
- I am fully committed to ensuring this bill protects Point No Point treaty rights of the S'Klallam/Klallam peoples, and I am fully committed to working with the Committee, Port Gamble, Jamestown, and Lower Elwha Tribes to make any needed changes to protect treaty rights.

- Both Port Gamble and Jamestown, as well as Lower Elwha have shared proposed language, which I have shared with the Committee staff. I urge the Committee to give these changes all due consideration in the markup process.
- In closing, taking this land into trust and reservation status, subject to Point No Point treaty rights, will protect sacred and cultural lands, continue restoration of a unique ecosystem, and uphold the federal government's trust and treaty obligations to the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe.
- Thank you, and I yield back.