

STATEMENT OF
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOREST SERVICE
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIAN AND INSULAR AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
REGARDING
H.R. 2389 – “QUINULT INDIAN NATION LAND TRANSFER ACT”
H.R. 2400 – “PIT RIVER LAND TRANSFER ACT”

April 30, 2025

Chairman Hurd, Ranking Member Leger Fernandez, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on H.R. 2389 and H.R. 2400, which would direct the Secretary of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service to transfer certain lands located in the States of Washington and California to the Department of the Interior to take them into trust for the benefit of the Quinault Indian Nation and the Pit River Tribe respectively. My name is John Crockett, and I currently serve as Deputy Chief for the USDA Forest Service State, Private, and Tribal Forestry. With over 28 years as a career employee at the USDA Forest Service, and the past 13 focused on national level policy issues, I have gained valuable experience in partnering with Tribes and implementing Tribal-related authorities. The USDA Forest Service appreciates the opportunity to comment on this legislation and its potential implications for federal lands and intergovernmental partnerships.

The USDA Forest Service manages 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands, including lands in the Pacific Northwest that are in proximity to Tribal lands and culturally significant landscapes. The Forest Service works closely with the Indian Nations through sustainable land stewardship, including forest management, wildfire mitigation, resource restoration, and cultural preservation efforts. We acknowledge the Tribes’ deep cultural, historical, and ecological connection to the lands identified in these bills and are committed to continued interagency and Tribal coordination where overlapping interests or adjacent lands exist.

H.R. 2389, “Quinault Indian Nation Land Transfer Act”

H.R. 2389 directs the Secretary of Agriculture to transfer approximately 72 acres of National Forest System Land from the USDA Forest Service Olympic National Forest to the Department of the Interior to place into trust for the benefit of the Quinault Indian Nation, subject to valid existing rights. The transferred land would become part of the Quinault Indian Reservation and would be administered by the Secretary of the Interior under existing federal laws for Tribal trust lands. The bill stipulates that the land cannot be used for gaming under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act and the bill does not alter any rights under the Treaty of Olympia.

USDA supports H.R. 2389.

The 72-acre forested parcel referenced in the bill as “Allotment 1157” is geographically isolated from the rest of the Olympic National Forest. The parcel is bordered by the Quinault Indian Reservation on three sides and by private land on one side. This land transfer would connect the parcel to the surrounding forest land in the Quinault Indian Reservation and allow for more efficient and effective management of the parcel within the forested landscape.

If this legislation is passed, the USDA Forest Service is committed to working collaboratively with the Department of the Interior and the Quinault Indian Nation to ensure a smooth transfer process that honors our government-to-government relationship and shared responsibilities.

H.R. 2400 – The “Pit River Land Transfer Act”

H.R. 2400 direct the Secretary of Agriculture to survey approximately 584 acres of land located within the ancestral territory of the Pit River Tribe in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, California, and directs the Department of the Interior to take the land into trust for the benefit of the Pit River Tribe, subject to valid existing rights. Non-federal land owned by the Tribe would also be taken into trust upon the Tribe’s request and completion of a land survey. Transferred lands would be managed under existing federal laws for Tribal trust lands. Once in trust, both parcels would become part of the Pit River Tribe Reservation and would be administered by the Secretary of the Interior in accordance with applicable laws and regulations for trust lands. The bill stipulates that the land cannot be used for gaming under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

The USDA supports H.R. 2400 and would appreciate the opportunity to continue working with the Committee to ensure that any existing special use permits are also excluded from the land transferred and that the language of the bill expressly provides for the administrative transfer of the land from the Forest Service to the Department of the Interior. We are also committed to working collaboratively with the Department of the Interior and the Pit River Tribe to ensure a smooth and coordinated transfer process that honors our government-to-government relationship and shared responsibilities.

That concludes my testimony. Again, I thank Chairman Hurd, Ranking Member Leger Fernandez, and members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to present the USDA Forest Service’s views on this proposed legislation. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.