Statement of The Honorable Cheryle A. Kennedy
Tribal Council Chairwoman
Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde

Before the Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives

Hearing on H.R. 10458, the Grand Ronde Land Transfer Act of 2026

November 19, 2026

Chair Hurd, Vice Chair Coleman Radewagen, and Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Cheryle Kennedy, and I am the Tribal Council Chairwoman of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon ("Grand Ronde" or "Tribe").

The tribes and bands confederated on the Grand Ronde Reservation signed seven (7) treaties with the United States between 1853 and 1855. These treaties were ratified by the U.S. Senate and today are binding on the Tribe and the United States. The Grand Ronde Reservation was established by these treaty arrangements and by the Executive Order of June 30, 1857.[1] The Reservation is located in Polk and Yamhill Counties in Oregon and the Tribe owns trust land in Tillamook County.

In 1954, the Tribe was terminated by Congress, along with other tribes in Western Oregon.[2] In 1983, Congress reversed itself and passed the Grand Ronde Restoration Act.[3] This Act restored the Tribe's federal recognition by reinstating its Indian Reorganization Act charter, as ratified by the Tribe in 1936.[4] The Act also re-applied the Indian Reorganization Act to the

[1] This Executive Order was signed by President James Buchanan and the Grand Ronde Reservation established by the Executive Order comprised 69,120 acres.
[2] Public Law 83-588 (Aug. 13, 1954), codified at 25 U.S.C. §§ 691, *et seq*.
[3] Public Law 98-165 (Nov. 22, 1983), codified at 25 U.S.C. §§ 713, *et seq*.
[4] 25 U.S.C. § 713b.

Tribe, along with other federal laws and regulations of general applicability to Indian tribes and their members.[5]

The Restoration Act required that the reservation for Grand Ronde would be re-established by subsequent Congressional legislation. After a reservation plan was developed, Congress passed the Grand Ronde Reservation Act in 1988.[6]

The Grand Ronde Land Transfer Act of 2026

When the original Grand Ronde Reservation was established in 1857, it covered approximately 69,000 acres in Western Oregon. Federal policies in the 19th and 20th centuries then stripped Grand Ronde of these lands.

When the Tribe was restored and a reservation plan enacted, only a fraction of the original lands (approximately 9,800 acres) was returned to Grand Ronde, despite the Tribe's request for more lands in the area.

The Grand Ronde Land Transfer Act would help right this historic wrong by returning 18,628 acres of U.S. Forest Service land to the Tribe. This land transfer would support the Tribe's ongoing work of rebuilding its community and economy.

The lands involved in this proposed transfer are located in close proximity to the existing Grand Ronde Reservation and are not currently subject to active forest management or wildfire mitigation activities. Since these lands are within Grand Ronde's ancestral territory, Grand Ronde seeks the opportunity to resume its stewardship of these lands, using the same innovative forest management practices it employs on its other lands within the Grand Ronde Reservation.

Ask any forestry official in Western Oregon: Grand Ronde is a leader in land

[5] *Id*.
[6] Public Law 100-425 (Sept. 9, 1988), 25 U.S.C. § 713f note.

management; and our forestry practices on the transferred lands will decrease wildfire risk, increase forest health, and aid in creating a sustainable ecosystem.

Under the terms of the proposed legislation, this land transfer will protect all reciprocal rights-of-way and cooperative agreements in existence today. And the transferred land will remain open to the public for hunting, fishing and general recreation.

Similar transfers of Federal lands for forestry purposes in Oregon were authorized by statute in 2018 for the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians and the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians.[7]

To build a coalition of support for this legislation, Grand Ronde conducted extensive outreach to adjacent landowners and other affected and interested parties. As a result of this outreach, Grand Ronde has, to date, received letters of support from the following governments and organizations:

- Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts
- Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians
- Environmental Defense Action Fund
- Oregon Department of Forestry
- Sustainable Northwest
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Stewardship Project
- Tillamook County
- Yamhill County

[7] *See* Public Law 115-103 (Jan. 8, 2018).

As an example, let me share with you the reasons for supporting this legislation articulated by the Board of County Commissioners of Yamhill County, one of the two Counties in Oregon where this Forest Service land is located. Our Yamhill County neighbors could not have said it better:

> The Grand Ronde Tribe is a vital part of Yamhill County's history, economy, and community. Yamhill County supports this transfer for several key reasons:
>
> - **Proven Stewardship**: The Tribe has demonstrated excellence in sustainable forest management. Their current forest plan is among the most robust in the region, consistently resulting in forest health that exceeds that of adjacent federal or private lands.
>
> - **Economic Vitality**: Sustainable timber harvests and Tribal resource management generate vital jobs and revenue that stimulate our local rural economies.
>
> - **Enhanced Safety**: The Tribe's comprehensive Wildland Fire program will strengthen fire protection and emergency response within and around the proposed area, providing a critical safety net for our county residents.
>
> - **Public Benefit**: This transfer benefits all Oregonians. The Tribe has a long-standing history of keeping their fisheries and big-game programs open to the public. We are confident that this expansion will result in increased recreation, hunting, and fishing opportunities for the entire community.
>
> We respectfully urge you to support this important legislation to strengthen Oregon's forests, economy, and community health.[8]

Summary of H.R. 10458

The language in H.R. 10458 is quite simple:

- Section 1 (Short Title) establishes the title of the bill as the Grand Ronde Land Transfer Act of 2026.

- Section 2 (Definitions) references both the 18,628 acres of Federal land to be

[8] Letter from Board of County Commissioners, Yamhill County, Oregon, to Senators Merkley and Wyden, and Congresswoman Salinas, February 12, 2026 (**bold** type in original).

transferred and the map prepared by the U.S. Forest Service to describe such land.

- Section 3 (Land to be Held in Trust) authorizes the transfer of the 18,628 acres from the jurisdiction of the U.S. Agriculture Department to the U.S. Interior Department. The land is to be held in trust by the Federal government for the benefit of Grand Ronde and will be recognized as part of the Grand Ronde Reservation.

- Section 4 (Administration) applies certain Federal laws and requirements to the transferred land, including all reciprocal rights-of-way and cooperative agreements in existence on the transferred land. Any gaming under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act is also prohibited on this land. And, as noted earlier, the transferred land will remain open to the public for hunting, fishing and general recreation.

Conclusion

On behalf of Grand Ronde, we hope the Members of the Committee on Natural Resources will support this legislation and vote it favorably out of Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our Tribe's views on H.R. 10458. At the appropriate time, I am happy to answer any questions that the members of the Subcommittee may have.