

**STATEMENT OF
JOHN CROCKETT
DEPUTY CHIEF
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOREST SERVICE
BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS**

Regarding

- S. 1514 – “Quinault Indian Nation Land Transfer Act”
S. 2796 – “Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation Land Exchange Act”
S. 2871 – Pit River Land Transfer Act of 2025**

June 3, 2026

Chairwoman Murkowski, Ranking Member Schatz, and Member of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on S. 1514, S. 2796 and S. 2871, 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 Interior to take them into trust for the benefit of the Quinault Indian Nation, the Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation, and the Pit River Tribe respectively. My name is John Crockett, and I currently serve as Deputy Chief with the USDA Forest Service. With over 29 years as a career employee at the Forest Service, and the past 14 focused on national level policy issues, I have gained valuable experience in partnering with Tribes and implementing Tribal-related authorities. The 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. We work 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.

S. 1514 – The “Quinault Indian Nation Land Transfer Act” would direct the Secretary of Agriculture to transfer approximately 72 acres of National Forest System Land from the 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 managed 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 S.1514 and the 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.

S. 2796 – The “Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation Land Exchange Act” would authorize a land exchange between the federal government and the Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation, a federally recognized tribe also known as the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, contingent upon an offer made to the Secretary of Agriculture. The proposed exchange involves approximately 1,460 acres of land owned by the Nation for 1,475 acres of National Forest System Land managed by the Forest Service, including all easements, subsurface rights, and improvements on both sides of the exchange. The land exchange must occur as soon as practicable within the 120 days of the Secretary receiving the offer. As a condition of the exchange, the Nation must enter into an agreement with the Secretary –within 120 days of enactment – to preserve the historical and cultural integrity of the Arrowhead landmark site. The legislation also exempts this exchange from the public land exchange provisions of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

The Forest Service has pursued a potential land exchange with the Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation since 2022, following the execution of a formal Agreement to Initiate. In 2023, the agency conducted a public consultation, leading to subsequent amendments. The Forest Service is currently working through the contract appraisal process and is nearing completion. Recent steps completed include securing appraisal services, correcting the right-of-way deed, completing the state historic review, and confirming the federal land descriptions.

The Forest Service is generally supportive of this bill and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Committee to streamline the land exchange process while addressing several important concerns. Even with recent progress on the administrative steps of the exchange, we remain focused on ensuring the bill clearly defines the standards for survey and appraisal requirements for both the parcels and the mineral estate, the role of the Secretary of the Interior in the survey and transfer of these assets to the Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation, and the need for a project exemption from requirements under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and from any additional requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 that have not already been completed. Additionally, we seek to clarify the financial responsibility for any unforeseen or outstanding costs associated with the parcel exchange.

S. 2871 – The “Pit River Land Transfer Act” would direct the Secretary of Agriculture to transfer approximately 584 acres of land located within the ancestral territory of the Pit River Tribe in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, California, from the USDA Forest Service to the Department of the Interior. It will direct the Department of Interior to take the land into trust for the benefit of the Pit River Tribe, subject to valid existing rights. Once in trust, the land 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 S. 2871 and would appreciate the opportunity to continue working with the Committee to ensure that existing special use permits are excluded from the land transferred. 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.