



IN REPLY REFER TO

MAKAH TRIBAL COUNCIL

P.O. BOX 115 • NEAH BAY, WA 98357 • 360-645-2201



Testimony of T.J. Greene, Treasurer, Makah Tribal Council Neah Bay, Washington

March 28, 2012

Before the
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment and Related Agencies
on the Fiscal Year 2013 Budget

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I am T.J. Greene, Treasurer of the Makah Tribal Council. I want to thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on the views of the Makah Tribal Council on the FY 2013 federal budget.

This hearing is especially meaningful to us at the Makah Tribe because it is the last chance we will get to appear before our Congressman, Norm Dicks. We have been truly blessed not only to have Norm Dicks as our Congressman, but also by his long-standing friendship with our Tribe. Congressman Dicks has visited our Reservation many, many times since he was a young man. He has spent countless hours visiting with us, touring our Reservation and hearing our concerns, but he may have spent even more time off our shores in what he recently called his favorite fishing spot! Words cannot express our gratitude to you, Congressman, for all that you have done for us and all that you mean to us.

I would like to testify today on three priority issues:

- Assistance from the federal government for helping us clean up the Warmhouse Beach open dump site on our Reservation;
- Our efforts to secure federal grant funding for replacing our commercial fishing dock; and
- Our work in support of a sustainable federal ocean policy.

Warmhouse Beach Open Dump

The Makah Tribe is taking aggressive steps to address the serious environmental and health risks posed by the Warmhouse Beach Open Dump, a decades-old landfill located on the Makah Reservation that was used by the U.S. Department of Defense and other federal agencies to dispose of hazardous waste. The Dump is leaching harmful chemicals into a nearby stream which flows into the pristine waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca at Warmhouse Beach, a traditional shellfishing location for the Makah people. Frequent fires at the Dump contribute to air pollution in the Town of Neah Bay and the Reservation community.

This summer, we plan to open our new solid waste transfer station in Neah Bay, which will enable us to close the Dump. This is an important step for the Tribe that has been many years in the making. Now the challenge before us is to clean up the Dump so it will stop polluting our waters.

The Tribe has documented that the Makah Air Force Station, which supported radar operations at Bahokus Peak from World War II through 1988, disposed of many hazardous substances at the Dump since its opening in the 1970s, including asbestos, batteries, pesticides, paints and waste oil. For many years, other federal agencies with operations on the Reservation also disposed of their waste at the Dump. As a result of this legacy of waste disposal on tribal land, the federal government bears substantial responsibility for cleaning up the Dump and preventing further exposure of the Reservation community to the environmental and health hazards caused by the Dump.

The Makah Tribe has taken action to secure federal assistance for cleaning up the Dump through negotiations with the Defense Department or possibly through the federal Superfund program. We have waited many years and tried many avenues to clean up this dump. We would appreciate this Subcommittee's support for our efforts.

Replacing our Commercial Fishing Dock

The Port of Neah Bay Commercial Fishing Dock was constructed between 1947 and 1952. Its condition has now deteriorated so badly that it has been closed to semi-truck traffic for seven years. Structural surveys of the dock have led to the conclusion that the dock now needs to be completely replaced.

This commercial fishing dock generates over \$6 million in fish landings annually, which are shipped around the country and internationally. It supports about half of the working-age population of Neah Bay and over 100 minority-owned enterprises. It supports the traditional maritime culture of the Makah Tribe. It also supports the ecosystem management and biological data collection efforts of the State of Washington, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and tribes to ensure sustainable fisheries of over 20 groundfish species, salmon species, halibut and shellfish.

We have been working with many federal agencies, including the Economic Development Administration (EDA), BIA, USDOT, the Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development, and state agencies, to find funding that can help us with this dock replacement project, thus far without success. We are currently in the final round of consideration for EDA funding and we have submitted a grant request under the TIGER IV program. We would appreciate the federal government's assistance in finalizing this important economic development initiative.

National Ocean Policy

The Makah Tribe is proud to be one of the hosts of the First Stewards Symposium: Coastal People Address Climate Change, July 17-20 at the National Museum of the American Indian. This will be the first national symposium on the impacts of climate change on coastal indigenous peoples.

We are also proud that our Tribal Chairman, Micah McCarty, has been asked to serve on the Governance Coordinating Committee that is working with the National Ocean Council on national ocean policy. He has also been named to several other advisory bodies on ocean and fisheries issues.

The Makah Tribe is unique in having a marine sanctuary, the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, right off our shores and within our "usual and accustomed" fishing area.

We are proud of our work as well on ensuring tribal consultation on federal maritime matters and helping to improve oil spill pollution prevention and response.

Many vessels involved with the Sanctuary, ocean and fisheries research, and oil spill prevention and response are stationed in Neah Bay. We are the only ocean harbor in the Pacific Northwest that isn't closed in heavy storms because of hazardous bar conditions. In order to serve the growing number of these vessels, however, we need to improve our harbor, for example, by deepening our entrance channel. We would appreciate the Subcommittee's support for our efforts to make Neah Bay harbor a first-class homeport for vessels helping to keep our ocean resources sustainable.

We take our job as stewards of ocean resources very seriously and we look forward to expanding our collaboration with federal and state governments and the private sector to ensure maritime policies that will be sustainable well into the future.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, for this opportunity to testify before you today.