



**Testimony of Councilman Tyson Johnston
Quinault Indian Nation
to the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indian and Insular Affairs
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 2389, "*Quinault Indian Nation Land Transfer Act*"
April 30, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chairman Hurd, Ranking Member Leger Fernandez, Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on H.R. 2389, "Quinault Indian Nation Land Transfer Act". My name is Tyson Johnston, I am an elected Councilmember of the Quinault Indian Nation's Business Committee and will speak on behalf of the Nation on this bill. Currently I serve as Chairman of the Quinault Indian Nation's Natural Resources and Community Development Committee and serve on the Tribe's task forces for village relocation and land acquisition.

History of Allotment 1157 and the Quinault Indian Reservation

The Quinault Indian Reservation was set aside for the Quinault Indian Nation (the "Nation") for their exclusive use following the Treaty of Olympia of 1856 whereby the Nation ceded millions of acres it had freely roamed in exchange for a homeland and other benefits. Allotment 1157 was a part of the Quinault Indian Reservation when it was formed.

In 1887, the passage of the Dawes Act broke the promises of the Treaty of Olympia and authorized lands that were communally held by tribes to be allotted to tribal members. As a result, the Quinault Indian Reservation was partitioned into 2,340 parcels of 80 acres each, assigned to individual tribal members ostensibly for agricultural use. However, the majority of the Reservation was heavily forested and largely unsuitable for farming, rendering the intended purpose of these allotments impractical.

On April 23, 1928, Allotment, 1157 was issued to Ellen Hyasman through a Trust Deed signed by President Calvin Coolidge. Under the Allotment Act, the United States of America held the property in trust for the allotted individual. This is the point in history that this land was taken away from the Quinault Nation.

On March 18, 1960, the Bureau of Indian Affairs facilitated the sale of the land and timber on Allotment 1157 from Ellen Hyasman Heath to Anderson and Middleton Logging Company ("A&M") for \$59,000 thus alienating this property from the reservation. Mrs. Heath retained the mineral rights and A&M took ownership of the property in fee status and managed it along with their other fee holdings on the Quinault Indian Reservation for timber production.

In 1993, A&M intended to harvest the old growth timber, but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ("USFWS"), as well as certain non-governmental organizations, objected to the harvest as it would remove habitat needed for the Northern Spotted Owl, which had recently been determined to be threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The USFWS sued A&M to stop the harvest.

In August 1996, the lawsuit was dropped in favor of the federal government working out a purchase from A&M. Using federal funds, a purchase or trade transaction was facilitated through the Trust for Public Land whereby the property was purchased from A&M in August 1996 for \$3,544,000 and sold and transferred to the U.S. Forest Service (“USFS”) for \$3,808,000.

Since 1996, the USFS has maintained ownership and management of this orphaned property on the Quinault Indian Reservation. Allotment 1157 does not abut any USFS property.

Land Description

Allotment 1157 is 72 total acres. The legal description of the land is “Government Lots 6 and 7, in section 35, Township 24 North, Range 12 West, W.M., in Jefferson County, Washington.”

Please see the attached map for the exact location of the Allotment.

Importance of Allotment 1157 to the Quinault Indian Nation

The Nation has endeavored to reacquire ownership of its Reservation lands to manage as a whole for the benefit of the Nation and its members, including being involved in a robust Land Acquisition Program since the 1970s. Over time, the Nation has repurchased thousands of acres from five major timber companies, Grays Harbor County, and numerous fee and trust landowners. The Nation currently owns approximately 51% of the acreage on the Reservation and continues its efforts to consolidate land within the Reservation for the exclusive use of its membership.

Allotment 1157 represents one of the few remaining vestiges of the old-growth forest, including ancient cedar trees that once defined the Quinault Indian Reservation’s landscape. This land holds profound cultural significance for tribal members, serving as a tangible connection to the heritage and ancestral lands of the Nation. That is why local Tribal and County governments have stated they support or do not oppose transferring this land

The Nation’s Plans for Allotment 1157

The Quinault people regard this land as sacred, a place to be safeguarded and preserved for the next seven generations and beyond. The Nation is committed to ensuring that Allotment 1157 is never commercially logged. The site contains remnants of cedar sticks and other materials left by ancestral carvers, which were historically used to guide canoe hulls safely into the Salmon River. These canoes were then transported downriver to the main villages for final completion. Upon reclaiming ownership of this land, the Nation will have the opportunity to bring tribal members to this historic site, teaching them how their ancestors worked to sustain and honor their culture and heritage.

The Quinault Nation also plans to utilize this land as a living museum for educational purposes, where students and college interns will learn how to preserve other historical places. Trees and downed wood on this land will be utilized for cultural purposes as has been done in the past.

The Nation currently works with and reports to the USFWS on activities affecting living species on the Quinault Indian Reservation. Allotment 1157 will be part of these efforts and reports.

Importance of Transferring Allotment 1157 in Trust Status

As noted, Allotment 1157 was once part of the Quinault Indian Reservation. Transferring the land in trust status back to the Nation will help restore the Nation’s Reservation. All the Nation land adjacent to

Allotment 1157 is held in trust status.

Conclusion

In closing, the Nation urges the Subcommittee to support and pass out of Committee, H.R. 2389, the “Quinault Indian Nation Land Transfer Act.” Enacting this bill will honor the promises made under the Treaty of Olympia and would be an important step in restoring the Quinault Indian Reservation. Returning Allotment 1157 to the Nation in trust status is not only a matter of legal and historical justice but also an opportunity for Congress to preserve and protect land of immense cultural and environmental significance to a tribal Nation for future generations.

Thank you for holding this hearing to discuss this important legislation and for the opportunity to testify today. I’m happy to answer any questions on this land and the bill.