

**TESTIMONY OF DONALD “DEL” LAVERDURE,
PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
ON S. 636
A BILL TO PROVIDE THE QUILEUTE INDIAN TRIBE TSUNAMI AND FLOOD
PROTECTION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

APRIL 14, 2011

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the Department of the Interior’s views on S. 636, a bill to provide the Quileute Indian Tribe tsunami and flood protection, and for other purposes.

The Department supports S. 636. This legislation would make available to the Quileute Indian Tribe 785 acres of land currently within the boundary of Olympic National Park in order to facilitate the tribe’s move to new lands on higher ground, away from the frequent flooding and the tsunami risk that the tribe currently must contend with. The legislation also seeks to protect the natural resources of the land removed from the park, to encourage agreements between the National Park Service and the tribe on matters related to the land, and to designate approximately 4,100 acres of Olympic National Park as Wilderness.

The Quileute Indian Tribe is a small, Federally recognized tribe in the State of Washington. The Quileute Indian Reservation, established in 1889, is located on the Olympic Peninsula along the Pacific Ocean. The reservation is bordered to the north by the Quillayute River and to the east and south by Olympic National Park. It consists of approximately 880 acres and is home to about 375 residents. Most of the reservation is located within the flood zone and much of the tribal infrastructure, including their administrative buildings, school, elder center, and housing is within the tsunami zone. Recent tsunamis in the Pacific Ocean, including the one which struck Japan last month, clearly demonstrate the risk faced by the tribe and the need to move housing and infrastructure inland.

The 785 acres of land within Olympic National Park that would be held in trust for the tribe under S. 636 are in two parcels. The northern parcel, known as Thunder Field, is comprised of approximately 510 acres along the south side of the Quillayute River. A 275-acre parcel, 220 acres of which are designated wilderness, lies immediately south of the current reservation boundary. There are no park-owned facilities or trails in this area, and there are few opportunities for park visitors.

In addition to providing for the 785 acres to be held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Quileute Indian Tribe, and to excluding this land from the boundary of Olympic National Park, S. 636 also would:

- designate approximately 4,100 acres of new wilderness within Olympic National Park as additions to the existing Olympic Wilderness;

- provide for placing in trust for the benefit of the tribe the approximately 184 acres of non-Federal land that the tribe has recently acquired;
- express the intent of Congress regarding preservation, protection and alteration of the 785 acres, and cooperative efforts between the National Park Service and the tribe.
- provide specific restrictions on the use of the 785 acres in order to protect the land's resources; and
- provide for continued public access and use of park and tribal lands at Second Beach, Rialto Beach, and along the Quillayute and Dickey Rivers.

The National Park Service has worked collaboratively with the tribe over many years to address these issues. As such, the Department supports S. 636 and its balance of tribal safety with protection of park resources and visitor access.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you or the other members may have.