

**TESTIMONY**  
**OF**  
**MIKE BLACK**  
**DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS**  
**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE AFFAIRS**  
**HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**  
**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**ON**  
**H.R. 1225, THE SAMISH INDIAN NATION**  
**HOMELANDS ACT OF 2013**

**JULY 23, 2013**

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Hanabusa, and Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Michael Black and I am the Director for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's (Department) views on H.R. 1225, a bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to place certain lands in Skagit and San Juan Counties, Washington, into trust for the Samish Indian Nation (Tribe), and for other purposes.

Taking land into trust is one of the most important functions that the Department undertakes on behalf of Indian tribes. Homelands are essential to the health, safety, and welfare of the tribal communities. Thus, this Administration has made the restoration of tribal homelands a priority. This Administration is committed to the restoration of tribal homelands, through the Department's acquisition of lands in trust for tribes, where appropriate. While the Department acknowledges that a tribe near the Samish Indian Nation opposes H.R. 1225, the Department supports H.R. 1225, with some amendments.

H.R. 1225 directs the Secretary for the Department to place approximately 95 acres of land into trust for the Samish Indian Nation, with certain conditions prior to taking the 95 acres into trust. First, the Tribe must convey to the Secretary all right, title, and interest in and to the parcels of land; and, submit to the Secretary a request to take the parcels of land into trust for the Tribe; and the Secretary's action shall be in accordance with the regulations of the Department of the Interior for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 18 4321 et seq.) that are applicable to trust land acquisitions for Indian tribes that are mandated by Federal legislation. H.R. 1225 also includes a restriction that the Tribe may not conduct any gaming activities on any land taken into trust pursuant to this Act.

The Department recommends Section 3 plainly state the direction to take the 95 acres into trust for the benefit of the Tribe under current applicable Department regulations for mandatory acquisitions. The Department finds no need for the Conditions provision under Section 3(a)(2) in H.R. 1225. The Tribe does not need to convey the land to the Department in order to take these lands into trust for the Tribe. Also, the Department recommends identifying a time for when the Tribe shall conduct the survey. Finally, the Department, after the survey and land descriptions are determined, does not need a formal request from the Tribe to take these lands into trust for the Tribe. The legislation is the direction to the Secretary to take such action.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department's views on this legislation. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.