



Chinook Indian Nation

Cathlamet, Clatsop, Lower Chinook, Wahkiakum, Willapa

Monday, July 20, 2009

Chinook Tillicums,

On Wednesday, 15 July 2009, we (Chairman Ray Gardner, Vice-Chairman Sam Robinson and Council Member Phil Hawks) attended and provided testimony in a full hearing with the U.S. House of Representatives' Natural Resources Committee on H.R. 3084, The Chinook Restoration Act. We spent the following day in meetings with lead staff members from Senators' Patricia Murray (D-Wa), Maria Cantwell (D-Wa) and Jeff Merkley (D-Or) offices to discuss a matching bill for the Senate. These are exciting times for the Chinook Nation and those two days in Washington DC were a positive advancement in the Restoration of the five tribes of our Nation.

The House Natural Resources Committee, led by Chairman Nick J. Rahall (D-WV), held a legislative hearing on the following bills:

- H.R. 2678 (Sponsor – McDermott, D-Wa): "Duwamish Tribal Recognition Act"
- H.R. 1358 (Sponsor – Stupak, D-Mi): "Burt Lake Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians Reaffirmation Act"
- H.R. 3084 (Sponsor – Baird, D-Wa): "Chinook Nation Restoration Act"
- H.R. 3120 (Sponsor – Rehberg, R-Mt): "Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians Restoration Act of 2009"

This hearing provided the opportunity for each sponsor - a US Congressional House Representative, each Nation, the BIA and dissenters the option to testify about these bills. Members of the Committee, to include Chairman Nick J. Rahall II, (D-WV), Doc Hastings (R-Wa), Dale E. Kildee (D-Mi), Grace F. Napolitano (D-Ca), Donna M. Christensen (D-Virgin Islands), Cynthia M. Lummis (R- Wyo) and Jay Inslee (D-Wa) also took this time to ask question and provide comments about each bill. A full archived webcast of the hearing is available at the [Natural Resources Website](#).¹

By time the hearing began, it was standing room only in the audience section of the chambers. In fact, the staffers had to open up an overflow room for people to watch via video feed. Quite a few of those in the audience were Friends, such as [Wink Soderberg, Council Member of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde](#), and Citizens of the Chinook Nation. We would like to say Hayu Masi to all of them for taking time out of their schedules to come support us.²



*Congressman Baird and
Chairman Gardner at the
hearing.*

Congressman Baird gave a wonderfully compelling testimony on the behalf of our Nation. There is no doubt that he is dedicated to our cause. After his testimony, he accepted the Committee Chairman's invitation to stay at the hearing as a panel member (the only sponsoring Congressman to do so) and defended our position and spearheaded questioning that championed our cause.

After the hearing, Congressman Baird cleared his schedule and spent a couple more hours with us to discuss the events of the hearing and our path forward. He was even gracious enough to take us to the House floor to

¹ Committee of Natural Resources' archived webcast can be found at:

http://resources.edgeboss.net/wmedia/resources/2009_07_15_full.wvx

² Wink Soderberg's bio is at: <http://www.grandronde.org/template.aspx?id=302>

witness the Congressional voting process and gave us a personal tour of the U.S. Capital. His staff treated us very well; they saw to our needs, escorted us to the cafeteria and provided us a CD of the pictures from the hearing. We are extremely lucky to have such an outstanding and supportive Congressman. We would like to ask each of you to take a moment to send him and his staff a [note of appreciation](#).³



Chairman Gardner providing testimony.

Chairman Gardner spoke for the Chinook Nation and his testimony was well received by the panel. Congressman Baird stated more than once that his deposition was clear and concise. The Committee did not ask any follow on questions and seemed to understand our plight. Majority of Committee panel members stated that they want to right the injustices that have occurred to American Indian Nations in the past.

During the final portion of the hearing, two groups provided witness in direct relation to our Restoration bill. The first was the BIA, whose testimony was in reference to all four bills. Many of the panel members questioned the BIA's process and questionable decisions to recognize and then unrecognize various Nations. The final disposition of BIA's testimony was that they do not oppose our Recognition. They concur that the decision to restore the four Nations is now the responsibility of Congress.

The second group was the Quinault Nation. Their testimony was in direct response to our Chinook Nation bill. Through [President Fawn Sharp](#), the Quinault nation testified not to oppose the Chinook Restoration, but to ask that Congress not violate Treaty of Olympia in the process of Chinook Nation Restoration.⁴ Our stance on this is that we, the Chinook Nation, will not violate Quinault Nation's – or anyone's – treaty rights. In return, we insist that all Citizens of the Chinook Nation that are allottees on the Quinault Reservation have their property owner rights honored.⁵ Chairman Gardner and President Sharp spoke after the hearing, he made the offer for our councils to meet and discuss these issues.

For ten working days after the hearing (until 29 July), the Natural Resources Committee will hold the session open so that witnesses, interested parties and panel members can add additional comments, questions and responses. Once the ten days have expired, Congressman Baird will request that H.R. 3084 go to [Markup](#).⁶ After Markup, our bill will go to a vote of the Natural Resources Committee. If affirmed, H.R. 3084 will go to the House floor for vote. After passing in the House, this bill will go to the Senate for a matching bill.⁷

At the Thursday meetings, Senate staff indicated that we might have to testify in a hearing – similar to the one held on the 15th - with the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. We need either Senators [Patty Murray](#) or [Maria](#)

³ Due to screening procedures, individuals sending written mail (U.S. House of Representatives, 2350 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515) to Congressman Baird's DC office should expect mail delivery to take about three weeks. Your patience with this matter is greatly appreciated and when possible, please feel free to e-mail (https://forms.house.gov/baird/webforms/issue_subscribe.htm), call (360-695-6292 / 202-225-3536), or fax (360-695-6197 / 202-225-3478).

⁴ President Fawn Sharp's bio can be found at: <http://209.206.175.157/presidentsoffice.htm>

⁵ History of the Treat of Olympia can be found at: <http://www.trailtribes.org/fortclatsop/making-treaties.htm#treaty> The full Treaty can be found at: <http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Treaties/Treaty-Of-Olympia-1856.html>

⁶ "The process by which congressional committees and subcommittees debate, amend, and rewrite proposed legislation." (http://www.senate.gov/reference/glossary_term/markup.htm)

⁷ The full process of how a Bill becomes a Law can be found at: http://www.votesmart.org/resource_govt101_02.php

[Cantwell](#) to sponsor this Senate version of the bill. Please take the time to contact both of their offices and respectfully request that they take up this bill for the Chinook Nation.⁸

Hayu Masi to everyone for your support, to those that have contacted our Congressional Representatives and to those that will continue to help us move this to final Restoration. We would especially like to thank our lawyer, Michael Mason, Esq. For years now, he has volunteered his time and talents to ensure that we are properly represented to the U.S. Government and other Nations. His wisdom and tireless efforts are appreciated and we look forward to many more years of collaboration.



*Chairman Ray Gardner, Councilmember
Phil Hawks and Vice-Chairman Sam
Robinson*

It was an honor to be in Washington DC representing the Chinook Nation and we look forward to the day the entire council can come back to sign the Chinook Restoration Act. We hope that as many Chinook Nation Citizens as possible make the journey to meet the council in DC and witness this historical event. We will keep you updated through email, monthly council meetings and the newsletter as the Restoration Act progresses.

Respectfully,

*Ray Gardner, Chairman
Sam Robinson, Vice-Chairman
Phil Hawks, Councilmember*

⁸ Contact Sen. Patty Murray at <http://murray.senate.gov/contact/> Sen. Maria Cantwell at: http://cantwell.senate.gov/contact/office_locations.cfm