



WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
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BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS
HEARING ON WILDFIRE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

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Madam Chairman Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to share successful examples and community-based approaches that offer solutions for fostering Wildfire Resilient Communities.

My testimony today focuses on a forward-thinking replicable model that balances ecology and economy, holistically reduces wildfire risks through an ecological approach, advances climate adaptation, and addresses the socio-economic challenges faced by forest-based communities.

I have resided in the Cascade Mountains in southern Oregon near the town of Ashland for the past 31 years, where I raised my two daughters who are now grown adults and have children of their own. I have worked in the private sector in forest management, reforestation, and ecosystem restoration across the US West since 1988. I own an 80-acre rural forested property in the mountains east of Ashland Oregon that I have managed for two decades. In 1995, I founded Lomakasi Restoration Project, an ecosystem restoration and workforce development non-profit, and in 2006 I founded Lomakatsi Ecological Services Inc., an ecological forestry, prescribed fire management, and wildland fire suppression corporation.

Lomakatsi is a non-profit, grassroots organization that develops and implements forest and watershed restoration initiatives, programs, and projects in Oregon and northern California. Lomakatsi's mission is to "restore ecosystems and the sustainability of communities, cultures and economies". For the past 24 years, our team of foresters, ecologists, eco-cultural experts, forest workers, and fire professionals have worked to restore dry forest ecosystems, create fire adapted communities, and provide economic opportunities by creating jobs and sending logs to local mills.

We sustain 55 full-time employees in house and provide hundreds of seasonal jobs, and additionally support over 15 different contractors. We operate 10 standalone programs focused on forest and watershed restoration, workforce training and employment for youth and adults, and a thriving Tribal Ecosystem Restoration Partnerships Program.

Restoring Ecosystems and Enhancing Tribal Economies, Cultures and Communities

For more than fifteen years Lomakatsi has worked in partnership with Native American Tribes and tribal communities throughout Oregon and Northern California to build sustainable ecosystem restoration programs. Lomakatsi's tribal staff works closely with tribal and agency partners to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge into ecosystem restoration projects. Tribal partnership initiatives assist in building tribal capacity for the implementation of ecological restoration across thousands of acres of ancestral lands.

Hundreds of tribal jobs have been created through adult and youth workforce training programs, providing long-term employment. Our success lies in our ability to implement projects on the ground with our experienced technical and ground crew. It also stems from our ability and leadership in building collaborations between agencies, non-profits, Native American Tribes and industry partners to develop an economic model that cares for wildlife, cultural subsistence systems and landscapes, as well as people.

Through our Tribal Ecosystem Restoration Partnerships Program, we are requested to assist in outreach and engagement for the regional tribal nations and work to include their voice and meaningful participation in large landscape scale restoration projects within their ancestral heartlands. Lomakatsi coordinates the Inter-Tribal Ecosystem Restoration Partnership to advance opportunities for Native American Tribes in Oregon and Northern California focused on the implementation of ecological restoration initiatives, increasing employment, business development and education.

The goal of ITERP is to restore aquatic and terrestrial habitats, work collaboratively to plan and conduct landscape scale restoration, and repair impacts to ecocultural systems that indigenous communities depend on for subsistence and survival.

Living in the Frequent Fire Environment

Wildfire is a natural disturbance agent and a natural visitor to forest ecosystems of the Western US. Fires shaped these landscapes and ecosystems, and is responsible for the biological diversity, structural heterogeneity, and complex arrangement of vegetation patterns and habitats. Natural fire is an essential element of a healthy forest and helps mitigate future fires by clearing fuels from the forest floor. Tribes bring a wealth of knowledge and cultural practices including indigenous fire that is applied to the land to increase vegetation for wildlife habitat and decrease disease and what would today be considered “hazardous fuels”. Indigenous Fire was and is applied carefully and diligently to increase forest health and subsistence lifestyle cultures. (See submitted letter from the Karuk Tribe Natural Resources Director, demonstrating a model for indigenous land management).

Yet wildfires in the Western US have become more intense, burning hotter, longer, and across more of the landscape, destroying communities, impacting livelihoods, and making the air dangerous to breathe. Last summer, southern Oregon suffered through six weeks of choking smoke and near misses. Several hours south we watched as Paradise, California, a town like many of the communities in my region, burned to the ground. Smoke and fire threaten Oregon’s health, economy, and future.

The gravity of our situation is reflected in the numbers. Oregon wildfires cost a whopping \$514 million in 2018, and that half-billion is not the end of our troubles. Our fire seasons are longer than in the past, more ferocious, less predictable, and made worse by climate change. The cost and impacts of fire and smoke on our lives will increase.

There is a practical solution. Through science-based risk assessments and land management strategies, there is a middle way between a complete hands-off approach (do nothing) and outdated forest management practices of extensive timber harvest that have created homogenized landscapes, making them prone to burning hotter. This middle road strategy protects large trees and wildlife habitat, conducts ecologically-based commercial thinning of trees as the by-products of restorative work, and reduces the risk to communities by returning beneficial fire to the landscape.

The Challenge

Oregon, Northern California, and many western forests are in a state of crisis, facing increasing frequency and severity of wildfire and smoke. Wildfire is intrinsic to North American forests, yet fire impacts are increasing due to climate change acting on homogenized landscapes of overly dense forests with altered forest composition formed by a century of fire exclusion and extractive logging. Moreover, there are more people embedded in this landscape than ever before. In the contemporary checkerboard of public, tribal, and private lands with sprawling communities at risk, fires increasingly threaten natural habitats and human communities despite aggressive fire suppression. Millions of acres of public and private forest lands urgently

require ecologically-based treatment to reduce fuel loads, improve watershed health, and bolster resiliency so they can continue to provide vital ecosystem services for communities.

The Klamath-Siskiyou bioregion where I live and work is a biological wonderland, where millions of acres of public and private lands feature a range of native conifers, hardwoods and shrubs. There are a number of plant and animal species that are found nowhere else on earth except for the Klamath-Siskiyou. Numerous tree species, including ponderosa pine, sugar pine, grand fir, Douglas-fir, Oregon white oak, and California Black oak are found here.

Historically, these forests experienced fire every 7 to 15 years, with fires common in the spring and fall, and even in summer: these fires were caused either by lightning or by native peoples who thoughtfully used fire for eco-cultural management and land care. These fires would burn off the understory and small trees, resulting in a diverse and robust mosaic of older, larger tree species mixed with areas of younger trees, stands, and forests. These fires also facilitated the propagation of First Foods, medicines, and raw materials for indigenous peoples. Indigenous people used, and still use fire to modify the environment for their own survival. The most important out-come of fire use was the intentional creation of a mosaic of habitat patches that promoted food security by ensuring a diverse and productive landscape.

Past forest management, including chronic fire exclusion, has altered the frequent fire forests across the Klamath-Siskiyou region, creating overly-dense forests that are not resilient to fire and other disturbances such as climate change, and contributed to degraded aquatic function. Forest management practices during the last century – predominantly clear-cut logging, intensive replanting, and extensive domesticated livestock grazing – has reduced the diversity of species and age structures, and has increased tree densities across the region. Fire suppression practices in the past century have elevated ‘fuel levels’ to a degree that has further altered forest tree species composition and succession has increased the forest’s susceptibility to uncharacteristic large wildfires.

Forests of Oregon and California are rich in forest products, clean water, fish, wildlife, recreation and other important multiple resources. As population continues to increase in our region, there also is a growing demand for ecosystem services including significant increases in demands for water, recreation, and other resources. At the same time, however, many of our watersheds have lower resilience to ecological stressors, such as high frequency, high-severity wildfire, increasing insect and disease infestations, and periods of prolonged drought. Climate change is another stressor that taxes our forests. These changes have decoupled the naturally patchy forest mosaic and impairs the inherent capacity of these forests to function as a refuge for various species. Barriers to wildlife migration, altered stream flows, and degraded water quality from increased temperature and sediment delivery have followed development of timber management road networks and intensive timber harvest.

Over the past 20 years, there has been a transition in public lands forest management away from unsustainable clear-cut logging and the removal of the large fire-resistant trees and the dependency on a “big tree economy.” Following the aftermath of the transition, this boom and

bust left small, rural towns throughout Oregon and Northern California economically and environmentally impacted. Families often had little opportunity, and very little voice in the future management of the forests that surrounded them. These communities have experienced a dramatic decline into economic depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and little hope for the future. Youth in rural forest-based and tribal communities struggle to find long-term employment and career opportunities.

Wildfire and smoke threaten the health and economies of these wildland urban interface and rural intermix communities, many of which are already facing intense economic challenges following the loss of jobs from the once thriving forest products industry. As forest ecosystems became degraded, so did people's lives.

Solutions

Collaborative restorative forestry is based in forest and fire science, Traditional Ecological Knowledge and eco-cultural management practices held by tribal communities. Lomakatsi serves as a principle NGO, working with collaborative partnerships in an all lands context.

Collaborative partnerships are fostering new ways of taking action, modeling successful forest restoration with government agencies and empowering disenfranchised communities to take an active role in restoring the resilience and long-term stewardship of the ecosystems that surround them.

Collaborative Partnerships Include:

- Fremont-Winema Master Stewardship / Klamath Tribal Ecosystem Restoration Partnership (OR.);
- Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative (OR.);
- Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship MSA (OR.);
- Western Klamath Restoration Partnership (CA.);
- Inter-Tribal Ecosystem Restoration Partnership (OR., CA);
- Klamath Siskiyou Oak Network (OR, CA).

This approach is based on the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, a national vision for wildland fire management. Promoting shared risk management among all stakeholders and across all landscapes, the strategy articulates the need for meaningful progress toward three goals: 1) resilient landscapes; 2) fire-adapted communities; and 3) safe and effective wildfire response. These efforts have centered on the U.S. Department of Agriculture, United States Forest Service, and the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management lands, private lands, ancestral lands of Federally-Recognized Tribes and tribal trust lands and emphasizes working across all-lands.

To address wildfire risks, impacts to forest health, and unemployment faced by rural and tribal communities, collaborative partnerships are leading an ambitious effort to restore resilience to forests, while creating fire adapted communities and long-term economic opportunity. Through

community engagement strategies that are tailored specifically to deeply held values and are founded on science-based risk assessments, collaborative groups of diverse stakeholders are advancing the retooling of wood processing infrastructure and communities' relationship with the forest landscape. "Shared Stewardship" becomes a reality through collaborative partnerships and networks, and the win-win is restored ecosystems, communities, and economies.

Following environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act, and utilizing risk assessments and conservation implementation strategies, treatments are prioritized in the Wildland Urban Interface to protect the communities or wildlife habitats at risk and in need of protection from wildfire. Other treatments are strategically placed along ridgelines within the landscape to serve as anchor points during future wildland firefighting efforts. Some of the restoration treatments are designed to protect ecologically valuable older forest patches by reducing dense patches of fuel adjacent to these areas in order to avoid the continued loss of at-risk habitats for species like the northern spotted owl. Strategic ecological thinning can expand the areas available for future controlled burning, managed fire and suppression efforts. After restorative mechanical treatments are completed, the stage has been set for the careful reintroduction of prescribed fire back into the landscape to reduce uncontrolled wildfire risk.

Importantly, this restoration vision is based on science, focuses on solutions, and is legally responsible. In addition to traditional ecological knowledge, many of our partners bring other scientific expertise to the collaborative table, which helps guide our restoration. This work does not require circumventing the environmental laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act or Endangered Species Act: instead, these laws provide a flexible framework in which we are able to tailor our land management treatments. To be sure, we are a diverse group of stakeholders, and we don't always agree on what's best for the land. But we are willing to try new approaches to sustainable land management, because we have no other choice if we are to sustain our forests and the communities that depend on them. We are stronger when we work together.

Modeling a 20-year Collaborative Forest Restoration Project

In addition to my role in Lomakatsi Restoration Project, I currently serve as the Board President of the Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative (SOFRC), who is leading a comprehensive approach to wildfire risk reduction, ecological restoration and wildfire fire management that will benefit people and the landscape.

The causes of more severe wildfires are climate change and outdated forest management practices. The Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative, an array of leaders in conservation and forestry, is tackling these challenges with the Rogue Basin Strategy.

The Rogue Basin Strategy provides a middle way between a complete hands-off approach and extensive timber harvest using even-aged management of a single species. The Strategy protects large trees and wildlife habitat but also offers risk reduction to communities and returns beneficial fire to the landscape.

SOFRC, an array of leaders in conservation and forestry, is tackling these challenges with the Rogue Basin Strategy and modeling a 20-year project to help bring such projects to a meaningful regional scale. SOFRC and partners layered conceptual and design elements of the foundational collaborative projects into modeling a 20-year Rogue Basin Cohesive Forest Restoration Strategy.

Earlier and successful stewardship and forest restoration projects demonstrated the integration of values through landscape design with strategic treatment placement and varied prescriptions to address the key shifts in forest composition, structure, and wildfire risk. The projects also generate timber as a byproduct of restorative forestry, while supporting the recovery of the northern spotted owl.

The Rogue Strategy articulates a principled and comprehensive approach to restoring forest and community resilience to fire across the 4.6- million-acre basin. Completed in 2017, the Rogue Strategy articulates a collaborative vision for a 1.1 million acre, 20- year program of work that focuses on thinning and controlled burning. A quantitative wildfire-risk assessment is at the core of the Rogue Strategy, connecting complementary partners focused on landscape resilience, fire adapted communities, and safe and effective wildfire response.

The Rogue Strategy provides data, tools, and approaches to integrating wildfire risk reduction with endangered species recovery and climate adaptation. It identifies forests to protect intact, then uses optimization software to place ecological thinning and controlled burning where accessible and appropriate. The outputs account for forest density reduction, reduced wildfire risk, and resulting timber revenue and jobs for three alternative scenarios. The all-lands scenario, mirroring the Ashland Forest All Lands project, reduces wildfire risk to human communities and old growth habitats by 50%, while annually delivering 83 million board feet of federal timber, the restoration byproduct, to local mills.

Following years of collaboration and technical development, the Rogue Basin Strategy is a comprehensive science-based roadmap for healthier forests and communities across 4.6 million acres of Southern Oregon.

Reduce Wildfire Risk to Forests and Communities

- Reduce wildfire severity
- Assist wildfire control
- Reduce wildfire risk by up to 70%
- Reduce wildfire risk to homes by up to 50%
- Reduce wildfire risk to high quality old-growth forest for the Northern Spotted Owl by 47%
- Enable better smoke management

Protect and Restore Forests

- Implement plans to restore old growth forest

- Restore open forest where appropriate in the landscape
- Protect riparian and stream habitat
- Promote climate resilience in forests
- Set the stage for controlled burning with prudent mechanical treatments

Collaborate with Communities and Support Local Economies

- Embrace a proactive, restorative approach to active management that sustains jobs and economic
- Employ site-specific collaboration and planning to support local values
- Generate 1,700 jobs annually
- Deliver 83 million board feet of federal timber to local mills annually

Resource Needs:

About 4.2 million acres of the Rogue Basin in southwest Oregon are forested and 64 percent of the forested lands are managed by the USFS and the BLM. Currently about 9,000 acres are treated each year for fuels reduction between both agencies. The RBS calls for treating between 35 and 45 thousand acres a year for 20 years. We need to begin increasing the acres treated annually not only on both BLM and USFS lands but also across boundaries on some of the 1.5 million acres of privately-owned land. The majority of the landscapes at risk of fire near the rural communities in our area are managed by BLM or are privately owned.

Leveraging Funding and Engagement

Proactively treating 1.1 million acres over 20 years at a cost of \$600 million is daunting, requiring co-investment toward shared landscape-scale objectives. Modeling this co-investment, SOFRC, The Nature Conservancy Lomakatsi, Klamath Bird Observatory, Oregon State University Extension, Oregon Department of Forestry, US Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, has successfully secured state funding from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and match from partners to launch the new Rogue Forest Restoration Initiative (RFRI). The \$6 million/six-year pledges from OWEB, backed with \$3.8 million in match from an expanded group of partners, will touch down with treatment implementation and community engagement on six projects distributed across the Rogue Basin. Successive implementation of staged projects distributed among management units will seed the approach in different communities. RFRI will leverage engagement on these initial projects to catalyze further understanding and support of new co-investments to expand and integrate across the basin.

To succeed, the RFRI Partnership must become a trusted institution with wide and diverse affiliations. Federal land treatments alone require a five-fold increase in the treatment schedule and funding. Considering the possible and potentially avoided costs (California spent \$15 billion in fire remediation and recovery from the 2018 fires), the investment in the Rogue Strategy appears wise. Industrial forest owners, the insurance industry, water utility fee payers, tribes, and county government could potentially become co-investors. Smoke impacts have spread the

risk from localized fire-vulnerable locations to broad communities now energized to proactively manage forest landscapes. To our advantage in going to scale, the region retains a viable timber industry, a growing and highly-trained workforce, and significant economic activity.

Long-Term Agreements, Co-Investments, and Restoration-Capacity Development

Success of All-Lands initiatives stems from collaborative relationships enabled by shared investment, risk and understanding, using the stewardship authority provided by the 2014 Farm Bill (Agricultural Act of 2014, Pub. L. 113-79, sec. 8205). Ten-20 year Master Stewardship Agreements among the US Forest Service, tribes, municipalities, and non-profit organizations allow partners to work collaboratively by using a variety of funding and tools to accomplish projects.

For example, tribal, municipal, and non-profit partners provide matching non-federal dollars to leverage private investments, lead community engagement efforts, and bring experience managing their adjacent lands to the table. As the dominant public land manager, the Forest Service is a critical partner and conduit for core funding as well as environmental planning and monitoring. Nongovernmental partners like Lomakatsi bring experience implementing projects under the stewardship authority with a flexibly-scaled and skilled ecological forestry workforce, which also allows us to integrate and engage diverse tribal and youth perspectives to our restoration work. NGO partners add science support and a conservation perspective, and lead multiparty monitoring that ensures transparency and accountability. An Implementation Review Team provides external review by staff from University partners and local environmental organizations. This is truly an “all-lands all-hands” approach to forest restoration.

Expanding a Nationally Recognized Forest Restoration, Tribal Capacity, and Workforce Development Model

Since 2005, Lomakatsi has served as a principal non-profit restoration management and implementation partner with the Oregon Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service Regions 5 and 6, playing a lead role in leveraging and administering funds from multiple sources for stewardship agreements and All-Lands initiatives.

We are a partner in seven stewardship agreements, three on the Rogue River-Siskiyou NF, one on Fremont-Winema NF, one in the Six Rivers NF an agreement with the Pacific Southwest that covers more than 25.5 million acres and an agreement with the Medford District BLM covering over 800,000 acres. These agreements currently provide the framework where almost 60,000 acres of restorative forestry treatments are in various stages of implementation with an opportunity to increase the pace and scale to treat larger acreages.

The commercial by-product of restoration, including saw logs, biomass, and small diameter materials, serve local mills. The stewardship agreements have succeeded in generating \$8 million of retained receipts from the sale of restoration byproduct timber, which is reinvested back into the project to accomplish additional restoration work, including prescribed fire.

Lomakatsi's efforts have helped to transform the human relationship with forests and fire by building upon successful initiatives that are increasing the pace, scale, and quality of forest restoration throughout the geography where we work.

One success story is a 5-year private lands initiative on the border of Oregon and Northern California in a rural community known as the Colestin Valley in the Mid-Klamath Watershed. Lomakatsi has served as the principle project sponsor for the Klamath-Rogue Oak Health and Habitat Restoration Project for the Klamath-Rogue Oak Health and Habitat Restoration Project, funded under the Regional Conservation Partnership Program of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Lomakatsi, in partnership with the NRCS, US Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and The Klamath Bird Observatory, is working with over 20 private landowners in Southwest Oregon and Northern California to assist them in enhancing wildlife habitat, reducing wildfire risk, and protecting and promoting oak woodland connectivity.

An investment of \$3 million-dollars from NRCS with partners bringing an additional 1.5 million in matching funds, has worked to restore 3,000 acres of degraded oak habitats with 20 private landowners enrolled in the program. Through an ecologically-based thinning and prescribed fire approach, oak habitats are being restored with an additional benefit of reduced fuel hazards and protection of the community risk.

Habitat restoration and fire mitigation strategies for this project involve a regional inter-tribal workforce who are implementing an eco-cultural restoration approach through the creation of a mosaic of habitat patches to promote food security by ensuring a diverse and productive landscape. Large old oaks are protected and thinned around and within the project area, the cultural vegetation mosaic is being restored promoting stability in the food supply by creating multiple resource patches. Maintaining a diversity of habitat buffers, the impact of natural fluctuation in a single food species and increases overall productivity is realized through eco-restoration efforts. Following mechanical treatments, the indigenous cultural fire cycle is being reintroduced to create openings that will attract elk, deer, and other game.

This practice of indigenous people skillfully modifying the fire cycle to create a range of forest openings in many different stages of post fire is resulting in breaking up fuel continuity and enhancing the diversity supporting habitat for big game, berries, root crops, edible seeds, and medicinal plants. This sustainable mosaic pattern began fading in the 1850s with Euro-American settlement and the forced removal of native Americans who had thrived with extensive fire use.

Sophisticated and extensive community engagement is a hallmark of these collaborative projects as is the management of a diverse workforce in complex social settings supported by critical community outreach. Our ability to build community trust and understanding, while at the same time effectively managing successful restorative commercial thinning projects, has established a solid foundation of community support for ecological restoration. This support

has resulted in sending more than 45 million board feet of timber to local rural mills, even in environmentally sensitive communities.

In addition to accomplishing community wildlife risk reduction and ecological restoration, Lomakatsi brings added capacity to address socio-economic challenges for rural forest, tribal, and rangeland-based communities, by layering education, workforce capacity, and small business development programs into stewardship projects. Through adult and youth workforce training programs, we are providing long-term employment to local community members and working to revitalize local communities while creating resilient ecosystems.

One example of community revitalization through Lomakatsi's workforce training programs includes the incubation of a tribally owned business, Issi Wah Ecocultural Restoration Services Inc. This company is housed on the XL Reservation of the Pit River Tribe in Modoc County California. All lands restoration efforts are in development across Forest Service, BLM, private and tribal trust lands, where emerging tribally owned service providers like Issi Wah, will be positioned to assist in implementation. Establishing long-term stewardship agreements, coupled with business incubation will provide place based local capacity and employment for tribal members.

Another example of intergenerational stewardship involves youth engagement and employment. For over 15 years, Lomakatsi has employed an innovative and highly successful model for engaging a diversity of youth in ecological restoration to build fire-adapted forests and communities. This model creates meaningful, living wage work experiences that provide the foundation for the next generation of workers in the forest product and ecological restoration industries. Four of these programs operate seasonally across three counties in Oregon and one in California and have employed over 300 youth in the rural timber based and tribal communities. This program is changing lives.

Another project success is seen in the ancestral lands of The Klamath Tribes. The Klamath Tribal Ecosystem Restoration Partnership Initiative is a strategic collaboration spearheaded by The Klamath Tribes' Natural Resources Department (NRD). The Initiative is aimed at increasing the tribes' capacity to actively manage their ancestral lands. Through established strategic partnerships with Lomakatsi and The Nature Conservancy, this initiative is building additional capacity within the Natural Resources Department, creating sustainable job opportunities with a focus on tribal members, and engaging in ecological forestry and ecosystem restoration on the Klamath Reservation Forest and ancestral lands. The Initiative has emerged through years of collaboration that built a mutually respectful relationship between the partners through active engagement on the land, planning processes, workforce development and training.

Building upon years of collaboration, The Klamath Tribes, Lomakatsi and The Nature Conservancy entered into a formal Master Stewardship Agreement with the U.S. Forest Service, Fremont-Winema National Forest (see submitted letter from Tribal Chairman Don Gentry). The Master Stewardship Agreement, executed in September of 2011, put into place a ten-year framework for landscape restoration activities through the planning and development of

Supplemental Project Agreements (SPAs). The area of focus is the approximate 1.7 million acres of the Fremont-Winema National Forest (excluding the Lakeview Sustained Yield Unit) which includes the 1.1 million acres of former reservation land and ancestral lands.

Technical ecological forestry training and mentoring has increased the knowledge of tribal staff to develop, implement and administer stewardship agreements including project preparation: boundary layout, tree marking, vegetation inventory and implementation: tree falling, controlled burning.

This collaborative partnership has been a successful national model of ecological forestry across more than 40,000 acres where restoration is being implemented, creating forest resiliency and building fire adapted communities. We have succeeded in developing 4 Supplemental Project Agreements that have resulted in 24 million board feet removed through an ecological forestry approach that protects the large old trees, restores forest structural diversity, reduces the risk of uncharacteristically severe wildfire, while benefiting communities and supporting the local economy. The restoration by-products and generated dollars from the timber and biomass removed, goes back into restoring the ecosystem and habitat for our subsistence and cultural beneficial uses of the tribe.

Lomakatsi has brought the tribal community a team of technical assistance specialists helping to build a workforce that is equipped with the skillsets for natural resource careers. This has included building tribal capacity and a labor pool to engage in long-term ecological restoration and economic development, working across the ancestral land base and an additional 12 counties, where 45 adult tribal members and tribal affiliates have been employed. Lomakatsi has also partnered with The Klamath Tribes in managing the Tribal Ecological Forestry Youth Training and Employment Program, where 17 tribal youth were employed and trained in natural resource careers, building the next generation of ecological stewards.

Our model focuses on a triple bottom line/community-based approach to restorative forest management that includes jobs, economic activity, fire preparedness, and restoring the natural condition of ecosystems reliant on periodic wildfire. Ensuring that people in rural communities have the skills and employment opportunities to secure forest jobs and build contracting businesses will sustain local capacity for the long-term maintenance and stewardship of forests.

When we restore the forests and create resilient ecosystems, we restore health and social well-being to communities. What this looks like in action is re-tooling and re-training skilled forest workers to view the forest through restoration eyes. It means community-based organizations working with government agencies to develop restoration initiatives, then raising the funds to launch these projects and hiring and training local community members to implement them. It also means active community engagement when designing projects, empowering these communities to have a voice in the care of their forests, and facilitating long-term partnerships between communities, agencies, and funding sources. This ensures long-term empowerment, capacity building, and funding acquisition in these communities, which is desperately lacking in most of our communities. In the case of tribal communities, it means facilitating capacity to

have an active role in the care of their ancestral lands through the knowledge of the active stewardship of indigenous fire as a place-based model and stewardship tool.

Collaborative partnerships are manifesting a proactive, middle way through historical tension between resource use and conservation, sidestepping a false dichotomy between the needs of people and the needs of nature. Fortunately, broad public and partner support for proactive, restorative mechanical treatments with controlled burning has been buoyed by successful projects like those in which Lomakatsi is involved. Ecologically-based and collaboratively implemented stewardship projects are grounded in the best available science and traditional ecological knowledge, which has allowed mature partnerships to integrate objectives and deliver long-term landscape-scale solutions. Every day we are closer to realizing our shared landscape vision: to transform society's reactive relationship with wildfire to one that proactively and positively engages with fire to restore forested landscapes and create community resiliency and safety.

Creating Wildfire Resilient Communities

Organizations such as Lomakatsi and our partners are doing our part to create wildfire resilient communities, both from an ecological and socioeconomic standpoint. But we need the help of the United States Congress to continue to support the programs, mechanisms and appropriations that support these models that are demonstrating success.

Conclusion

In sum, there is a great deal of good news coming from the forests of Klamath-Siskiyou region in the Pacific Northwest, although much work remains. Diverse partnerships, including Native American Sovereign Nations, non-profits and federal and state agencies are restoring forests to a more resilient condition, which is slowly improving the socioeconomic wellbeing of associated rural communities. This work is time consuming and difficult, requiring a strong commitment from staff, but the rewards are great. Lomakatsi looks forward to working with this Committee to ensure that our progress continues.

Sincerely,



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