STATEMENT OF
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U.S. FOREST SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS
AND PUBLIC LANDS
HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

March 6, 2008

CONCERNING

H.R. 2675 – Help to Access Land for the Education of Scouts' or `HALE Scouts Act'

Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today in order to provide the Department of Agriculture's view on H.R. 2675. The Department does not oppose this bill. This bill would provide for the sale of approximately 140 acres of land in the Ouachita National Forest in Oklahoma to the Indian Nations Council, Inc., of the Boy Scouts of America.

The bill stipulates that the sale of national forest system land shall be for market value, as determined in an appraisal done in conformity with the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions. H.R. 2675 also provides that the Council will pay the reasonable administrative costs for appraisals, surveys and other administrative analyses

associated with the land sale. The bill authorizes retention and use of the proceeds from the land sale to purchase land and interests in land within the Ouachita National Forest.

The Council owns and operates a camp on land they own within the Ouachita National Forest. The Council desires to build additional facilities on land east of their current operation.

While the land proposed for acquisition is not identified for conveyance in the Forest Plan, it does adjoin a sizable private in-holding owned by the Council. The provision in the bill directing the retention of proceeds from the sale to be used for land acquisition will allow the Forest Service to purchase replacement lands having high priority resource and public recreation benefits.

While the Department does not oppose H.R. 2675, we would like to work with Committee staff on technical corrections to the bill, such as referencing a map in lieu of a legal description.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.