

Statement of Tony Tooke
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U.S. Forest Service
United States Department of Agriculture
Before the
United States House of Representatives
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs,
February 5, 2014
Concerning

H.R. 3605, “Sandia Pueblo Settlement Technical Amendment Act”

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Hanabusa, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to provide the Department of Agriculture’s views on H.R. 3605 “Sandia Pueblo Settlement Technical Amendment Act.

The Administration supports H.R. 3605. H.R. 3605 would amend the T'uf Shur Bien Preservation Trust Area Act (Act) by adding paragraph (6) to section 413(b) requiring the Secretary of Agriculture, at the request of the Sandia Pueblo of New Mexico and the Secretary of the Interior, to transfer certain National Forest System (NFS) land to the Secretary of the Interior to be held in trust for the Pueblo, if a land exchange with the Pueblo currently required by that Act is not completed within 30 days of enactment of the bill. The bill provides an additional option of using an interagency transfer of lands, in addition to the land exchange that was specified in the original Act. An interchange can achieve the original Act’s objectives, but through a process less complex and considerably less expensive than a land exchange.

The bill would require the NFS land conveyed to the Secretary of the Interior under paragraph (6) “remain undeveloped with the natural characteristics of the land to be preserved in perpetuity.” After the transfer of the NFS land is complete, the bill would require the Secretary of the Interior, with the consent of the Pueblo, to transfer to the Secretary of Agriculture (1) the La Luz tract as generally depicted on the map entitled “Sandia Pueblo Settlement Technical Amendment Act and dated October 24, 2013; (2) the conservation easement on the Piedra Lisa tract as generally depicted on the map entitled “Sandia Pueblo Settlement Technical Amendment Act and dated October 24, 2013; and (3) the right-of-way for the Piedra Lisa Trail within the Piedra Lisa tract as generally depicted on the map entitled “Sandia Pueblo Settlement Technical Amendment Act and dated October 24, 2013. The La Luz tract would be conveyed to the Secretary of Agriculture without deed conditions.

The Forest Service has been working closely with the Pueblo of Sandia and Bureau of Indian Affairs to ensure this transfer is implemented smoothly.

This concludes my testimony and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.