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Introduction

The HALE Scouts Act is proposed to support the continued growth of the Indian Nations Council Boy Scout summer camp program in the Ouachita National Forest located in Eastern Oklahoma. The passage of this Act will allow the Indian Nations Council to purchase an additional 140 acres of U.S. Forest Service land immediately adjacent to the existing Camp Tom Hale facility. We have worked extensively with the U.S. Forest Service over the last four years to coordinate this effort and respond to their needs and consideration of this opportunity. Further, the Indian Nations Council Board worked closely with Congressman Boren's office as they drafted the H.R. 2675 which is now before this Subcommittee. We would like to thank Congressman Boren, his staff, and the U.S. Forest Service for their support and cooperation. We thank this Subcommittee for the opportunity to make this presentation.

Hale Scout Reservation (Camp Tom Hale)

In 1963, the Indian Nations Council completed a transaction with the State of Oklahoma and U.S. Forest Service to acquire 480 acres of wilderness area in the Ouachita National Forest to establish Camp Tom Hale. Camp Tom Hale continues to this day as an adventure camp, serving thousands of scouts and adult leaders each summer with a wide variety of activities, advancement, and learning opportunities.

This past summer over 6,300 scouts attended camp during one of its eight sessions (see Attachment 1). During a typical week at Camp Tom Hale, scouts are active participants in fun and learning dedicated to leadership, life skills, nature conservation, and values consistent with the Boy Scout program. Nearly 20,000 merit badges were earned for 2007 and over 1,300 rank advancements were completed by the scouts in attendance. Attendance in 2007 was 110% of the 2006 participation. Year-over-year program growth has been consistent. Ninety-three percent (93%) of our Council's troops attended a long-term camp session this past summer at Camp Tom Hale.

The Council has already taken significant steps and made further investments to accommodate the increased demand for camp services. A ninth week of camping has been added to our 2008 camping season which now completely fills the summer availability. Previously, we have added new camp sites with full bathroom and shower facilities to the extent available on our current landholdings. We are at capacity today and now have a waiting list of troops wishing to attend.

The success of Camp Tom Hale was no accident. Starting in 1997, the Board of the Indian Nations Council adopted a strategic plan that included a major \$3.5 million expansion and renovation of the camp. This expansion not only included the "bricks and mortar" listed below but also the leadership and human resources necessary to make a World Class Boy Scout Camp a reality:

- New Dining Facility Seating 500
- Junior Olympic Pool
- Facilities for Nature Training
- Lake Aquatics Training
- Air-conditioned Staff Housing
- Downhill Skiing Area
- Horse Stables
- Leadership Training Center
- 28,000 Gallon Water Storage & Delivery System
- Complete Waste Disposal Lagoon System
- Many Other Program Enhancements

But Camp Tom Hale isn't just for the scouts. The year 2007 marked the fifth year in a row that many adult leader training courses were offered, covering a wide variety of adult leadership, outdoor skills, and first aid courses. This past year 1,300 various adult leader course completion certificates were issued. In addition, First Aid and CPR Certification was offered, resulting in 153 leaders completing adult CPR with AED, 50 were certified in First Aid, and 120 adults completed Wilderness First Aid.

Due to the growth of the scouting program in Eastern Oklahoma, attendance at Camp Tom Hale has outgrown the maximum number of available campsites and program capacity, and has caused us to turn away hundreds of scouts each summer. The critical need to serve more scouts requires additional land to allow us to maintain the quality of camping and experience for our scouts and their adult leaders. Boundaries must now be extended to include more area for camping and for additional program and training services.

Background Information – Boy Scouts of America

For more than 95 years the Boy Scouts of America has dedicated itself to teaching America's youth about self-respect, leadership, and life values while preparing them to become our leaders of tomorrow. Our programs are infused with a balanced mix of outdoor adventures, life and leadership skills, character education, and values. Scouting provides youth with the essential tools they will need to successfully navigate their adolescent years and beyond.

The programs of the Boy Scouts of America were introduced into this country in 1910. In 1916, United States Congress recognized the potential of the Boy Scouts of America's programs as an educational resource for groups interested in a positive program for youth. The United States Congress granted a charter to the Boy Scouts of America to make the Scouting programs available through community organizations.

Background Information – Indian Nations Council, Inc.

The Indian Nations Council is chartered by the National Council, Boy Scouts of America to administer the Scouting program in 18 counties throughout Eastern Oklahoma. The National Council conducts an annual charter review and financial audit of the Council to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the programs and financial condition. The Indian Nations Council ranks in the top 10% of all Boy Scout Councils and has consistently achieved the Quality Council Award.

The Indian Nations Council provides service for over 28,000 youth and 6,000 adult leaders. The programs are administered by 19 full-time professionals and 11 administrative personnel. The Executive Board of Indian Nations Council consists of 111 community and professional leaders from Eastern Oklahoma. The programs offered by the Indian Nations Council include the traditional Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Venturing, as well as eight outdoor camping/activity facilities.

The traditional Scouting model remains at the core of all that is offered by the Indian Nations Council. Yet as good citizens within the 18 counties of Eastern Oklahoma, we have demonstrated the Scouting slogan, "Do a Good Turn Daily" and have developed, funded, and continue to grow specific non-traditional approaches to Scouting in order to reach youth who would not otherwise have a chance to participate in Scouting. We call this Scout Reach.

Our Scout Reach Program is over 15 years old and is a unique program intended to serve the needs of children not traditionally involved in Boy Scouts (inner city, Hispanic, and extreme rural). The program is designed to bring together the tools and methods of the "5 Promises Initiative" along with traditional Scout programs to provide the following resources to these at-risk youth:

- Caring Adults
- Safe Places and Constructive Use of Time
- A Healthy Start and Healthy Development
- Effective Education for Marketable Skills and Lifelong Learning
- Opportunities to Make a Difference through Helping Others

The Scout Reach Division of the Indian Nations Council consists of 2,800 boys ages 7 to 18. The Scout Reach programs are provided staff from the Indian Nations Council, conducting scout meetings, monthly field trips, merit badge, and advancement opportunities for each child. Staff mentors also serve as a scout leader during the summer months giving all participants an opportunity to attend week-long summer camp experiences. Four out of the nine week-long sessions at Camp Tom Hale include Scout Reach troops.

Summary

We feel strongly that the mission of the Boy Scouts in Eastern Oklahoma can be more effectively accomplished through the needed expansion of Camp Tom Hale. The addition of 140 acres will allow thousands more scouts to be served with programs designed to teach them valuable life skills and a greater appreciation of the outdoors. Funding of more than \$400,000 has been approved by the Indian Nations Council Board for this purchase including the immediate construction of infrastructure and facilities to camp 180 additional scouts per week, once the acquisition is completed. Further funding in excess of \$1.5 million is anticipated in the near future for additional camping & program facilities on this addition.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter. We appreciate the continued support and cooperation of Congressman Boren and the U.S. Forest Service. We would be pleased to answer any questions that you have about the Indian Nations Council and this proposal.

Attachments:

- (1) Chart
- (2) Photos – 4 Pages