

**Statement of
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U.S. Department of Agriculture
Before the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs
November 4th, 2015
Concerning
H.R. 3079, a bill to take certain Federal land located in Tuolumne County, California,
into trust for the benefit of the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians**

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Ruiz and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to provide the U.S. Department of Agriculture's views regarding H.R. 3079, a bill to take certain Federal land located in Tuolumne County, California, into trust for the benefit of the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3079 would transfer approximately 80 acres of National Forest System (NFS) lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service located within the boundaries of the Stanislaus National Forest to be held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians.

The Department does not oppose the transfer of this land to be held in trust for the benefit of the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians. The two National Forest System parcels comprising the 80 acres are surrounded by private property with no legal access for the Forest Service. The private properties surrounding the two parcels are the Murphy Ranch, owned by the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians, and the Edward Ingalls Trust. Mr. Craig Ingalls has written a letter on behalf of the Trust in support of this proposed land transfer.

A search of Forest records and a brief site visit indicate that there are no distinctive Forest uses or special resources connected to or located on these parcels. There are no special use authorizations associated with these parcels. There is, however, a grazing permit that covers these parcels. However, the forage on these allotments is minimal, and there is no range infrastructure on the properties. Discussions with the range permittee and the tribe related to future range use have taken place and a workable solution for both parties has been reached.

The Department supports the positive and cooperative relationship between the Forest Service on Stanislaus National Forest and the Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians and their desire to manage these lands for fuels reduction and other conservation purposes.

The Department would like to work with the Committee to make one important technical correction to the legal description as described in the legislation. Please add to the legal description the base and meridian, Mt. Diablo Meridian. This is needed to distinguish between the Mt. Diablo, San Bernardino and Humboldt meridians.

This concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer questions concerning this bill.