

**Statement of
Bill Haines,
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Boy Scouts of America
before the
House Natural Resources Committee,
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forest and Public Lands
on
H.R. 473**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss H.R. 473, the 'Help to Access Land for the Education of Scouts' or 'HALE Scouts Act.'

The HALE Scouts Act proposes to allow the Indian Nations Council of the Boy Scouts of America to purchase acreage from the Ouachita National Forest to expand summer camp operations. We have worked extensively with the U.S. Forest Service to coordinate the purchase.

Further, the Indian Nations Council Board worked closely with Congressman Boren's and Senator Inhofe's offices as they drafted the HALE Scouts Act. We would like to thank Congressman Boren and Senator Inhofe, their staff, and the U.S. Forest Service for their support and cooperation.

Boy Scout camps develop the "whole self" and encourage good citizenship. The Indian Nations Council is not looking for a handout, only the ability to purchase additional acreage from a willing seller at fair market value to provide great scouting experiences for more kids.

In 1963, the Indian Nations Council acquired 480 acres from Ouachita National Forest to establish Camp Tom Hale. Camp Tom Hale continues to this day as an adventure camp, providing thousands of Scouts and adult leaders each summer from around the country with a wide variety of activities, advancement, and learning opportunities.

This summer over 6,800 Scouts will attend camp during one of its nine sessions. During a typical week at Camp Tom Hale, scouts participate in leadership and life skills development, nature conservation, and value building exercises, 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 2010 was 113% of the 2009 participation. Year-over-year program growth has been consistent. Ninety-three percent (93%) of our Council's troops attended a long-term camp session last summer at Camp Tom Hale.

In recent years, the Council has invested over \$1 million in the camp to accommodate increased demand for camp services. An additional week of camping has been added, which now completely fills the summer availability. Previously, we have added new camp sites with bathroom and shower facilities.

We are at complete capacity and have a waiting list of troops wishing to attend. Other recent improvements include:

- 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
- New Waste Disposal Lagoon with a 10,000 Scout capacity
- Many Other Program & Facility Enhancements

Funding of more than \$400,000 has been approved by the Indian Nations Council Board for purchase of additional land, 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 has been raised for additional camping and program facilities.

Camp Tom Hale is not just for the youth. Since 2002, Camp Tom Hale has hosted adult leader training courses, covering a wide variety of leadership and outdoor skill development and first aid courses. This past year 1,500 various adult leader course completion certificates were issued. In addition, First Aid and CPR Certification was offered, resulting in 232 leaders completing adult CPR with AED, 126 were certified in First Aid, and 261 adults completed Wilderness First Aid.

Due to the growth of the scouting program in eastern Oklahoma, attendance at Camp Tom Hale has outgrown the program capacity, causing us to turn away hundreds of scouts each summer. The critical need to serve more scouts requires additional space 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. Passage of the HALE Act will provide the space needed to allow over 1,500 additional scouts the ability to go to camp.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter. I appreciate the continued support and cooperation of Congressman Boren, Senator Inhofe and the U.S. Forest Service. I would be pleased to answer any questions.