UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

LISTENING SESSION

2017 LAND BUY-BACK PROGRAM FOR TRIBAL NATIONS

1:00 p.m.

Tuesday, April 25, 2017

Tulalip Resort Casino

10200 Quil Ceda Boulevard

Tulalip, Washington 98271
PARTICIPANTS

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR:

MIKE BLACK, Acting Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C.

DEBRA DUMONTIER, Acting Special Trustee, Office of the Special Trustee for American Indians, Albuquerque, New Mexico

KATHERIN (KATY) GROUNDS, Supervisory Senior Advisor - Tribal Relations, Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C.

WELDON (BRUCE) LOUDERMILK, Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C.

JOHN MCCLANAHAN, Director, Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C.

JULIUS SNELL, Advisor - Tribal Relations, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C.

TRIBAL MEMBERS/SPEAKERS:

TERI GOBIN, Vice Chair, Tulalip Tribe, Tulalip, Washington
PARTICIPANTS

TRIBAL MEMBERS/SPEAKERS (continued):

PATTI GOBIN, Treaty Rights Office, Tulalip Tribes, Tulalip, Washington

CHELSEA GOBIN, Teacher, Quil Ceda Tulalip Elementary School, Tulalip, Washington

TRIBAL LEADERS:

EDDIE HAMILTON, Governor, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, Concho, Oklahoma

AUSTIN GREEN, Chairman, Tribal Council, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Nation, Warm Springs, Oregon

TRACY SMALL, Project Coordinator, Crow Nation, Crow Agency, Montana.

HARRY BARNES, Chairman, Blackfeet Tribe, Browning, Montana

DELANO SALUSKIN, Vice-Chairman, Yakama Nation, Toppenish, Washington

TOM HAMMER, Fort Belknap Indian Community, Harlem, Montana
PARTICIPANTS

TRIBAL LEADERS:

MARY ANN YOUNGBLOOD, Tribal Elder, Suquamish Tribe, Suquamish, Washington

STUART REDWING, Tribal Secretary, East Santee Dakota Nation, Nebraska

FRANCIS MULLINS, Private Citizen

TRIBAL MEMBERS:

MONNA CORDONIA, Tulalip Tribe, Tulalip, Washington

TOM CURLEY, GIS Program Manager, Suquamish Tribe, Suquamish, Washington

ROBERT WILSON, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, Concho, Oklahoma

NOREEN LAFORGE, Crow Tribe, Crow Agency, Montana

JAMES KELLY, Oil and Gas Administrator, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, Concho, Oklahoma
MR. MCCLANAHAN: Hello. Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to the Land Buy-Back Program for Tribal Nations 2017 Listening Session. My name is John McClanahan. I'm the director for the Buy-Back Program. I just wanted to start by saying we do have an interpreter here at the front, so if there's anybody that needs interpretive help, please come forward.

Before we begin, I wanted to introduce and hand over the welcome to Chairwoman -- Vice Chairwoman Teri Gobin to make a welcome on behalf of the Tulalip Tribe, our gracious host for today's Listening Session. Ms. Vice Chair?

MS. TERI GOBIN: Thank you. First of all, I'd like to welcome you all here to our beautiful reservation and our land. And we're excited to have you be here to be part of this wonderful group that is looking out for the best interests of Natives throughout the country.

My name is (NATIVE LANGUAGE SPOKEN). My English name is Teri Gobin. My parents are (NATIVE LANGUAGE...
SPOKEN), Joanne Jones and (NATIVE LANGUAGE SPOKEN), Stan Jones, and my father was on the Council for 44 years, and 26 of those as chair. But I just recently got on the Council. I'm three and a half weeks in, so I know it all. No.

(Laughter.)

MS. GOBIN: So, but our Chairwoman, Marie -- our newly-elected chairwoman, Marie Zackuse, is out of town, and she was going to be here today, but her schedule had some conflicts. So, this is the first time we had a majority woman Council. We have four women on our Council.

So, we are looking at quite a few changes in our Tribe, and this is the year of the woman for our Tribe and Mother Earth, and different things that we're going to be bringing are going to be positive changes for our people, and we're really excited about that. Our schedules are conflicting all over the place. That's one of the things we're going to get under control.

But, as a matter of fact, I have a meeting to head out to right after we have the youth here perform. But I'd like Patti to introduce the group here today.
MS. PATTI GOBIN: Many of you see me -- see me this morning, so I'm not going to speak much. But my ancestral name is (NATIVE LANGUAGE SPOKEN). My English name is Patti Gobin. I work for the Treaty Rights Office for the Tulalip Tribes. And my parents are Delores Gobin and Bernie Gobin, and my grandparents are Joe and Ruth Gobin and Cecelia Young -- (NATIVE LANGUAGE SPOKEN) Young.

And this is my daughter. I'll let her do the introduction. She works for Marysville School District for Quil Ceda Tulalip Elementary School, and these are our kids.

MS. CHELSEA GOBIN: So, my name is (NATIVE LANGUAGE SPOKEN), and I'm a teacher at Quil Ceda Tulalip. And we're on the reservation just down the road, but we are a public school in part of the Marysville School District. And when I started teaching, I thought we have so much work to do in education, and I believe we have so much healing to do. And so, I thought, well, my great-grandmother is a survivor of Tulalip Boarding School, and they did everything they could to stop her from
being Indian. They beat her for speaking her language.
They made her feel as though she was less than human.
They made it illegal for our people to practice their
singing and dancing. They did everything they could to
take -- strip away being Indian from our people. They
weren't allowed to do that. Our people are amazing
people, and we survived that time.
So, one way of healing around education in a
public school is we sing every single morning as a
whole school. We sing a traditional song. These songs
belong to families, so I don't want to offend anyone if
some of these songs might be coming from your
territories. Some families have brought them forward
to give us permission to sing them, and I apologize if
there are any mistakes. We're still learning.
But we sing every single morning to try to heal
the past. We sing for our ancestors. We sing because
they weren't allowed to sing. They weren't allowed to
be Indian when they walked through the doors of the
education system. And if that's the one thing we can
start with, that's what we're doing.
Our next goal is to get Indian education in every
single classroom in an indigenous way of thinking and teaching, so, this is a start for us. So, thank you for having us.

(Presentation by Quil Ceda Tulalip Elementary School.)

(Applause.)

MR. MCCLANAHAN: I can't think of a better way to start a Listening Session. Thank you so much, Vice Chair. Thank you, singers and drummers. I know you won't ever stop, but don't stop drumming and singing.

That was awesome. Thank you.

Today we're here to listen to Indian Country. Our goal is to receive input, and guidance, and questions that we will take back that we will hear, and as we have before, use to improve the Program. Our goal will be to be brief so that we can listen to you, so I will make a few brief remarks.

I'm going to show a video. But, again, our main goal here today is to hear from you about how the Program is working, how it can get better. And that's a very important thing for the Program because our results, as you'll hear us talk about today, are really
a result of working with Indian Country.

So, before I show the video, I just wanted to frame a few of the issues to facilitate our conversation today, and, first of all, I want to talk about the scope of fractionation. This is a major challenge that we have before us. There's about 245,000 people across 150 locations in Indian Country that have three million fractional interests, and that covers about 11 million acres of land.

As we've talked about in prior Listening Sessions and in the reports that we've put out, 90 percent of Indian land was lost through the allotment policy. So, this 11 million acres that's remaining that's fractionated with so many owners is so important to focus on. And that's the mission of the Buy-Back Program is to do what we can to consolidate the fractional interests on that land.

Oftentimes this remaining land is the prime land, the important land that's next to a river, or in the bottom land, or next to a road or habitat. So, we're really trying to make sure that that remaining acreage is the best that it can be.
In May of 2016, we announced a schedule of 105 locations that we're seeking to bring the Program to. That's out of the 150 locations. We put that schedule together after talking with Indian Country and getting input from Tribal leaders and others. Those 105 locations encompass about 96 percent of all the owners across these fractionated acres and about 98 percent of the acres.

And we've quite a bit of progress working with those locations, 37 now I believe that we've made offers to. And those locations have achieved some major progress with us in just a short amount of time. Our first offers went out in December of 2013, and those were at Makah, so right close to here, our very first offers. And then we rolled out at larger locations in the Great Plains at Pine Ridge and Rosebud.

But at this point now, we've got some big results. You're going to hear a lot of results, but one of the big ones that I wanted to mention is that we've reduced the number of fractional interests from the number that existed in 2013 by about 23 percent. And some of the
location-specific results are even greater than that.

I’m soo happy that Chairman Barnes is here today from Blackfeet to talk about their results. Fifty-two percent reduction in fractional interests. Pine Ridge, 44 percent. Fort Belknap about 45 percent. So, really some tangible results.

The results that we've achieved, again, would not have been possible without our cooperative agreements and outreach with Indian Country. So, I just want to take a moment and recognize all the Tribal leaders and staff that are here today to help answer the questions that the landowners have, and help disseminate information about the Program. Your work with us has been absolutely critical to making this work, so I just want to say hats off to you, and thank you for your partnership.

It's a huge, huge issue. Our job is not done. And so, today we want to know what we can do to keep at this issue of fractionation. We've got new leadership obviously that's in place and coming in place in the days ahead, and we know that they're very interested in fractionation. They're taking a look at our progress
so far. They're asking as part of this fresh look what other strategies could we bring to bear, especially those that maximize the number of fractional interests that we can consolidate. And so, you know, all options are on the table.

A couple of things that have been discussed so far are how can we make the appraisals that we do available to as many people as we can, so if they want to do co-owner purchases, that that's an option. We've also talked about, and I'll get into this a little bit later, our purchasing power. Of the dollars we have left, how can that be used in a way that's going to get the most interest?

And we've also talked about the possibility of changing the schedule that we announced back in May. And when I say "changing the schedule," that could mean returning to places that the Program has already been to. It could mean adding places that we have not been to that are not on our schedule. But it also could mean changes in not going to places that are already identified. And I just want to make sure that we flag that early and get your input on that.
The Federal Register notice that we put out before the Listening Session flagged those items, but I just wanted to take a moment here and identify that. I also want to say we don't know what those changes might be. Part of the process is to get input from Indian Country, and we're analyzing the situation as well. So, please provide your input. That will be considered, and it's, again, very important. We have hard choices. Any time you've got a greater need than resources or time, you're going to have to make hard choices, and so, we need your help making those hard choices. So, right now what I'd like to do is play a video that we put together in the last couple of years. And this is really a video that showcases the teamwork that has been a big part of the Program. Our Interior partners, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Office of Special Trustee, the BLM, many other offices have come together to make this a reality with Indian Country. And so, you'll see many of our staff that are here today in the video, and you'll also see Tribal leaders that helped talk about the Program early on and what
its benefits were to them. It's something that we've
shared with all locations, and it's on our website.
And it's, I think, a pretty good way to give you an
overview of the Program.
So, without further ado, I'll play that now.
(Video presentation.)
MR. MCCLANAHAN: Now I'd like to invite some of
the leaders from the Department of Interior up to the
stage that are going to be here at the table listening
to your feedback, and they'll each make some brief
remarks. I just, again, wanted to say thank you to our
staff all over the country, many of which are here,
many of which are in the video, for helping make this
Program happen.
So, I want to introduce Deb DuMontier. She's the
Acting Special Trustee for American Indians. The
Office of Special Trustee has been a major partner in
the Buy-Back Program in a number of areas, including
appraisal work and outreach. Deb?
MS. DUMONTIER: Thank you, John. (NATIVE LANGUAGE
SPOKEN) to the Tulalip Tribe for welcoming us with that
song. It really warmed the heart.
We often talk about how the Buy-Back Program strengthens Tribal sovereignty. Every interest sold reduces fractionation and increases land consolidation, which allows Tribes to manage and use reservation lands for the benefit of the Tribal community as a whole. But a Land Buy-Back Program purchase can also be life-changing for the individual landowner.

We are working diligently to make sure that the landowners have the information they need to make informed decisions about their land. We also know that it's critical to provide financial training, including budgeting, investing, and planning for the future, to empower beneficiaries to grow and sustain personal wealth.

For those landowners who receive a purchase offer and choose to sell their land, it's important to think strategically about how to use the funds received from the sale. It may be the single and only time an individual receives such an amount in their lifetime. The proceeds of the land sale represent the land's legacy, and the funds can offer both long- and short-term benefits.
At OST, we have dedicated staff to provide beneficiaries with additional information regarding their land interests, and what options may be available to them with respect to their proceeds of sale. We have a table set up next door, Orca 3, so if you haven't stopped by, please do. We also have information about how to contact our Trust Beneficiary Call Center or visit our Financial Empowerment website.

But not everyone will receive a Buy-Back purchase offer, or if a landowner receives an offer and chooses not to sell their land, it is still equally important to consider how to best utilize the property, and how to efficiently pass the interests to their intended beneficiaries. There are certain Federal rules and Tribal codes that govern inheritants of trust land.

OST and our partners at the Bureau of Indian Affairs help landowners make informed decisions by sharing information about various estate planning options that may be available, such as gift deeds, exchanges, and life estates. Because the rules and the codes can and do change and are sometimes complex, it is critically important to get as much information as
possible to make careful and informed decisions about land interests and estate planning options.

Again, OST can help. We work collaboratively with a number of Tribal organizations, legal aid services, and law schools to help provide Indian trust beneficiaries with resources to assist with estate planning. The biggest priority of our team is to provide landowners with the answers they need to make informed decisions.

We are undertaking a monumental effort to conduct outreach about the Buy-Back Program through advertisements, media relations, postcards and phone calls, posters, public service announcements, regional events, and sessions on or near reservations. We have also partnered with the Indian Land Tenure Foundation to create a brochure, which you received in your welcome packet, to help landowners understand how their appraisals are calculated. This brochure is also sent to every landowner who receives a purchase offer.

I hope that everyone here will join us in assisting with the outreach efforts throughout the remainder of the Land Buy-Back Program. The proceeds
from this effort can truly make a difference throughout Indian Country, for individual Indians, and the communities they call home.

So, thank you for attending, and now I'd like to turn the microphone over to Mr. Mike Black, our Acting Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs.

MR. BLACK: All right. Thanks, Deb, and good afternoon, everybody.

First, before I get started, I'd like to introduce down at the end of the table there, we have Mr. Bruce Loudermilk, the Director for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. And, Bruce, do you have anything you'd like to say?

MR. LOUDERMILK: Yeah. You know, I just wanted to come to this meeting and introduce myself. Obviously previous to this position, which I got to D.C. on December 24th, so relatively new as the Bureau director, I was regional director of the Great Plains Region. I've seen the positive benefits of this as it rolled through the Great Plains for both individuals and the Tribes. And I just wanted to be here today as we go through this process here in the Northwest.
So, thank you.

MR. BLACK: All right. Thank you very much, Bruce.

Well, again, welcome, everybody, and thanks to the Tulalip Tribe for hosting us this afternoon. We greatly appreciate that. I want to reiterate what has already been said about the historic opportunity before us today.

This Program was designed in partnership with the Tribes and the individuals through consultation and the Cobell plaintiffs to help reverse the fractionation of Indian lands that was set in motion under now repudiated policies of allotment and assimilation. Together we created this program which helps to keep this land in trust, and together we can continue to see the difference made in Tribal communities throughout Indian Country.

The Program is about putting resources back into Indian Country. Reducing fractionation reinforces the cultural and economic future of Tribes. Consolidating and returning these lands to Tribes in trust has an enormous potential to improve Tribal community
resources by increasing home site locations, improving transportation routes, spurring economic development, and preserving traditional cultural and historical ceremonial sites.

We're already seeing this difference this Program is making, and some of you may have examples we can cite. But as a result of the Program, the Squaxin Island Tribe is now able to better protect its world-class oyster beds. Land secured in trust for the Crow Tribe is being used for a community water plant. The Makah Tribe was able to build the Cape Resort Cabins and Camping Recreational Vehicle Facility, which will help generate further income from the Tribe. And the Oglala Sioux Tribe of the Pine Ridge Reservation is embarking on a major housing program aided by the recent acquisition of land through the Program.

At Crow Creek, there was a single tract with approximately 1,200 unique owners. After the Program implementation, there are now about 850 unique owners on that tract, but the Tribe owns 50.7 percent, making this tract economically viable, something that they can use. Since the Tribe owns the majority interest, it
1 can grant grazing permits and seek other opportunities
2 that'll benefit the whole community.

3 The Buy-Back Program and Tribal leaders must
4 continue to work together to ensure that the landowners
5 are aware of the opportunity to sell land interests for
6 the benefit of both the landowner and the Tribal
7 community. We've certainly seen some big results at
8 locations where Tribal leaders were actively talking
9 about the Program. I think John mentioned some of
10 these earlier in his talk.
11
12 You know, for an example, 65 percent of the owners
13 on the Crow Creek Indian Reservation who received an
14 offer said yes. Nearly 80 percent of the owners who
15 received an offer for land on Swinomish Reservation
16 decided to consolidate those fractional interests for
17 the community.
18
19 We know selling land is a deeply personal decision
20 that has impacts for both the landowner and the Tribal
21 community. We must always be guided by the idea that
22 this is a voluntary program: willing buyers, willing
23 sellers. And landowners should take the time to speak
24 with their families, to look at their fractional
interests and the benefit that they're receiving from them, and ultimately make their decision based on what's best for them.

The Blackfeet Nation took this task very seriously. The Tribe worked to create the -- I'm going to probably mess this up, Chairman Barnes, but the Piikani --

MR. BARNES: Piikani.

MR. LOUDERMILK: Piikani Money Campaign focused on financial awareness -- thank you -- exploring both what options might be available for landowners who receive large sums and how to look out for those who might commit fraud or scams. And with that, I'd like to welcome Blackfeet Tribal Business Council Chairman, Harry Barnes, to speak about the significant gains for Tribal control and reduction in fractional interests the Nation has seen.

Thank you.

MR. BARNES: Thank you, Mike. (NATIVE LANGUAGE SPOKEN), or as my mother knew me, Harry Barnes. I'm Chairman of the Blackfeet Tribe. I, too, want to thank Vice Chairwoman Gobin and the singers. It's a proper
welcome and prayer. And I want to thank the Tulalip Tribe for the hospitality, which is certainly not shown in the casino as I lost last night.

(Laughter.)

MR. BARNES: That's one thing we have in common, I guess, with the Blackfeet casino. The odds are always in favor of the house.

I do want to introduce fellow Councilmember Tim Davis and ask him to stand up. And then, I would like to introduce the Blackfeet Tribe and ask them to stand up -- excuse me -- the team, Blackfeet Tribal team. That way, in case you have questions later, that's who you need to talk to.

Billy Old Chief was our Program Coordinator, and he is still. Next to him is Ted Hall, Program Partner, team member, and then Mark Magee. Mark is our Land Director for the Blackfeet Land Department. So, if you have questions, get with them afterwards and ask them because they know a whole lot more than me, but I outrank them.

I would like to also recognize Elouise Cobell, who's not here today, you know. But without her
fortitude and intense desire to find justice for all Indian people, this wouldn't -- we wouldn't have been here today.

You know, unfortunately Elouise passed on before she saw the fruits of her labors. While the case was settled, the deal wasn't made until much later. So, we thank Elouise, who was a Blackfeet member, Treasurer for a whole lot of years. And I knew her, and others knew her even better than I, so we certainly want to recognize her.

I want to share with you a quick personal story. Now, I think Mike or John asked me to speak here because I'm a dynamic speaker. I'm handsome. I'm good looking, and I'm -- and then I found out it was just because Elouise Cobell -- so anyway.

(Laughter.)

MR. BARNES: You have to stick with me anyway. I want to share this personal story because it's a lot of about what we're talking about today.

Mom and Dad had 18 children, nine boys, nine girls. The last birth was twins. I think that's when they said, hey, we've got to quit this. But there's a
lot of cold winters in Montana. I was born in September, which is, like, the ninth month -- yeah, it's the ninth month of the year. She ended up with 40 acres from my grandmother, which then when she passed was split between the 18 children. So, each of the siblings had one-18th share.

Before the Land Buy-Back Program, nine of my siblings have died, and so their children -- and when they said "go forth and multiply," we kind of took that literal, and so there's a lot of nieces and nephews that are on that, too.

And so, we always had a personal connection. We thought that was our connection to the land and our culture, and our being Blackfeet was resting in that land or Mother Earth, you know. You know, but our leaseholder always had more rights than any of us, so I couldn't even live on my land, much less pitch a teepee or even run a cow because the leaseholder had more than rights than I did.

And so, but we still always felt -- a couple of siblings tried to gather enough signatures to do something, never successfully. And so, we were never
able to do anything with that land, but we always maintained that personal, emotional connection to our homeland, even though most of us had not even -- had long since moved away from the Blackfeet Reservation, many in Spokane, you know, so that's the dry part of this State. But that's exactly what this Program, the Land Buy-Back Program, was designed to eliminate or at least mitigate. And so, it's had an awful lot of success.

The Blackfeet Reservation is over a million acres. You'll see it right up there on the slide. We're agriculturally based, okay? It's farming and ranching. We're right on the eastern front of the Rocky Mountains. We just signed -- voted positively on a water compact settlement last Thursday, so we're very -- still very excited about that. That has money in it to buy land that has water allocation. And so, we look forward to developing a lot of natural resources, water, but also the land and irrigation.

So, we're the most -- third most fractionated reservation. You'll see up on the left up here is the parcels that we own 51 percent of before Land Buy-Back.
Then the slide on the right shows those parcels that we the Tribe own 51 percent of after Land Buy-Back. So, you can see there's a substantial change in the dots.

Now, we don't know yet the full impact. We're estimating that we're going to realize a $2 and a half million per year recurring revenue stream to the Tribe, which will enable us to buy other lands, especially fee land. We have a lot of fee land on the reservation, and John has not agreed to pay for those yet. We're not done with the day yet either, though, John, so.

But our Program on the Blackfeet was very successful, and I owe it all to the team. Normally the Chairman takes all the credit while somebody else does all the work. But I'm not up for reelection this year, so --

(Laughter.)

MR. BARNES: -- I'll give them the credit. They know me.

You know, we're the third most fractionated reservation in the country, okay, so we had a big job to do. We had -- we've reduced the number of acres or
the tracts that are 51 percent owned by the Tribe now
by 52 percent, okay, so that's a substantial number.
Yeah, certainly exceeding that. So, we're number one
there.

We're number one in the total number of acres that
are going back to the Tribe: 323,407 acres are
reverting to the Tribe -- the Blackfeet Tribe, so you
can see that's a substantial amount of acreage. We
just don't know how much of it's contiguous yet. And
so, what are we going to do with it? What are our
plans? We don't know yet. We are going to reach out
to our community back home and let them be involved in
it.

We're number one in the number -- the total dollar
and offers sent out. We're number one in the total
dollars distributed through those offers. I told John
we're number one in the take rate. He disagrees with
me, but we'll take that up later, too.

Like I said, recurring revenues to the Tribe is
going to be approximately $2 and a half million. It'll
allow us, and we just -- coincidentally next month
we're starting planning on a comprehensive land use
plan, so this will fit right into that. It's hard to manage those fractionated tracts, and so, we want to find ways of further reducing the number of fractionated tracts.

We are -- so fractionation has not cured everything for the Blackfeet nor will it in Indian Country. I think it -- I believe it to be a good start, you know, but we have a long way to go. And so, one thing I would ask all Tribes is to please lobby your congressional delegation to try to get John some more money. He needs more money.

So, what do I attribute the success to? It really is an outstanding team that worked on the education and the outreach portion through our compact. The only involvement the Council had was we hired Billy Old Chief, Jr., and for the most part we stayed out of it. That's the way you can be successful in how the Council contributed by sticking their nose someplace else, in someone else's business.

The team conducted over 60 outreach events stretching from Billings, Montana to Seattle, okay? We identified where all the population pockets were that
Blackfeet had moved to. We actually had a Relocation Program years ago that relocated a lot of Blackfeet, and so, there’s actually quite a Blackfeet population from Tacoma all the way up to Anacortes and the border, you know. So, we have quite a few Blackfeet over here that are trying to wiggle their way into a -- this distribution.

We had performed over 1,900 notarized signatures right on the Blackfeet Reservation. There were others done not by the team. The team just did 1,900, which tells me that’s at least how many takers there were right there in Blackfeet Country, or a close number. In one day, they processed over 218 clients, you know. That’s processing a whole lot of people. We located them up in the Bureau of Indian Affairs building, and so they had ready access to records and everything else. And so, they did an outstanding job, sometimes staying until 8:00 at night. So, like I said, I really give them all the credit for the success we did.

The team was patient, respectful, and helpful. And I say that, they emphasized the Program was
voluntary. Their job was to help people become more informed so they can make informed choices. Just about every speaker that spoke before me talked about informed choices, because really that's our obligation to our members, to provide them as -- with as much information they need to make an informed choice. And so, that's what our team worked on, you know, because it is a highly personal and emotional choice.

There's a lot of people that make a -- that same connection, and I shared my story -- personal story with you. There's a lot of folks out there that feel the same way, and so, it's a very tough, tough call, but our team, as I said, worked with them patiently and respectfully. While they could've ran out of patience, while they could've said, oh, that's a really stupid question, while they could've yawned and said I really hate to be here, they didn't. They stayed right there, always keeping a positive attitude.

Leadership. The Council did get involved in encouraging participation and encouraging folks to get yourself educated, make an informed choice, but the choice is yours.
We appreciate the cooperation of the Bureau, which is not always the case sometimes in Indian Country, but in this, we very much worked cooperatively. The Bureau stayed there late. The realty person over at Blackfeet Agency, she was right there. She was shoulder-to-shoulder with the team providing information and helping educate people on where their acreage was, what they had.

And so, it really was a cooperative effort between both our team and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Blackfeet Agency, I applaud them. I happen to appreciate my relationship with Thedis Crowe. You know, we come from a place where our government was broke down. My first visit shortly after coming into office was up to Thedis Crowe's office, and she said, Harry, you know, there hasn't been a representative of the Tribe in here in two years, maybe three years, you know. So, she was happy to see me. We started off well, and we're still going that way.

And so, I encourage you all, you know, provide input to John and the rest of the leaders so that they can go back and make decisions that'll further affect
us. If your Tribe hasn't completed their Program, it's important that you still provide input to the decision makers because this is your chance, folks. So now you get to beat them up. Now you get to kick them around and do all that stuff. But without your input, it's pretty hard for them to do what's best for us unless we tell them.

And so, I encourage all of you to step up to the mic. It's your chance at the plate, and let them know the direction you believe the remainder of the Program should go. And they can take it to heart if you share it with them, and so, without that, they can't.

I thank you for your time. I will be around today, too, so if you have any questions for me. As long as they're easy ones, I'll answer them. If they're tough ones, I will refer you to somebody smarter than me. And that's not a very high bar, folks, but I'll find someone.

So, thank you all for your attention and your participation.

(Applause.)

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you, Chairman Barnes. We
all know that you're a good speaker. Thank you.

I want to introduce Katy Grounds. She's a Senior Advisor for Tribal Relations for the Buy-Back Program. Katy leads a team of key staff that helps coordinate our Federal teams that work very closely with Tribes to tailor the Program to each location that we go to. Katy?

MS. GROUNDS: Hi, everyone. I'm Katy Grounds with the Land Buy-Back Program. I'm going to provide a general overview of the Program's parameters that are outlined by the Cobell settlement. And then I'm going to provide an update on our progress to date building on the information that we've heard today from Departmental leadership and the landowner outreach video that we all watched.

The Buy-Back Program implements the land consolidation piece of the Cobell settlement. The Program utilizes a $1.9 billion fund to purchase fractional interests in trust or restricted lands from willing sellers at fair market value within a 10-year timeframe, which is set to end November 2022. So, we're about four and a half years into that 10-year
Interests purchased from individual landowners are consolidated into Tribal trust ownership for the Tribes that have jurisdiction over the lands. And as John mentioned earlier, in May 2016, the Department of the Interior announced a list of 105 reservation locations that were scheduled for implementation through mid-2021.

So, tracts or allotments, and we use those terms interchangeably, were created as part of a now repudiated Federal allotment policy where an individual Indian was assigned a tract or an allotment of land. And as land gets passed down through the generations, the number of owners on each tract increases. So, when we talk about fractionation, what we're talking about is multiple landowners who own on a single of tract of land.

And as we heard from Chairman Barnes' story and also from a lot of you landowners who already are aware of this, the challenge of fractionation is that because of the multiple landowners who own on each tract, it becomes difficult to make decisions about how to use
the land. So, for example, at the Yakama Reservation, the most fractionated tract has 304 unique landowners. So, if you own on that tract and you want to build a home, consent to a lease or a right-of-way, or make other decisions about the land, you have to involve those 304 unique landowners before you move forward on any land management decisions.

So, as I stated earlier, the Program manages a $1.9 billion fund, and there are three pieces to that fund. The biggest piece -- $1.555 billion -- that's what available to pay landowners for the interests that they choose to voluntarily sell through the Program. So, the biggest piece of the fund -- $1.555 billion -- that's available to buy land.

The second largest piece -- $285 million or 15 percent of the $1.9 billion total -- that's what available to administer the Program. So, that's the cost of landowner outreach and education, the mapping work, the appraisal work, the mineral evaluations, and it also funds the agreements that we enter into with Tribal nations, $285 million. There's also a $60 million scholarship piece of the fund, and we refer to
that as the Scholarship Fund.

So, the Program spends about 18 months at each reservation to implement the Program. So, when we break that down, there are four major phases. The first phase is outreach, and that's when we meet with Tribes and individual landowners to provide information about the land, what they own, and what their options are as a landowner, including their option to participate in the Land Buy-Back Program, and also alternatives to sale if the landowner chooses not to participate or doesn't receive an offer.

The second phase is land research, and that's when we gather data and information about the land, like precipitation, elevation, soil types, whether there's road access, the presence of timber or minerals, a lot of other data points so that we can then do the third phase, land valuations, and that's the appraisal part of the Land Buy-Back Program. And that's when we determine the fair market value on a tract-by-tract basis.

Once the appraisals are complete, we move to the fourth phase, which is land acquisitions. And that is
when we send out offers to the individual landowners and process those offers that are returned, and transfer the interests in trust to the Tribe with jurisdiction over the land.

Okay. So, now that I've covered the main parameters of the Buy-Back Program, I'll talk about our progress as it relates to land consolidation, the implementation costs, and transfers to the Scholarship Fund.

So first, on land consolidation, since the Program began making offers in 2013, we have consolidated more than two million equivalent acres across Indian Country. We've purchased more than 690,000 individual interests on nearly 40,000 tracts. So, as John mentioned earlier, that's about a 23 percent reduction in the total number of fractional interests that existed in 2013 prior to the Land Buy-Back Program making offers.

We've sent offers for interests at 37 reservations, including Yakama, and those offers are actually going out this week. So, 37 reservations have received offers, and over 13,000 tracts have reached 50
percent or more Tribal trust ownership as a result of
the Land Buy-Back Program.

We've purchased over $1.1 billion worth of land,
which is over 75 percent of the $1.555 billion that's
available to buy land under the Land Consolidation
Fund. And in terms of implementation costs, we've
expended 25 percent of the $285 million that was
authorized for implementation costs. And that means
we've also entered into agreements with 46 Tribal
Nations so far.

The Department has now transferred a hundred
percent of the Scholarship Fund, or $60 million. It's
overseen by the Cobell Board of Trustees, and it's
administered by Indigenous Education, Inc., and that is
a nonprofit corporation expressly created to administer
the scholarship program.

So, that is an update on where the Buy-Back
Program is right now. I'm going to turn it back over
to John.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you, Katy. I just want to
spend a few more minutes to identify a couple of key
areas that we're especially interested in getting
feedback from Indian Country on. This is not intended to limit the scope of your comments, but really just to try to convey a couple of points that we're really interested in.

So, there are two major topics. The first one are what are the best strategies for continuing to address fractionation. And we've got two subparts to this: how do we reduce fractionation with the remaining funds, and then second, how do we do that in the long term? And then the other topic that we're hoping to get feedback on are off-reservation lands.

On the screen, I have got a picture or a diagram here that will help us explain some of the factors that we're looking at or that could be considered in using the remaining funds that we have in the Buy-Back Program. Right now there's less than $600 million remaining of the overall $1.9 billion fund. As I indicated at the outset, our new leadership is interested in this Program. They're reviewing our progress, and they're taking a fresh look at the Program and asking what are the other strategies or new ideas that we could bring to bear to use the remaining
Some of the ideas that are being discussed include the value of the land, the size of the fractional interests, and whether there's control on the tract, meaning are there owners that can make a decision somewhat easily?

So, looking at the picture here, I've stated a question, which is: let's assume that the Program has $5,000 of a budget to make offers. We've got a choice. We've got two tracts, Tract A and Tract B, where we could make offers. One tract, Tract A, is valued at $9,000. The second tract is valued less at $5,000. That's, you know, based on an appraisal.

Each tract has a different number of owners, and so, we've circled Tract B for two reasons. There are two benefits of making offers on Tract B versus Tract A. The first one is that if I use that $5,000 to make offers on Tract B, all five of those owners that each have a 20 percent undivided interest will get an offer. On the other hand, if I -- if the Program makes an offer on Tract A, there's only going to be an offer for two of the landowners.
So, the benefit that we are able to realize with making that offer on Tract B is that more people get an opportunity to participate in the Program. And if they decide to sell -- again, it's up to them -- more interests are consolidated.

The second benefit that can come from making an offer on Tract B is that if three of the owners that receive an offer on Tract B decide to sell, then that tract now has 60 percent ownership. And if it's agricultural land, like most of the land at Blackfeet, for example, then the Tribe is in ownership of adequate interests to make a decision about the land. So, making that offer on Tract B helps gets tracts into Tribal control so our resources are better directed in that sense as well.

So, the final bullet on this slide is intended to indicate that using these kinds of factors, the Program may adjust the schedule that we've announced. Again, in May of 2016, we identified 105 locations that we're seeking to bring the Program to. But, again, as we are working with the new leadership, we're looking at any and all strategies that could be utilized to best
stretch those remaining dollars, and that could result in a change to our schedule, as I pointed out. So, we definitely are looking for feedback from Tribal leaders and landowners on those questions.

The picture I've got here is intended to give you a visual depiction of the progress that the Program has made. As Katy and others have indicated, as I indicated at the beginning, we've reduced the overall fractional interests that existed in 2013 by 23 percent. So, the bottom curve is showing before the Program, the actual increase, and then the bottom part when the Program was implemented in 2012, we start to see a major reduction in the fractional interests.

The top dotted line is shown to let folks see how fractional interests would've continued to grow most likely absent the Program. We're seeing a 1.2 percent, or estimating, I should say, a 1.2 percent growth rate in fractional interests. So, the Program has definitely made a lot of progress, and there's been solid gains, as Chairman Barnes described at Blackfeet, with the number of tracts that are in Tribal control. Those are long-term benefits that are going to
strengthen Tribal sovereignty when those tracts get to 50 percent. So, that's not going to change.

But what is going to change is every day that goes by, even though the Program is making progress, folks are passing away and fractional interests are being created. And so, the challenge for Indian Country and the Department is how do we continue to address the issue of fractionation? The $1.9 billion that was provided through the Cobell settlement is a substantial amount of money, but it is not enough to purchase all the fractional interests that exist in Indian Country.

In our Status Report that we put out in November, we indicated that it would be many billions of dollars, assuming everybody was interested in consolidating their interests, to solve fractionation. And that's a major scope that, again, the Program is just not going to be able to address, in part because the Program is voluntary.

So, recognizing that large scope of the challenge before us, we want to get input on what do we do for the long term? How do we continue to address fractionation, recognizing these 11 million acres that
are left are so important to the future of Indian Country, and recognizing that they pose major challenges for effective land management?

Again, it's a voluntary Program. We know folks choose for various reasons, including personal reasons, not to sell. And so, with those landowners that are not interested in selling, we need to be thinking of other options and tools that folks have described today. And so, we're looking for input on those kinds of ideas as we move forward, again recognizing the size of the challenge before us.

Finally, one other area that I wanted to point out are off-reservation lands, also sometimes referred to as public domain lands. I know in the Northwest, there are a number of locations that have been particularly interested in this topic.

And the question that we're interested in receiving input about is the priority that ought to be ascribed to purchasing off-reservation lands when we realize our limited -- our resources are limited, and that there are quite a few -- most really -- fractional lands that are within reservation boundaries.
The challenge sometimes with off-reservation lands is that jurisdiction can be complicated, sometimes disputed. And so, it can take extra research and resources in order to determine where those lands would be vested, which Tribe would receive the lands. And so, that, again, is a question for input. What are the relative priorities of those lands versus the on-reservation lands? The second part of the question that we're interested in is there's got to be jurisdiction in order to acquire those lands if we're able to do that.

And so, in our Federal Register notice that we published before this meeting, we identified a number of questions that one would go through in order to determine jurisdiction, and so, we're asking for input from Tribes about those questions. Are those the right questions? Are there other questions that ought to be asked?

So, with that, I appreciate your patience. And now we want to introduce Julius Snell, who will help moderate feedback from Tribal leaders. I want to recognize we have a court reporter here, and so we're
going to have your comments down, and it will be helpful considering those as we move forward. So, thanks again for your time, and I look forward to hearing from as many of you as possible. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. SNELL: Yes, like John said, we'd like to invite Tribal leaders up first if you have any comments. Please come up to the mic if you can. Speak directly into the mic. Provide us your name and your Tribal affiliation so we can get the transcript correct. And then after we're done here at the Listening Session, we'll provide the slides and the transcript onto our website.

So, please come up to the mic if you -- elected Tribal leaders or people speaking on behalf of the Tribe, to come up and make a comment. Thank you.

MR. HAMILTON: Good afternoon. My name is Eddie Hamilton. I'm the Governor for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes located in Oklahoma. A couple of things is just to -- I want to show gratitude and also our concerns that we have within our territory.

First, you know, Elouise Cobell, I want to thank
her for her efforts, and also give you guys my praise for your efforts of standing up here and taking on this task of helping this Program come to fruition. In those efforts, I know that, just like any other Tribal leader or leader at most, you know, you have to go home and spend some time trying to take out those arrows out of your back from the day of listening to everybody's concerns or frustrations. So, I thank you for your efforts of what you're doing and what you continue to do.

Our concerns at Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes has mainly been about, because we are in a checkerboard type of a territory where our lands are not consolidated as most territories are, is how do we get past this whole issue of dealing with not only above-surface, but sub-surface when we talk about those minerals. And how do we deal with knowing that most of our lands, as fractionated as they are -- I think we talked about one tract of land that had over 500 people on there as owners.

But in reality, it's about trying to do what's best for our people, and, in this situation, take advantage of this opportunity for us to purchase those
lands. But it's the concerns or the frustrations of knowing that we can't do this if there's -- those below surface of those, you know, like oil and gas. And right now, in western Oklahoma, especially in northwest Oklahoma, we're probably one of the top spots in the Nation dealing with those types of minerals.

And how do we -- how are we able to purchase those lands if we have that issue going on in Oklahoma, especially in our territory? That's where we really would like to get more of those answers and try to figure out how we can best serve our people and get those lands back, because I think the intent of this whole Land Buy-Back was to actually, like you mentioned in the video, was to strengthen our sovereignty, and get our lands back that were once ours. But yet, it's this issue of sub-surface and those types of issues.

So, that's really my concern. And, but once again, I want to thank you all for your time and your efforts, and give you praise for standing up here and doing what you do. And thank you for your time.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you.

MR. SNELL: Thank you.
(Applause.)

MR. GREEN: (NATIVE LANGUAGE SPOKEN). Good afternoon, friends. My name is Austin Green. My Indian name is (NATIVE LANGUAGE SPOKEN). I represent the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Nation. I am the Chairman of the Tribal Council, and I do have some written testimony here I'll be providing at a -- at a later time. But I do want to discuss some issues here, and just want to use your time and things go out here.

First and foremost, I do want to thank the Land Buy-Back team and the leadership that has come out to listen to the concerns of Tribal leaders. Next, I do want to recognize my staffers that have been working on this issue -- Mr. Louie Pitt and Randy Scott -- as we advance our -- advance forward on this issue.

Some of the concerns that I have is potential adjustments to locations, even removing locations, as mentioned in the Listening Session paper. Reasons to continue working with Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, I believe that the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs sent a letter of intent that was accepted by the Land Buy-Back Program -- Federal Program, and a
cooperative agreement and a budget was formulated. And Tribal governments supporting the Land Buy-Back Program as resolutions were approved and whatever other support needed will occur.

And like I mentioned, Tribal staff was trained. In other words, we -- both Federal and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Land Buy-Back Program are well down the road to implement this project. The need for land consolidation -- lessening the fractionated allotment problem on our reservation and off reservations are a high priority. Strengthening Tribal and individual sovereignty is what the project will do and is greatly appreciated.

Having the ability to do more with our lands is especially needed as the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs is challenged for a decrease in revenues. Consolidation and economic development priority allotments will clarify development opportunities. Protection of our way of life as Tribal people will be further strengthened. Education of Tribal governments and individual allotment owners is a great investment.

In the Middle Oregon Treaty of 1855, our contract
1 with the USA, we ceded -- basically we gave up 10
2 million acres that we own. Yes, we owned it. Short
3 course on treaties, two sovereigns brought their
4 inherent rights to the treaty negotiations. No one
5 gave us any rights. Tribes reserved off-reservation
6 rights to fish, hunt, gather berries and roots, and
7 pasturing of our stocks on unclaimed lands.
8 The four Columbia River Treaty Tribes all reserved
9 these off-reservation rights since time immemorial. At
10 the beginning of time, we fully administered, managed,
11 protected, utilized all of our lands, including off
12 reservation. Today we have off-reservation trust lands
13 and public domain.
14 Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs continue to
15 have governing authorities on these lands. Our Tribal
16 constitution and our ordinance administer and manage
17 these lands. Please consider including off-reservation
18 trust lands to be part of the Land Buy-Back Program.
19 Our services -- our Land Service Administrator has
20 reported the need to facilitation of co-owner
21 purchases. The Tribe has always supported keeping our
22 lands in Tribal ownership with individual ownership as
our second priority. Purchasing by a co-owner -- a fellow owner, same family, should be facilitated. One way is to share appraisals on those priority lands. Sharing appraisals while they are still valid would help our individual Tribal member allotment owners. Long-term option. This is my first encounter with the Land Buy-Back Program, and our Tribal government will give serious thought and send them to you in written comments supporting my comments and more later. As I mentioned, I did have original testimony, but things have changed and transpired and the need for updates. So, I will submit my written testimony by the May 31st deadline.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

MR. SNELL: Thank you.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

(Applause.)

MS. SMALL: Good afternoon. My name is Tracy Small. I am the Project Coordinator for the Crow Nation. I am from Crow Agency, Montana. And I'd like to thank the Department of Interior for putting on this Listening Session with the Land Buy-Back Program. I'd
like to thank everybody else who had attended and
sought consultation.

I have a few questions to ask. However, I'd like
to comment on today's session here.

In the past, when the Land Buy-Back Program was
tapped into the Crow Nation, there was nothing like
this here today. We were not having -- we did not have
any consultation about how to spend it and what are the
Tribal priorities, and what we needed to do through
that process as far as appraisal and even the market
value. We did not have that.

However, we were given that money, and it was
almost like watching a music video where they kind of
splash money at you, and here you go. And we had --
there was consequences to that. So, today as you are
-- I really hope that a lot of people took advantage of
that consultation with financial education, and the
appraisals, and your minerals, and where are the Tribal
priorities with that land.

Make sure you are getting educated. Make sure you
have that network. Make sure you have that feedback
with your Tribe because we didn't have that with the
Crow Nation. And right now, that's the question that I'm going to ask with the Department of Interior that if the Crow Tribe can go on ahead and ask for -- request another round of that funding in a fair manner -- fair consultation to be brought to the Crow Nation, having that financial education, having that appraisal, mineral rights, knowing that and teaching that to our people so that we know where also us as Tribal executive officials, that we can share those priorities.

The other question that I also wanted to ask is during this Land Buy-Back Program, why are we not able to purchase the fee land. Back when the Dawes Act of 1887, back in the Crow Act of 1920, there was by means of the government to purchase on the Crow Reservation by non-enrolled members to purchase our land, and it was a really good plan. And when they purchased that land and they were giving enrolled members -- Crow enrolled members non-access to the water and power lines.

That's why we want to request that second round to have a fair shake, again, like I said on the financial
education of this Land Buy-Back. And to have a fair shake on that, purchasing the fee land from non-enrolled Crow members that -- again, like the other individual had mentioned, we, too, have a checkerboard reservation, and we want to go on ahead and purchase those -- that land -- the fee land. Not just allotted land, but fee land so we can have access to our -- more access to our water that we own and the power lines that we want to go on ahead and utilize for future home sites.

So, I don't believe I have any more questions other than I just really want to thank everybody for this time. I also recall this morning, Kathy when she mentioned about the appraisals, make sure, to the other Tribes, that your appraisals are efficient.

Our appraisals that came to the Crow Nation, they gave us five times more than the market value when they could've -- they could've at least appraised it at least, you know, double time. That way we could've managed our money to buy even just that much more land instead of throwing money like crazy to our members and saying your land is five times more than the market
value when it -- you know, even at least double the
market value.

Make sure your appraisals that come from the
Department of Interior are efficient, and that they are
-- you know, your Tribal officials are efficient at
knowing, well, how you're going to be -- have that fair
market value of those lands so that you can -- the
Tribe can purchase that land efficiently, and buy that
much more land.

Other than that, I thank you for your time.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. TSOSIE: Thank you (NATIVE LANGUAGE SPOKEN).
I'm Leonard Tsosie with Navajo Nation Council. We've
already gone through the Land Buy-Back effort. I come
here today to talk about not allowing the funds to be
returned to the U.S. Treasury, and if need be, make a
second round. In our Nation, it's been quite
successful.

The other thing, too, is to allow offers to be
made to Indian allotments that are under probate, and
help them to finalize these probates. They're all
within the same program. The sooner that's done, you
know, the better the offers that are made to them.

Also, we're finding that allottees who have not
accepted the offer are actually asking about it now and
want to participate. They realize the success of the
Program and want to participate.

So, I just wanted to mention that, and I thank you
for working, and, of course, consultation is always
important. And we hope the Trump Administration will
continue the practice. Thank you. (NATIVE LANGUAGE
SPOKEN).

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. BARNES: Harry Barnes, Chairman of the
Blackfeet Tribe. Those were my unofficial statements
up there. I do want to make sure that the Blackfeet
Nation's position is heard as well.

I echo what's been said certainly by almost
everyone. We want another pass, but we want you to
include fee land. There's a whole lot of reasons why
that's fee land. A lot of it's forced fee patents, you
know. We lost that land through every crooked means
available, and so we want to consolidate that land into the entire reservation as well, not just the trust land. I guess the untrusted land, huh? And so, we certainly want that to be considered.

As I talk to you this morning, John, and I don't want to sound like let's use our own money to buy our own land. But one way is to leverage the funds available on any Tribe that does want to match funds so that we can spread $200 million to $400 million in purchases. That to me seems a reasonable way for us to use our new-found revenue stream is to try to further buy up, and if that includes fee lands, then we do it

But we're trying to consolidate all of our reservation back into the control of the Blackfeet Tribe and the Blackfeet people. And so, we stand with the rest of the Tribes certainly in support of another go-round, but also to seriously have you look at fee land as well located within the exterior boundaries.

So, I thank you. I just wanted to make sure the Blackfeet Tribe's position was out there. Thank you.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you, Chairman.

(Applause.)
MR. SALUSKIN: Good afternoon. My name is Delano Saluskin. I'm the Vice Chairman for the Yakama Nation. And I, too, I want to thank the Tulalip people here for welcoming us the way they did with prayer and song. It's very appropriate.

But I have a couple of comments. One is we're talking about fractionization, and one of the recommendations of what I'm hearing is it would be nice if everybody made a will. But on the other hand, wills used to be made at our Agency, and they used to be retained at the Agency level. Now, you're encouraging us to do wills, but there's no place to ensure that those wills are going to be available for -- when that time comes for a person's interests to be probated.

And so, I really do think it's important if you're going to encourage Tribes and members to do wills, that you also provide the opportunity and ability to ensure that those wills are protected and they're made available when that time comes. So, that's my first comment.

I want to echo what Mr. or the Chairman for the Blackfeet Nation, you know. At Yakama Nation, we're
trying to think about how we can enhance this program, and one of the things that we're looking at trying to borrow some money to take advantage of this opportunity when all these appraisals are completed. And then, whatever -- because we were told in Tribal Council that there are going to be a number of people who are willing sellers that won't get an offer. And unfortunately, many of those willing sellers may be elders, and I know I have elders in the past that wanted to sell their lands, but there wasn't the ability to do that.

So, we want to be able to -- I mean, it's going to be our goal to try to secure funds to enhance the Buy-Back effort for those members that don't get an offer. And it's going to be a challenge because, number one, we were -- I was just told this morning that the Yakama Nation appraisals was done January 30th or 31st. And they have a shelf life of nine months, so that only is going to give us maybe four or five months to try to put together a program where we might be able to assist in using the appraisals to acquire additional lands.

And so, you know, I'm just expressing a little bit
of frustration because, you know, had we had the -- I mean, if this shelf life was for nine months from the time that the offers went out, then I think that it would enable to do a better job of trying to plan and facilitate acquiring additional lands beyond what's being made available.

The other thing is that I agree with, like I said, the Chairman of the Blackfeet Nation, is that I would hope in the future to address fractionization, that there would be some resources made available, whether it be low-interest loans, zero percent interest loans to -- you know, that we could use to continue to acquire lands that have a fractionation issue with them.

So, you know, somehow or another, we want to be partners. We want -- we want to help you address fractionization, but at the same time, not all Tribes have the ability to just put the money out there. I think if we could develop a model that would allow us to look at the value of the lands that's being acquired, the rental incomes, and maybe we can come -- you know, come together with a program and a process
for us to continue this fractionization reduction.

But at the same time, it's going to require --

it's going to require the ability to have current

appraisals. And that's really been an issue for a lot

of things, even on our lands to get them leased. There

is a backlog of unsigned leases because we can't get an

appraisal, and I can attest to that. I have a piece of

land that I've been waiting two years. People want to

lease it, but I can't get it done because the lease

hasn't -- I mean, the appraisal hasn't been done. So,

I think that's -- again, that's -- we need to be able

to depend and rely upon current appraisals if we're

going to continue to reduce fractionization.

The other thing is that there hasn't been a lot of

communications with regards to how do we help

facilitate Tribal members to do land exchanges, to also

to do purchase, you know, maybe other family members'

interests in a piece of property so that they can

increase, you know, their interests. So, I haven't

really seen a lot. I heard it once, but I haven't seen

this is how you can do it, this is how it can be done.

And I would hope that both the OST and BIA staff would
consider that as a priority to help facilitate Tribal members to do land exchanges and/or Tribal members to purchase lands that they may own in common on a piece of land.

So, I'm sure that there's other things that I could say, but I, too, will be working to provide you a written testimony on behalf of the Yakama Nation. And, again, I just want to thank everybody for coming.

(NATIVE LANGUAGE SPOKEN).

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you.

MALE SPEAKER: Okay. My name is (NATIVE LANGUAGE SPOKEN). I'm from the Blackfeet. And to just reiterate what our chairman did say, that, you know, with all these Cobell efforts, how we're able to acquire this and it's a great thing. And thank you guys for bringing this forward to the other Nations.

They mentioned off-reservation and our traditional aboriginal areas. And, you know, in 1879, the United States President made executive orders ordering us up to another location, our old Agency at Fort Pershing. And maybe you can convince this Administration to make another executive order.
That land was traditionally ours. Maybe we can divide it up some for off-reservation for Indians to get -- acquire that -- traditional aboriginal areas back, too, as well that's been held in reserve for other Federal lands. So, maybe Trump would do something -- kind of an executive order like that rather than a wall.

But we're just thankful for you guys and look forward to good times, and hopefully that second round will happen. We thank you for that opportunity, and we just look forward to working with you guys again, all the Tribes. Thank you guys for inviting us out here and having a good Invocation from the schools here. We really appreciate that.

Thank you. God bless.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. HAMMER: I'm from Fort Belknap, or my Tribe is from Fort Belknap, and when my mother died, I went out there. She always wanted me to be registered, so I went out and got registered. And right away, they tried to buy my land, a fractional landowner. I've got
five percent. And then, you guys offer me one-quarter, and that was 20 years ago. That's, like, you know, anybody considering buying some land should think about, you know, getting the true value of it. You get ripped off.

MR. SNELL: Excuse me, sir? Would you mind just stating your name so we can make sure and have your name for the record?

MR. HAMMER: Tom Hammer.

MR. SNELL: Thank you, sir.

MS. YOUNGBLOOD: I'm Mary Ann Youngblood. I'm a Tribal elder of the Suquamish Tribe. And I'm not sure how low a fraction is. I know that in our Tribe, we have people that are 222nd over 4,552nd, and they're all non-Native. What do we do with those people? How low is a fraction? And I'm confused.

I appreciate your efforts. I also am not sure and have been asked, if the money, in fact, goes into my IIM account, is it a taxable amount? Are we teaching people how to deal with that as taxable income? And if you can help, I would appreciate it. That all could be in the packet. I haven't read it. But I do thank you
1 for all being here. Thank you.

2 (Applause.)

3 MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you. Just a quick answer
4 on that, the monies that are received from a sale are
5 not taxable. There are more details about the
6 implications of the Federal programs and other programs
7 for benefits that folks should learn about, but the
8 taxation is not something that happens with the
9 proceeds from the Buy-Back transactions.

10 MS. YOUNGBLOOD: Thank you.

11 MR. SNELL: Do we have any other comments from
12 elected Tribal leaders, because we also have a comment
13 period after our break for others. But if we have any
14 other elected Tribal leaders, then we would like to
15 hear from them first.

16 MR. REDWING: Good afternoon. Stuart Redwing with
17 the East Santee Dakota Nation, Nebraska.

18 I guess I would just like to comment that my
19 Tribe, we met with some folks in Rapid City back in
20 June, and we were informed that our Tribe is coming up
21 for the Land Buy-Back this year, 2017. And I guess I
22 would just like to go on record, and we would like to
-- we would like to see that go through.

We did send in a letter of intent and a resolution to participate in the Land Buy-Back Program. You know, listening and hearing Trump's Administration wanting to do away with or try to do away with some of these Tribes not having the option of having this Buy-Back for their own -- for their people. I would voice my concern, you know, that the monies, I guess, set aside for the Land Buy-Back Program itself is for our Indian people, and it's not for Trump to say, you know, this is how we're going to run it, you know. He's our President and whatnot, but his office is there for us.

We're not here for them.

So, I'd just like to kind of make that point out clear, and just to keep the East Santee Dakota from Nebraska on the -- on page, and still like to participate in the Buy-Back Program for our people.

Thank you.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you.

MS. MULLINS: Hello. My name is Francis Mullins.

I'm half Cherokee and half Irish. I have no Tribal affiliation.
My people are from Tennessee, and back in 1812, I have ancestors that were sent to Washington, a delegation, and they were held captive in a hotel at gunpoint until they signed the Treaty of 1812. When they went back to their reservation or their Indians, they were massacred for not following through with what their role was. They were going to Washington to fight like what's going on here, land allotments and all that.

And what happened later, the Indians were whitewashed. They were considered white on Census records. Today I couldn't become a member of any Tribe. I have ancestors from the Eastern Cherokee and also the other Cherokee Nations. And I can't prove that because all the records have been burned or disappeared.

So, for all the people that have land, I would like you to seriously consider selling or whatever you're doing because, frankly, it's a -- it's a legacy that you have when you pass on and you leave your fractions to your people. It's your legacy. And the trust is probably owned by the government, and maybe
with what Tribal Nations is what they did in Tennessee
and down South. So, you guys should truly investigate
and make an educated decision.

But thank you for your guys' time and for the
people that are interested. You guys are doing a great
job. That's all.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you.

MR. SNELL: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. SNELL: Do we have any other comments from
elected Tribal leaders?

(No response.)

MR. SNELL: So, if not, I'd like to turn it over
to John just for some final comments for this comment
period, then we'll take a break. The resource tables
will be open, and then we'll come back at 3:30 for any
other comments after this.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you, Julius. I just wanted
to reiterate that we are encouraging written feedback
as well, and we're asking that that be submitted by May
31. So, if you have ideas, please feel free to expand
on those and put those in writing.
Just wanted to recognize a few themes that I heard so far. Definitely hearing a lot of interest in fee lands. In the Program, we're focused on trust land, fractional interests and trust of restricted land, in part because those are the lands that are held by the class members in the Cobell case. And so, the Program has made it a priority to make sure that the $1.9 billion, the resource that we have is available to those owners.

And also, we're trying to make sure that the funding is used to address the trust interests that are managed by the Department because those provide a major challenge to the Department's management. And also, as I indicated earlier, the trust lands are oftentimes the most important lands. The allotted lands are the most important lands that are there in communities, and so, we want to make sure that we're focusing on getting those to be productive.

The other theme I heard is education. Chairman Barnes and the representative from Crow emphasized financial education. I agree that that's an absolute focus of the Program, and I think all of our speakers
recognize that. And we have several of our staff here
that have access right today to maps and other data.
So, if you're a landowner and want to know more about
your land, we've got a team in the room across the
hall. So, please feel free to go over there and get
informed.
But, again, we're going to take a brief break.
We've been sitting here for a while, so let's do that,
and then come back and we'll ask for additional
feedback. Thank you.
(Break.)

MR. SNELL: So, we're going to go ahead and get
started. This is the second comment period. We'll be
accepting Tribal feedback. So, I just also wanted to
mention that we also have sign language interpreters,
so if you need some assistance, please come forward,
and we have some seats up here if you need that
assistance.
So, this afternoon if anyone has any comments they
would like to share with us, please come to the mic.
Please state your name, Tribal affiliation, and also --
yeah, just tell us your comments. But I also wanted to
point out in your -- in your folders, there is an email address where we'll be accepting written comments until May 31st. So, if you don't want to speak now or if you want to wait to provide your comments, you can do that via email or letter. The address is also there. So, if anyone wants to come forward, please do.

MS. CORDONIA: Hello. My name is Monna Cordonia. I'm from Tulalip Tribes. And I'm a little new to inheriting land from my family. The issue or the concern that I have is how long it takes. Like, for instance, with my aunt, it took four years for the probate to clear. With my mother, it took another three years for the probate to clear, and I just had a sister who passed away last December.

And so, I noticed, like, in the audience a lot earlier there's a lot of elders that are -- that are here that are concerned about their land. And, you know, if this Buy-Back Program is going into 2012 -- 2022 and it's taking, you know, four -- three to four years for a probate to close, you know, they're not even having the opportunity to look into the land that either they're inheriting or they're passing on to
their future children to be able to participate in this
Buy-Back Program.

So, with my sister's concern, you know, I had -- I
had kept calling BIA, I kept calling OST to see if my
mother's probate could close a lot sooner, and actually
to be taken off the judge's desk so that she could
benefit from the inheritance that she received from my
mother before she passed away from cancer.

So, you know, and it was a little frustrating to
be calling and hearing that it's just sitting on
somebody's desk. And, you know, and just recently I
just found out that the person who was handling the
probate on my sister's account moved to California, so
there's nobody even handling the probates right now in
the Everett office.

So, you know, for many elders that are here that,
you know, want to be able to take advantage of this
program and also to understand, you know, what land
that they're inheriting, it's -- three to four years is
a long time. And mind you, every single one of my
family members had a will, so it wasn't like, you know,
they didn't prepare and have everything ready for our
families. And that's the other thing is, you know, I want to be able to have my will ready for our future generations so that, you know, the programs like these can be implemented in a timely manner.

So, that's my concern. Thank you.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you very much.

MR. SNELL: Thank you.

MR. CURLEY: My name is Tom Curley. I'm the GIS Program Manager at the Suquamish Tribe across Puget Sound here.

So, we're in the early stages of getting aboard here. And we just heard that a Trump Administration decision to go slow has impacted us, so that's very unfortunate. And I just wanted to express our displeasure with that, not that, you know -- it's kind of blowing in the wind, but crazy.

So, we've contributed quite a bit of time to this project already. One of the great advantages so far has been consultation with Tribal Council about this and education, not that they needed educating really because they're well aware. When we developed a Bingo hall, and a casino, and other money making enterprises,
those funds were designed to go back to buying back the
fractionated reservation and the partition properties.
So, they definitely have a strong sense of that.
So, this was going to add to what we're already
doing. It's re-stimulated that discussion, which is a
very good thing. So, if this Program comes to a halt,
that sort of good dialogue with the elected members of
Councils will come to a halt, you know, and that's a
real shame because this is a good program, and we are
very much looking forward to participating in it. And
it has real value. It's already brought us value even
though we haven't actually participated.
So, I just wanted to make that clear, and just
register our discontent with this politicalization of
admittedly a political thing. But we'd love it to go
forward, and we hope it goes forward for other Tribes
as well so they can get the benefits. Thank you.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you. Thank you very much.

MR. SNELL: Do we have anyone else who would like
to make comments? So, again, state your name and your
Tribal affiliation, if any. Thank you.

MR. WILSON: My name is Robert Wilson. I work for
the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma. Ever since we started the Buy-Back Program, I've been crying about the minerals. I think there's much more opportunity there for our people.

And I don't understand. The Program started out as reducing fractionation, but when you leave a group of that land out, you're not helping us, you know? I don't understand that. I know money is one thing that was mentioned to us. We don't have enough money to do the appraisals and all that good stuff, but I don't think that's --

I'll just put it -- I don't think that's fair. People are getting paid for other resources, timber, different things. And many of those people own tiny shares. They're not getting rich off that property. They're not being able to do anything with that money, and they're willing sellers. They're willing to sell. I don't know why the Tribe doesn't have the opportunity to purchase them through the Buy-Back Program.

Just one other concern is a couple of people mentioned buying land that was in fee. And I'll tell
you, through the probate process, when people will
their property to non-Tribal members, once they inherit
that, it goes out of trust, and we lose that forever.
And some of them are small interests, some of them are
a little bit bigger, but something has to be done about
that. I don't know how that's going to happen, but
we've got tracts that got specs of fee property in
them, and someday, that's going to -- that's going to
be gone, too. So, I mean, it's already out of our
hands. But once people sell outside, we'll never see
that land again.

Minerals, same way. I mean, people are being
offered a lot of money for minerals right now, three,
four, five, six, $7,000 an acre from the letters I've
seen. And if they take that, that'll be out of trust.
That'll be out of our hands. We'll lose that revenue,
not just the royalty, but the severance tax money that
goes along with that. We're losing two or three times
here.

But anyway, I thank you for the opportunity. I've
got a lot more on my mind, but I don't want to take up
a whole bunch of time. But anyway, thank you very
much. Appreciate it.

MR. SNELL: Thank you.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you.

MR. SNELL: All right. Would anyone else like to come up?

MS. LAFORGE: Hi. My name is Noreen LaForge. I'm from the Crow Tribe from Crow Agency, Montana. And I guess you could say why I'm here is because I lost out on the Buy-Back. I did not understand the Buy-Back, so I did not do the Buy-Back. I didn't know how to read the maps. I didn't know -- I didn't understand it.

And so, this Program that is set up here, just like Tracy Small mentioned, is a good setup. We didn't have this back home. It was not set up like this. There wasn't nobody there to help you with your maps and say this is, you know, so and so. You know, you have water running through this land, it should be a little bit more, or there's not -- nothing running through it, you don't have any minerals, so and so. This was not brought up, so it was just kind of -- basically it was showing like this, oh, we'll buy your land. The Tribe is going to -- they gave the Tribe
some money to buy your land, and this land comes back to the Tribe. Everybody is so broke. Every reservation is broke. They're going to look at money, like, oh wow, I could buy me a car, dah, dah, dah. They went for that. Some of them that were educated maybe had enough to invest in something. Some of them didn't. Some of them are right back square one. They're poor again.

I asked -- I called and asked about that, and they sent me a packet, and they said that I and my mom could still do it, even though, you know, they already did the first one, so which we did, and we sent it back in. We kind of worked it out. We kind of figured out the map part ourselves the best we could -- of our knowledge. We sent the packet back in. Then we made a phone call and they said that we were put on the list. Yeah, we received your paperwork. Okay, so we just waited and waited.

We received a little green card in the mail -- oh, before we got the green card, we received a survey asking us how did you like the Buy-Back, and we -- they were asking us all kinds of questions. We told them
that we didn't understand it. Nobody explained
anything to us. That's what we wrote in the little
notes. We answered it the best way we could. We sent
it back.

Then a little green card came in the mail and
said, yeah, we're -- we received your paperwork. Okay.
I called. We're still on the list. Now we got this,
so we came to this. So now, I'm asking my question,
are we still in the Buy-Back. And then, we were told
-- a few people I talked to -- I talked to Mr. John.
He said that that offer is no longer there, but we are
on the list.

I did see in the -- in the book that -- the
literature you guys handed out, we're the first ones
listed on there. We're under, like, something $3
billion you offered to the Crow Tribe, but the Crow
Tribe only used, like, $106 billion of it. I'm just
rounding some numbers off. I'm not on the dot here.

Where's the other part of that money? If the
Crows were offered this much money, where did that
other part go? And you're not even -- we're not even
in that half mark, but there's -- where did that part
of the money go? Couldn't that money go back to the
people that did not understand it, that kind of stayed
back on it like us and didn't sell out, and this
Program go down there and be explained to them where
they can get in on it? Is that available, or is it
long gone?

I'm asking you guys these questions. Anybody?

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Miss, I think the short answer to
the question is the Program made offers, but the
Program is voluntary, and so, not everyone accepts.
So, while we made $300 million in offers, not everybody
said yes to those offers. And so, the total sales were
$130 million, and so the offers were made, but not
everybody accepted.

And so, the resources the Program has have moved
to other locations. And as we've heard, there is this
major challenge where there's a great demand in Indian
Country for land consolidation, but the resources that
we have are not adequate to fully satisfactory that
demand. And so, we've got places that want us to come
back, like Crow. We have places that have not yet had
the Program that want us to come back. And so, we're
trying to understand today how we answer that tough question of our remaining, which is $600 million, how do we best utilize that.

So, I understand you're interested still, even though when the offer came out you weren't ready to participate. And so, we're tracking folks. We're keeping your information down so if the Program is able to go back to Crow or other places, we'll be in touch with you and communicate with you about that at that time.

MS. LAFORGE: I got one more question. Okay. you know how like I said that you offered the Crows $300 billion, whatever. And every Tribe down that list you offered them this much money, but only this many people went for it. So, that money that's left over, you're telling me -- really what you're telling me is that money kind of not -- doesn't exist anymore.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Right.

MR. BLACK: Let me -- let me try to explain that real quick if I can.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Sure, please, Mike.

MR. BLACK: As you know, there was never $300
million for Crow, and I'm going to use Crow as the example here. What we did is we generated and we developed what we call purchase estimates, basically kind of looking at the overall $1.555 million or billion that was available for the overall program. And then, we looked at all of the Tribes that had fractionated interests out there, and tried, you know, using a formula, kind of looked at a purchasable estimate for each of those reservations so that we'd be able to get the Program out there.

And then, looking at the return rates that we got at reservations that we participated at, like Pine Ridge, I think, was somewhere around 40 percent. You know, some of the reservations were 30, some were at 50 percent. So, looking at that average, we tried to put out an offer set that would somewhat help us to meet that purchase estimate, at the same making as many offers available as possible.

So, in the case of Crow, we looked at it, and said, okay, we got about $106 million and a purchase estimate available to go out and purchase interests out at Crow. So, we made offers somewhere around $300
1 million to try and achieve that $106 million. And in
2 the case of Crow, it went over that amount.
3 I don’t know if that helps to explain it or not,
4 but that's more or less how we came up with that
5 process.

MS. LAFORGE: Okay. Thank you.

MR. SNELL: Anyone else for comments?

MR. KELLY: Hello. I'm James Kelly from the
Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, their Oil and Gas
Administrator. And I spoke individually with a few of
you pertaining to my concern pertaining to the Oklahoma
uniqueness of what we're going through right here.

It kind of concerns me because of the
fractionation that's going to continue on those
minerals that you're not going to appraise, and with
that, you're taking the value out of the tracts that
are spotted. You know, in Oklahoma, we've got
checkerboard, so surface type situations may not be our
best bet due to the fact that it's not contiguous.

It's not, you know, the conventional type reservation.

And so, you may have an acre here. You may have
half an acre there. You may have a lot over there.
But you can't do a lot of development surface wise on that. So, when you talk about minerals, usually in a 640-acre tract, the minerals could be undivided, especially when it's 640-acre spacing. So, with that it becomes more valuable.

And a lot of these tracts that we're going to go after are not severed. And so, once we do express what we want -- what tracts we want and you take the minerals away from that and sever it, two things happen. One is it continues to fractionize, and the other thing is takes the value away from even the Tribal member who's trying to sell, and also the Tribe who's trying to buy.

You know, right now in Oklahoma, northwest Oklahoma is one of the hottest, if not the hottest, part of the United States in oil and gas. And so, it would be -- if the Tribal member is wanting to sell, it's the best time for them to sell. And since the Tribe is trying to buy, it's the best time for the Tribe to buy. So, that value will be at its peak on both sides.

And at that point, it wouldn't -- won't
fractionize anymore, so it'll remain a good value for the Tribe, and it'll stay within the Tribe. But if it's -- if it remains just where it is now, the minerals will become less and less and less and less, which it'll lose its value every time you have a probate. And so, you're taking away, in my opinion, the purpose of putting this Program together to stop fractionization, so.

And the other thing, too, is because of the uniqueness of a lot of the Oklahoma situations there, being checkerboard and everything else, there's unique issues that we need to address or we'd like to address with you. And so, we extend a welcome to you to come to Oklahoma and present a forum there as soon as possible or, you know, whenever it's convenient. The reason we ask that is we know that there is a timeline pertaining to the -- this Land Buy-Back.

And so, we'd like to be able to, not only our Tribe, but, you know, all the Tribes in Oklahoma are facing the same situation. And, you know, we're losing that value and also the abilities to hold together the land base right now. And we need some questions
answered so that we can put together some type of plan to retain as much land as possible.

Thank you.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you.

MR. SNELL: Any other comments?

(No response.)

MR. SNELL: So, like I said earlier, in your packets, in your folders, we have the email address and our physical address if you want to send written comments to us until May 31st.

If there are no more comments, I'll turn it back over to John, and after John or the panel here speaks, our resource tables will still be open. So, if you have additional questions that you have about your land or about your Tribe, you can go next door or across the hall to OST. John?

MR. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you, Julius. Just a couple of quick things in closing from my perspective. I first want to just thank again the Tulalip Tribe and Vice Chair for welcoming us and hosting us. The singing and drumming, again, was one of the highlights I thought, and that was a really special way to begin
The Tribal leaders that came today, Chairman Barnes, thank you for traveling so far and for recognizing Elouise Cobell, who was a major force that, again, brought us here today. We're very grateful and fortunate for the Blackfeet Tribe and both your leadership in making this happening.

Tribal leaders from Cheyenne-Arapaho, Warm Springs, Crow, Blackfeet, Yakama, Santee, Fort Belknap, a representative from Suquamish, you have a lot of high priorities. And so, it really means a lot for you to take time from your busy schedules to come here and share your concerns and your comments and feedback.

I've heard some really great ideas. I really appreciate the idea of trying to leverage the resources that have -- that we've got both with the Tribes and with the investments that we made. So, the comments about how the Tribes can bring their own money into the mix is very helpful. Comments about how we can maximize the use of the appraisals that our team has done are things that I think are very interesting. And we'll definitely take back comments about, you know,
the owners that may not want to participate.

And, again, it's voluntary, so 40, 50, 60 percent sometimes don't want to sell, so we need to be really mindful of how to give them the appraisals. So, if they want to co-owner purchases or exchange land with their Tribes, that's a good solution.

And the other thing that we can do, we're looking to do at least seriously, is if we buy interests and somebody wants to pay us the price that we paid for those, that's something that we're looking into. So, the concept of leveraging our resources is something that we really need to look at because, again, this is a major challenge that we have.

The other thing I wanted to recognize is that we're not ending the Program, and we have not decided to change the schedule. I, again, just want to say, as I recognized at the outset, these are things that are possibilities, and so, we really wanted to be up front and get your feedback on those ideas. So, don't walk away thinking, you know, a decision has been made to take someone off the schedule. I just want to, again, recognize that's a possibility.
And I'll finally close with we just really have
the challenge of there's a huge amount of fractional
interests out there. There's more than we can handle
basically. All the Tribes essentially that we've been
to want us to come back. Folks want us to do mineral
interests. I've heard that loud and clear from
Cheyenne-Arapaho and others. Folks want us to buy
interests at probate. Folks are interested in fee
lands. And so, those are all the desires that we have.
And so, with the remaining money, we've got to make
tough choices about how to prioritize.
So, again, thanks for your feedback, and I look
forward to working with you in the days ahead. Deb?
MS. DUMONTIER: Thanks, John. Thank you for
everyone attending and your feedback. It's been very
valuable. OST's mission is to honor our trust
responsibility with a beneficiary focus and
participation, and provide superior stewardship of the
trust asset.
We have resource staff here, and I've seen a
number of folks having to wait, and just ask for your
patience. What I think is really an attribute to the
trust reforms that we have in place now is we actually have real-time access to your information right here. So, we're able to provide that valuable information to you so that you can make informed decisions as a landowner.

So, really appreciate your coming out. And as Mr. McClanahan mentioned, we know that the Tribal leaders have a number of priorities, and it's a real honor to have you here giving us your feedback. So, thank you on behalf of the Office of Special Trustee for American Indians.

MR. BLACK: Well, I'll keep it short and sweet. Just thank you very much for coming and taking time out of your day to spend the afternoon with us, and to share your ideas and comments. And as everybody has said, you know, we really do appreciate the comments that have come in. We are hearing those. We'll be taking these back to leadership back in D.C., and sharing them with them as well, so don't think that you haven't been heard. And, please, if you've got some additional comments that you want to submit in writing, please do that. So, thanks again.
MR. LOUDERMILK: And I'll keep it shorter and sweeter. Thank you very much. Appreciate everybody for coming and providing your comments, and thank you very much.

MR. MCCLANAHAN: That concludes our Listening Session. Have safe travels on the way home.

(Applause.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned.)