

Legislative Update - May 10, 2001

(Broadcast #354)

Support Needed for Tribal Set Aside in Land and Water Conservation Grants - On May 3, 2001, Secretary Norton announced a new Indian grant program, to be funded out of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), that would allow tribes to apply directly for \$10 million in conservation funding under the proposed FY2002 budget. This proposal was likely initiated in response to tribal concerns raised during last year's funding compromise in the wake of Congress' failure to pass the Conservation and Reinvestment Act, which shut tribes out of important conservation funding. The proposed grant program would give tribes a share in a major shift in funding proposed by the Bush Administration that would increase funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund by \$359.7 million to a proposed level of \$450 million.

Tribes are strongly urged to write the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, as well their state delegations, urging support for maintaining this tribal grant program at a level of at least \$10 million in the final budget package. Attached for your convenience is a sample letter and address list. Secretary Norton's announcement can be found at <http://www.doi.gov/news/010503.html>.

Sample Letter

The Honorable _____
United States (Senate/House of Representatives)
Washington, DC

RE: Land & Water Conservation Fund Grants for Indian Tribes

Dear _____:

On behalf of the (Tribe) I am writing to request your support for the \$10 million set aside for tribes under President Bush's Flexible Land and Water Conservation Fund State Grant Program for FY 2002. This flexible program would provide critically needed conservation funding to protect the highest priority resources as identified by tribes themselves. Tribes across the country expended tremendous effort last year to obtain equitable access to the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA). Like States, Indian tribes have governmental responsibility for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and other resources on their lands. Like States, Indian tribes regulate hunting and fishing and gathering on their lands. Like States, Indian tribes would receive critically needed conservation funding under CARA. But unlike States, Indian tribes were completely shut out from the new conservation funding that was abruptly authorized at the end of the 106th Congress, which resulted from the inability to enact CARA last year. That funding, known by some as "CARA-Lite", funded fewer activities with fewer dollars over less time than CARA. No stakeholder was more adversely affected by this dilution than Indian tribes, who lost every single provision that had benefitted them in the original legislation. It is critical therefore, that the \$10 million tribal portion of President Bush's proposal be retained, along with the flexibility specified by the President for this program. We also ask that you include language directing a federal/tribal team be composed to develop the tribal competitive grant program to distribute these funds, which should include tribes, the BIA, and the National Park Service. In addition, we ask your support in assuring that tribes are included in the development of criteria for President Bush's \$50 million Landowner Incentive program for grants to tribes, states, and territories for habitat protection and management. Currently, the President's plan calls for the Fish and Wildlife Service to develop criteria for this program with the states. Federal consultation policy requires that tribes

be included in the development of these criteria. We ask your assistance to include language that directs the Fish and Wildlife Service to develop criteria for this program with the states and the tribes, or at a minimum, with the states and the BIA division of fish and Wildlife.

Sincerely,

(Tribal Chairperson)

Address List:

The Honorable Conrad Burns Chairman Senate Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Interior Room S-128 Capitol Washington, D.C. 20515 The Honorable Robert Byrd Ranking Member Senate Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Interior Room S-128 Capitol Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Joe Skeen Chairman House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies Room H-218 Capitol Washington, D.C. 20515 The Honorable Norman D. Dicks Ranking Member House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies Room H-218 Capitol Washington, D.C. 20515

For more information, please contact NCAI at 202-466-7767.