

**House Natural Resources Committee – [Biden FY2025 Department of Interior Budget Request](#)
1 May 2024**

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland testifies about the Biden Administration’s FY2025 Department of Interior budget request.

Congressional Witnesses:

- The Honorable Deb Haaland – (Link to [written](#) testimony)

Highlights:

- In written testimony the Secretary noted goals on Indian Affairs programs, leasing and conservation efforts in public and tribal lands, though did not mention Tribal agriculture leases specifically.
- The hearing was slightly contentious with committee members offering their differing views on the Department’s successes and failures on policies it enacted and intends to do so with this budget request.

In her written testimony, the Secretary offered details on:

- **Strengthening Tribal Nations** - This budget requests \$4.6b for Indian Affairs programs. Citing the goal of Tribal sovereignty and revitalization, Secretary Haaland’s written testimony notes it partnered on consultation sessions with the USDA, with the participation of NOAA, in which participants consistently pointed to the adverse impacts the changing climate is having on Alaska Native communities and subsistence practices. She pointed out the need to expand Tribal co-management partnerships and incorporate Indigenous knowledge into subsistence management, which are vital to Alaska Native communities and noted that the Department is working to implement the FY 2024 Congressional direction transferring the Office of Subsistence Management from FWS to the Office of the Secretary.
- **Payments for Tribal Leases**—Section 105(l) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act provides that Tribes and Tribal organizations may compact may enter into a lease agreement with the Department of the Interior for the tribally owned or rented facility used to carry out those functions. The 2025 budget proposes to reclassify funding for 105(l) lease agreement requirements from discretionary to mandatory funding beginning in 2026 and requests discretionary funding in 2025 to fully cover estimated requirements.
- **Land and Water Conservation Fund Program for Tribes**—The budget proposes an allocation of \$8m mandatory LWCF funding to establish a Tribal LWCF program in the Office of the Secretary account. The program to award funding for Tribal land acquisition proposals advancing conservation and recreation opportunities. If approved it will be the the first time Tribes have direct access to participate in LWCF without relying on partners.

Committee Chair Bruce Westerman (R-AR) criticized the administration’s direction in a number of areas, specifically calling out the Department’s interpretation of “conservation,” saying

Representative Teresa Leger Fernandez (D–NM) praised the Secretary’s work, specifically citing the Department’s efforts to 638 (self-governance and self-determination) contracting work at the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Delegate Amata Radewagen (R-American Samoa) mentioned this work as well, saying the territory’s efforts towards self-determination and self-governance were supported by the Department.

The Secretary responded to a question from Representative Kevin Mullin (D-CA) concerning the Department’s actions in response to rising sea levels, specifically mentioning support for the Quinault Nation in their move of the traditional village site to higher ground miles inland.