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Organization: The Tulalip Tribes

Title:

Comments: LETTER PASTED BELOW FROM ATTACHMENT
Erin Uloth, Forest Supervisor
Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest
1000 SE Everett Mall Way #410
Everett, WA 98208
June 4, 2026
Re: Mount Baker-Snoqualmie #284163 Consent to Lease Geothermal- 284163
Dear Supervisor Uloth:
The Tulalip Tribes is a federally recognized sovereign Indian government, successor in interest to the Snohomish, Snoqualmie, and Skykomish Tribes as well as other allied tribes and bands, signatory to the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott. Members of Tulalip, together with other Coast Salish tribes, have strong historical and spiritual ties and treaty reserved rights to hunt, fish, and gather in all usual and accustomed places and on all opened and unclaimed lands, which includes the forest lands and waters that comprise what is now a part of the National Forest system managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). As their original stewards, we have nurtured these forest landscapes for millennia, maintaining balance and resilience through our deep connection to and reliance on these lands. Lands within the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest constitute some of the last undeveloped areas within the Point Elliott Treaty ceded territory, where tribes like Tulalip exercise our treaty reserved fishing, hunting, and gathering rights. These lands continue to provide water, foods, medicines, and places that sustain our people, our lifeways, and livelihoods. As such, we have a profound interest in how these federal forest lands are managed and protected for future generations. Tulalip continues to echo the same concerns from our initial letter on geothermal exploration and development in 2012 and 2025 (attached); however, the state of forest lands and their environmental conditions are now more increasingly vulnerable to things such as wildfire, drought, and habitat fragmentation and the proposal for the consent to lease covers even more land, thus amplifying our ongoing concerns. Tulalip would not support geothermal exploration or development unless we were assured that such development would not lead to the disruption of these animal populations, their habitats, overall environmental natural and cultural resources health and availability, or to the general exercise of Tulalip's treaty-reserved rights in these areas. The crux of our concerns are that such exploration, development, and operation of geothermal energy in the Mt. Baker area constitutes an industrial use of forested public lands, with potential impacts such as water degradation (both surface and hydrologic), air emissions, habitat and migration corridor fragmentation and destruction, impacts on cultural resources, increased noise, damage to transmission lines (or increasing the amount of transmission lines), lack of privacy for cultural ceremony and other cultural activities, and creating increased recreation opportunities, which exponentially increase the aforementioned issues. While we understand that geothermal energy is considered by some to be a more "environmentally friendly" form of energy development than many other forms, the impacts may still be substantial. Of greatest importance to Tulalip is the availability of areas to exercise our reserved treaty hunting, fishing, and gathering rights on the forest- which requires access, resource availability, and often, privacy to conduct cultural activities. Current opportunities for Tulalip Tribal members to hunt mountain goat and elk are very limited. The nominated area overlaps with an area that currently serves as habitat for elk, as well as one of only two potential areas for mountain goat for Tulalip, as such, it is very important to us. As previously stated, Tulalip would not support geothermal exploration or development unless we were assured that such development would not lead to the disruption of these animal populations, their habitats, diminish overall environmental, natural, and cultural resources health and availability, or the general exercise of Tulalip's treaty-reserved rights in these areas. This should be accomplished with no consent to lease in certain areas and extremely strict stipulations in others. Cumulatively, the Forest Service is increasingly imperiling these resources with proposals on locatable minerals, pullbacks on National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes, the intent of rescinding the 2001 Roadless Rule, and changes to the Endangered Species Act. This imperiling will be amplified as the Bureau of Land Management goes through the leasing process and follows the same or similar changes in federal laws and policies. Please know that if the Forest Service consents to lease, and there are proposals for exploration and potential development of geothermal energy in this area, Tulalip would like to be involved and meet with the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, on a government-to-government basis, early and often in the planning process, and prior to and during any scoping under NEPA and other related planning processes. We

thank you for the opportunity to comment and will look forward to staying in touch regarding the outcome of this "consent to lease" proposal. Please feel free to contact me, or my staff, Libby Nelson, MBS MOA Administrator, to discuss these comments further. Thank you. Sincerely, Andrew Gobin
Director of Treaty Rights and Government Affairs
The Tulalip Tribes
CC: Jason Gobin, Aaron Jones, Libby Nelson, Meralina Morales, Erin Uloth, Scarlett Engle, Mike Smith