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Tribal Lands and Environment Forum 2026: A Week of Learning, Sharing, and Tribal Environmental Stewardship

Kermit Snow Jr, BTRP Compliance Officer

Wahey Neetine, hello my relatives.

This summer, it was time to take a trip to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, for the Tribal Lands and Environment Forum (TLEF) 2026. I knew it was going to be hot down there, as I remembered my trip to Oklahoma City for the National Brownfields Conference in 2022.

I always like to arrive a day early to check out the hotel where we will be staying. This year, we stayed at the

beautiful OKANA Resort and Indoor Water Park. Arriving early also gives me the opportunity to participate in the field trips and training offered on the Monday that the conference begins.

Pre-Conference Field Trips and Training

I participated in the UST Field Trip to the Chickasaw Travel Stop, their local

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gas station. Once we arrived, we divided into three groups to tackle different parts of the operation.

We looked at the **Underground Storage Tank (UST) system** outside, including spill buckets, dispensers, Submersible Turbine Pumps (STPs), and air vents. We even got to see them dump fuel while we were there.

Inside, we looked at their **Automatic Tank Gauge (ATG) system** and learned how they maintain their records, including financial responsibility documentation and walkthrough inspections.

After the field trip, we headed back to the hotel for lunch and prepared for the afternoon session.

The afternoon began with **Emergency Response**, focusing on prevention, preparedness, and response. We discussed reporting oil or chemical spills and who to contact when a spill occurs. We were then shown how to respond to spills outside by the **Cherokee Nation Emergency Response Team**.

We also got to see their awesome emergency response trailer, which is equipped with everything they need to respond to a spill of various types.

The day ended with a tour of the **First Americans Museum (FAM)**, which depicts the history and cultures of all 39 federally recognized Tribes in Oklahoma.

If you are ever in Oklahoma City, I urge you to take a tour of this magnificent museum. It has so much great history representing the 39 Tribes of Oklahoma. It was especially interesting to learn about everything that went into building the museum and how it reflects the Tribes involved.

We capped off the day with a nice group dinner at the awesome **39 Restaurant**.

Day Two: Opening Plenary and UST & Waste Management Sessions

The second day of the conference started with the **Opening Plenary Session**.

AJ Harvey (Ponca) sang the Honor Song while the Chickasaw Color Guard brought in the flags. This was followed by the Cherokee Prayer given by **Bishop David Wilson**.

We then heard welcoming remarks from **Nikki Cooley (ITEP)** and **Todd Barnell (ITEP)**. **Randy Gee, EPA Region 6 Director**, gave a welcome talk, followed by **Tracy Horst (Choctaw Nation & TWAR Steering)**.

The keynote speaker was **Shoshana Wasserman**, Deputy Director and a member of the Muscogee Nation. She belongs to the Turtle Clan and spoke about the First Americans Museum and the 39 Tribes represented there.

She discussed the museum as part of a healing process developed through consultation with the 39 Tribes. She also mentioned the **2005 Ground Blessing**, which was the first time all 39 Tribes gathered at the site.

She shared that the museum won the **2022 National Phoenix Award** and discussed the FAM Mound Revitalization project.

My first session following the opening was **"Beyond the Dumpster: Full Cost Accounting for Tribal Waste Programs,"** presented by **Elaine McCarty (Capacity Collaborative)** and **Rob Roy (La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians)**.

That was followed by **"Balancing the Bin: Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation Waste and Recycling Cost-Rate Analysis,"** presented by **Virginia LeClere (Potawatomi Nation)**.

The afternoon session began with **"Gas Stations: What to Do With the One You Have, Buying an Old One, and Installing a New One,"** presented by **Nisar Ahmad, Jeff Dzieranowski (SourceNA), and Carolyn Hoskins (OUST)**.

Carolyn Hoskins then presented **"Is Age Just a Number? Other Factors to Consider with Aging Tanks."**

The afternoon continued with **"Mixed AST & UST Systems and the Mysterious 'Bubble,'"** presented by Car-

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olyn Hoskins, followed by Class A & B Operator Training, presented by James Plummer (NEIWPCC).

Day Three: Aging Infrastructure, Reuse, and Redevelopment

Day three started with “Rooted in Respect: Aligning Development with Tribal Values & Environmental Stewardship.”

Nisar Ahmad and Jeff D. (SourceNA) discussed Aging UST Infrastructure in Indian Country. One of the main points was the limited number of service providers available in rural areas and the importance of getting second opinions.

They also discussed the planning involved in building or upgrading facilities, including site layout and thinking both before and beyond the project. Their message was clear: **think ahead and always ask questions.**

The next session was “Mystery USTs at Marble City Farmers Market,” presented by Sheila Sevenstar-Horn (Cherokee Nation/ITEC) and Madeline Dillner (Oklahoma Corporation Commission).

Yesnia Chavez (USEPA Region 5) then presented “Refueling Reuse: TBA’s to Address Abandoned Tanks & UST Contamination.”

Following that, Chris Herman (EPA Region 9) and Jacy Charley (Navajo Nation) discussed Fueling Reuse and the 270 USTs in the Navajo Nation.

The afternoon session began with “Cooperation on Redevelopment Opportunities: A Gas Station Case Study,” presented by Troy Techlin (Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy), Phil Jackson (Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe), and Nisar

Ahmad (SourceNA).

They discussed Sources, Pathways, and Receptors associated with petroleum UST releases.

The day concluded with “Choctaw Nation’s AST/UST Compliance Program and Best Management Practices,” presented by Jeremy Noah (Choctaw Nation). We ended the day with the Multi-Media Meetup, which provided an opportunity to visit with vendors and learn about the products, services, and resources they have to offer.

The Final Day: Solid Waste, Recycling, and Community Programs

The last day began with “Obtaining Useful Data on Solid Waste Streams: GAP Solid Waste Quality Assurance Project Plans,” presented by Alison Ruhs (Region 8 EPA) and David Jones (USEPA).

They discussed the Indian Environmental GAP Guidance, applicable waste-related activities, why a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) is required, and what constitutes quality

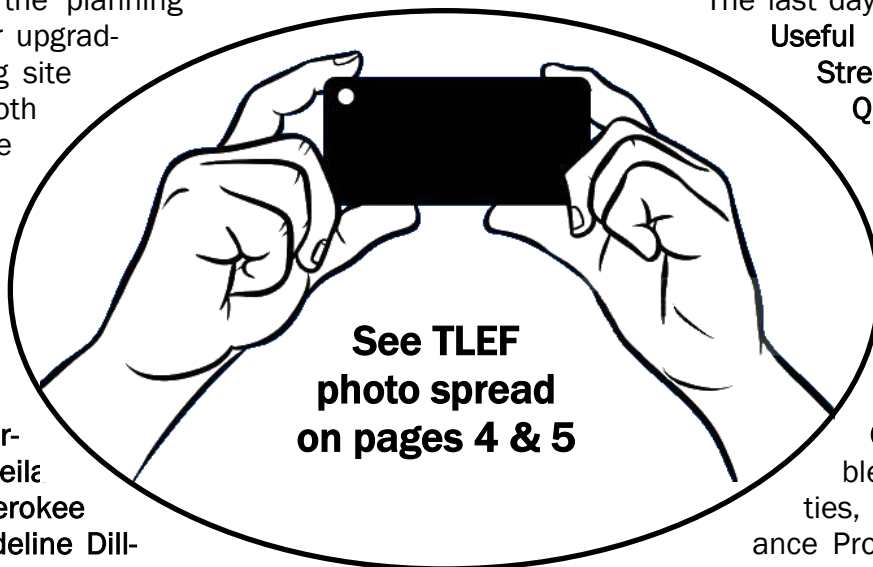
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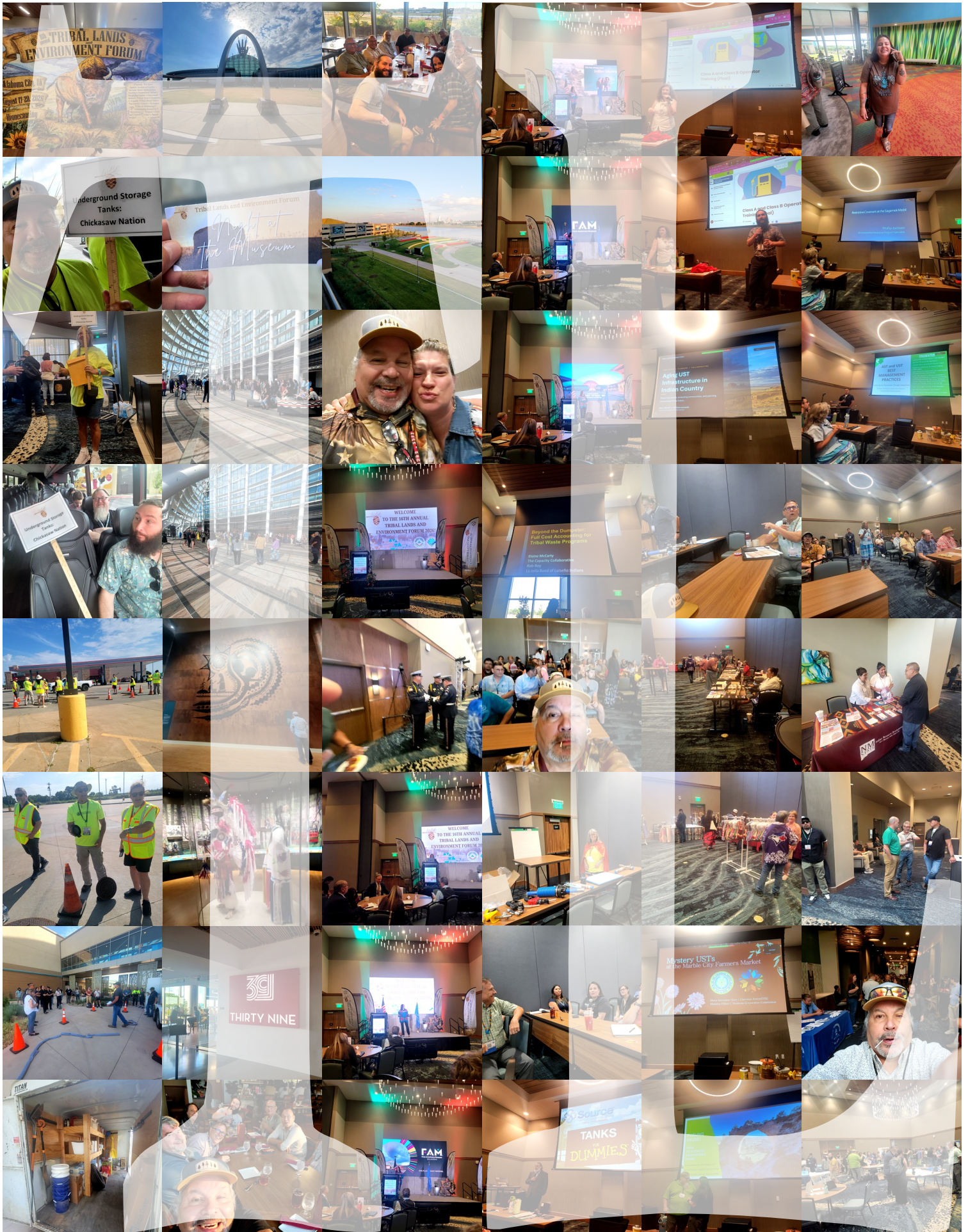
They were followed by Luke Hullinger (USEPA) and Mary Rose Morigeau (CSKT), who presented on Building End Markets for Tires.

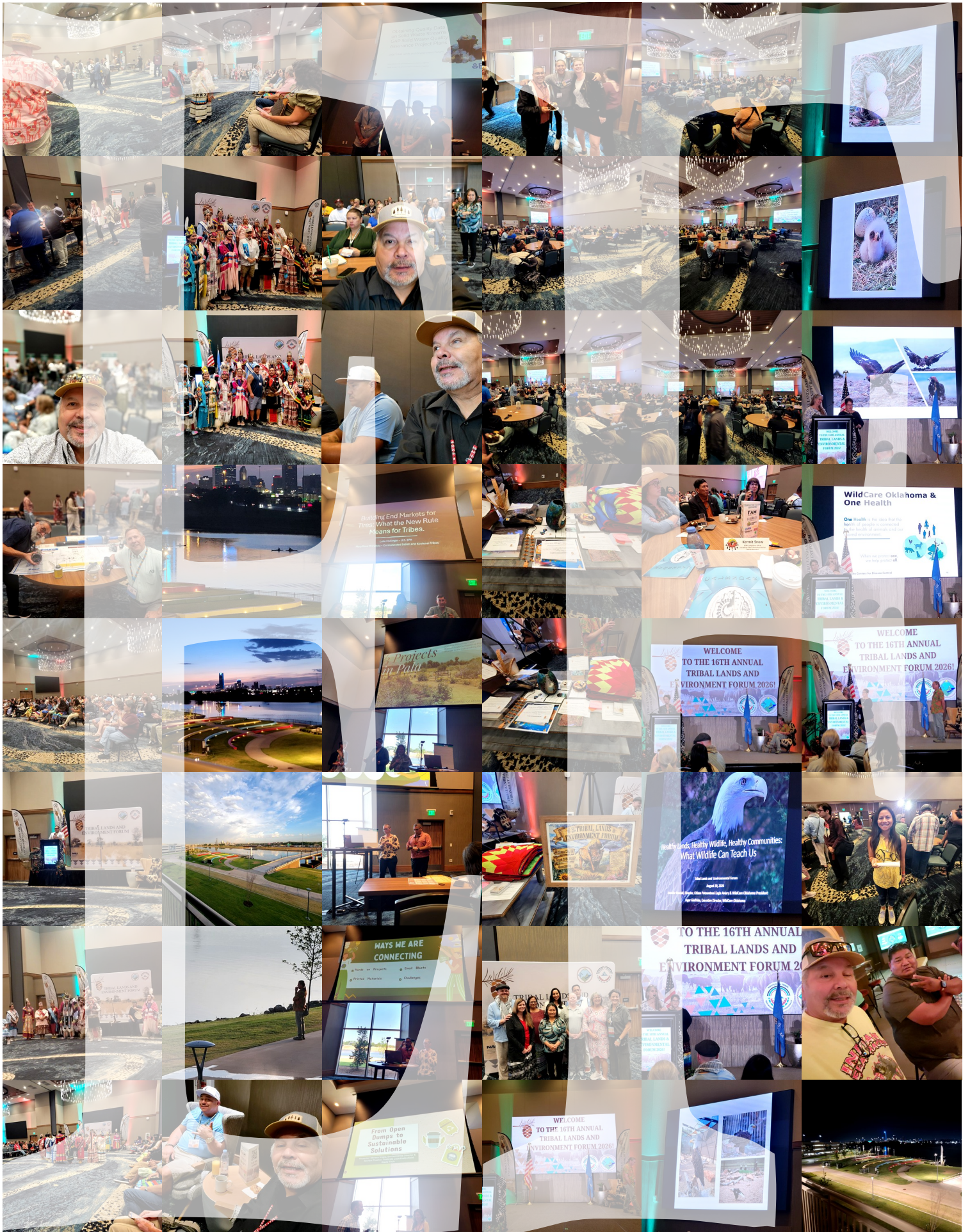
My next session was “Tribal Case Study: Pala’s Newest Solid Waste Pilot Programs,” presented by Heidi Brow and Alexis Wallick (Pala Band of Mission Indians).

They discussed their mobile recycling and composting programs, including both large- and small-scale efforts.

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Brandy Nelson and Ralph “Manny” Gomez (Ak-Chin Indian Community) then presented “Fun Ways to Connect with Community on Solid Waste.” They discussed working with schools, participating in community events, and providing monthly articles to keep community members informed.

The afternoon session began with “From Open Dumps to Sustainable Solutions: Our Transfer Stations Story,” presented by Marissa Snapp and Rachel Thacker (Pala Band of Mission Indians).

They discussed the five community open dumps and single-family dumps that existed before transfer sites were built.

The next presentation was a Panel Discussion on Best Practices for Managing Batteries on Tribal Lands, presented by Phoebe O'Connor (USEPA RCRA).

She was followed by Joanna Kelly (Zender Environmental Health & Research Group), who discussed Backhaul Alaska and its work in rural Alaska, serving more than 200 Tribes and villages.

Closing Plenary

We then finished the conference with the Closing Plenary.

Todd Barnell (ITEP) started by reflecting on the past week's sessions and activities. Becky Stevens (TWAR & Coeur d'Alene Tribe) followed with her closing remarks.

The keynote speakers were Jennifer Randell, Director of the Citizen Potawatomi Eagle Aviary and President of WildCare Oklahoma, and Inger Guiffrida, Executive Director of WildCare Oklahoma.

They talked about their work caring for animals through WildCare Oklahoma, the Native Wildlife Clinic, and their eagle aviary.

The week concluded with the famous raffle for all attendees and vendors.

Fort Belknap Star Quilt Winner

The winner of the Fort Belknap Star Quilt was:

Charlotte Trujillo
Pueblo of San Ildefonso, New Mexico

Congratulations, Charlotte!

We were also given the location for next year's TLEF. TLEF 2027 will be held in San Francisco, California, with the site still to be determined.

So, with that, I hope to see you all next year in sunny California!

A'HO!

A Special Thank You

I would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to those who donated toward this year's conference:

- Fort Belknap Indian Community — Star Quilt
- Aaniiih Nakoda College
- Fort Belknap Brownfields Program
- Kermit Snow Jr.

Your support is greatly appreciated and helped make this experience possible.

A'HO and thank you to everyone who supported my participation in TLEF 2026!



General Permitting Process & Regulatory Requirements for Projects that trigger a 404 Permit and 401 Certification

By Mitchell Healy, Acting Environmental Manager, WQ Program Coordinator

INTRODUCTION: The general permitting process for projects on or near a stream within the Reservation boundary, and projects near the Reservation border, off-reservation, are subject to different types of permits and regulatory requirements, from the Tribal, State, and Federal levels. This is great information to share with the public, for companies or anyone thinking of planning a project, and for everyone's awareness of what is involved with getting a project going. It can be confusing, but is necessary in protecting our tribal waters.

The process begins with Tribal law, regulations, codes, authorizations, etc., that are required for project approval. If approved, the project can proceed further and be reviewed by federal regulatory agencies for permits and certifications. If the project does not meet Tribal authorizations and requirements, the project will not proceed any further. The following are Tribal authorizations, which some may apply, and some may not apply, it would depend on the type of project proposed.

TRIBAL AUTHORIZATIONS (PRIMARY)

1. FBIC Aquatic Resources Protection Ordinance adopted by Council – January 7, 2003. Resolution No: 11-2003.
 - a. The FBIC Environmental Department houses the ARPO Permit Application, which ultimately requires Tribal Council approval before the applicant can apply for Federal permits.
2. FBIC Water Code adopted by Council – 1982. Resolution No: 186-82. I'm not sure the status of this Code, but it does exist, and needs to be reviewed and updated.
3. Tribal Historic Preservation Office for cultural resources and land-use clearances.
4. TERO would apply if using a Contractor(s).
5. Land Use/Right-of-Way Permits – issued by Tribe and BIA approval.
6. FBIC Peoples Creek Basin Indian Reserved Water Rights. Prepared July 28, 2021. Good information to know on irrigation and water rights, and maybe

something to consider for specific projects relevant to irrigation and water diversion.

FEDERAL CLEAN WATER ACT AUTHORIZATIONS

States do not have jurisdiction over tribal waters within the Reservation boundary and on tribal lands, so either the U.S. EPA or a tribe with TAS authority, manages CWA compliance of tribal waters. In the case of Fort Belknap, we do not have TAS for 401 Certification Program or have federally-approved Tribal Water Quality Standards (we have a draft version in process of being revised and reviewed by EPA), so EPA is responsible for issuing 401 certifications, only IF the project meets all the tribal requirements first, before a 404 permit can be issued. This will be clarified further.

What is a 404 Permit? (sources: EPA website, Google)

A 404 permit is a federal authorization required under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act to regulate the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including wetlands.

Issuing Authorities

- A Clean Water Act Section 404 permit is issued primarily by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), or by an approved state or tribal program that has assumed the authority.
- Approved State or Tribal Programs: Under Section 404(g) of the Clean Water Act, certain states and tribes take over (assume) the permitting program for specific interior waters and wetlands instead of the Corps.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): EPA does not issue the permits directly, but primarily oversees the program, establishes environmental guidelines, and holds veto authority over Corps permit decisions.

Types of Permits Issued

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General Permitting Process & Regulatory Requirements for Projects that trigger a 404 Permit and 401 Certification

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- Individual Permits: For large or potentially significant projects, reviewed through a public interest evaluation.
- General Permits (Nationwide or Regional): For specific categories of activities that cause only minimal environmental harm, allowing work to proceed with less delay.

Note: Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification must be approved, granted with conditions, or explicitly/constructively waived before a Section 404 permit can be issued.

What is 401 Certification? (source: EPA website)

Section 401 of the Clean Water Act provides states and authorized Tribes with an important tool to help protect the water quality of federally regulated waters within their borders, in collaboration with federal agencies.

- Under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, a federal agency may not issue a permit or license to conduct any activity that may result in any discharge into waters of the United States unless a Section 401 water quality certification is issued, or certification is waived.
- States and authorized Tribes where the discharge would originate are generally responsible for issuing water quality certifications. In cases where a state or Tribe does not have authority, EPA is responsible for issuing certification. EPA will not issue a 401 certification if the project is not approved by the Tribe.

Common Projects That Trigger 404 Permits & 401 Certification (source: Google)

- Infrastructure & Transportation: Building or repairing roads, bridges, culverts, and linear transportation projects that cross streams or wetlands.
- Development & Construction: Filling wetlands or low-lying areas for commercial, residential, or industrial site development.
- Utility Crossings: Trenching and backfilling for utility lines (water, sewer, gas, electricity, or telecom) that cross streams or waterbodies.
- Water Resource Modification: Constructing dams, dikes, levees, weirs, or ponds, as well as channelization and stream restoration or bank stabilization

(e.g., using rock riprap).

- Mining & Dredging: Maintenance dredging, gravel mining, or sediment clearing in lakes, ponds, and river channels.

MANDATORY FEDERAL CULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWS

(sources: EPA website, Google)

If a project triggers a 404 permit or BIA Right-of-Way approval, then the project requires compliance with federal statutes.

- Section 106 Historical Preservation Review: Under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), you must consult with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) to ensure the stream work does not alter or destroy cultural artifacts, sacred geography, or historic tribal sites.
- Section 7 Endangered Species Act (ESA): The permitting agency will coordinate with federal authorities to verify that stream modifications do not negatively impact critical fish or wildlife habitats.
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): NEPA applies whenever a federal agency takes an action, such as approving or issuing a permit. Because a Section 404 permit for dredge-and-fill activities is issued by a federal agency (typically the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or the EPA on tribal lands), it creates the legal trigger required for NEPA.

TRIBAL CONSULTATION

A very critical part of the process is a Government-to-Government consultation between the Tribe and Regulatory Agency. As an example, the Army Corps of Engineers would initiate a consultation with the FBICC before a permit application is finalized and during the review process. This consultation is to address concerns and ensure tribal input is considered for impacts to tribal lands, natural resources, protected treaty rights, and historic/cultural properties.

I was asked about the regulatory requirements for a project, and this involved some research on the process, and is very important information to learn

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General Permitting Process & Regulatory Requirements for Projects that trigger a 404 Permit and 401 Certification

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about. My primary occupation is water quality and involvement with the Zortman and Landusky mines, for the past 22 years. One thing I know, is that there is always something new to learn about and always new goals and aspirations. I envision the Water Quality Program having the capabilities to do so much

more for our Reservation, our home, and we will continue to work hard and learn more in order to achieve success. I hope this article and information was beneficial, and if there's questions on what the program does or can do or anything, please stop by the office or call 353-8433. Pinamiya.

PROTECTING OUR WATERS

A Homecoming Bonfire Brings Community Together

By Shelby Main, Nonpoint Source Pollution Coordinator

Community Stewardship • Youth Engagement • Pollution Prevention

By working together, we can protect our land, water, and community for generations to come.

The **Homecoming Bonfire** was organized on short notice as a way to bring together parents, youth, and community members. What began as a community gathering became an opportunity to demonstrate what we can accomplish when Tribal programs, departments, youth, community members, and partners work together to make our community safer and protect our natural resources.

The **Fort Belknap Indian Community Environmental Protection Department's Nonpoint Source (NPS) Program** focuses on **pollution prevention—prevention before mitigation.**

developing solutions.

“Prevention Before Mitigation.”

Protecting our waters begins with preventing pollution before it becomes a larger environmental problem.

BUILDING A CLEANER MILK RIVER CORRIDOR

The **Milk River Project** is envisioned as a long-term effort across the Hi-Line to identify, prioritize, and address environmental concerns along the Milk River corridor and its connected areas.



As part of this effort, the NPS Program partnered with the **Brownfields Program** to identify areas along the Milk River where dumping, debris, potential contamination, or other pollution concerns may be present. Bringing awareness to these areas is an important first step toward protecting our water resources and

Future work may include:

- Cleanup activities
- Woody debris management
- Identifying and addressing dumping areas
- Protecting riverbanks and drainage areas
- Monitoring water quality
- Developing restoration projects
- Developing pollution-prevention projects
- Building partnerships and identifying available resources

Protecting the Milk River also means protecting the connected watersheds that depend upon and influence it. This includes **Peoples Creek**, as well as

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PROTECTING OUR WATERS

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streams, wetlands, drainage areas, and riparian corridors.

Activities on the land can affect these connected waters through sediment, trash, debris, petroleum products, and other pollutants. By identifying concerns and addressing them early, we can help prevent pollution from reaching our waterways.

“Protect the Land. Protect the Water. Protect Our Future.”

Our waterways connect our community, our environment, and future generations.

COMMUNITY & YOUTH STEWARDSHIP

Youth and community members have an important role in protecting our waters.

Reclaiming our historical Tribal parks and cultural sites, along with cleanup activities, environmental education, stewardship projects, and community involvement, provides opportunities to learn about our watersheds and help care for the places we all share.

These activities also provide opportunities for our youth to become involved in environmental stewardship and learn how actions on the land can affect our rivers, streams, wetlands, and other water resources.

The NPS Program will continue coordinating with appropriate Tribal departments, programs, community members, and partners to identify environmental

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PROTECTING OUR WATERS

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concerns and connect them with appropriate resources and responsibilities.

WORKING TOGETHER

Protecting our natural resources is a shared responsibility. When Tribal programs, departments, youth, families, community members, and partners work together, we can identify concerns, prevent pollution, and take meaningful steps toward a healthier environment.

CLEAN WATER PROTECTION TAKES AN ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

Prevention Before Mitigation.

Protect the Land. Protect the Water. Protect Our Future.



MILK RIVER PROJECT

A LONG-TERM APPROACH TO PROTECTING OUR WATERWAYS

The Milk River Project is envisioned as an ongoing effort to identify, prioritize, and address environmental concerns throughout the Milk River corridor and connected areas.

Areas of Focus

- Pollution Prevention
- Identifying potential sources of pollution before they become larger problems.
- Cleanup & Restoration
- Addressing dumping, debris, woody material, and other environmental concerns.
- Water Protection
- Protecting riverbanks, drainage areas, wetlands, streams, and riparian corridors.
- Water Quality
- Supporting monitoring and awareness of conditions that may affect our waterways.
- Community & Youth Engagement
- Creating opportunities for community members and youth to learn, participate, and become environmental stewards.

CONNECTED WATERS MATTER

Protecting the Milk River also means protecting connected waterways such as **Peoples Creek**, along with streams, wetlands, drainage areas, and riparian corridors.

OUR GOAL

Identify • Prevent • Protect • Restore

By working together and building partnerships, we can protect the Milk River and the lands and waters connected to it for future generations.

**PROTECT THE LAND.
PROTECT THE WATER.
PROTECT OUR FUTURE.**

Montanans Demand all the Details of Keystone Revival

By Shannon James



Shannon James
Campaigns & Advocacy Director
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🌐 www.meic.org

Montana could soon become the latest link in a new tar sands oil pipeline system stretching from Alberta, Canada, to Oklahoma. The proposed Bridger Pipeline Expansion would run roughly 650 miles through eastern Montana ending near Guernsey, Wyoming. From there, the project's developers, Bridger Pipeline and South Bow, plan to build a subsequent pipeline segment to Cushing, Oklahoma—creating a massive new route for tar sands oil from Canada to U.S. refineries and export markets.

This is Keystone XXL.

The Bridger Pipeline is currently under review by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). In April, President Trump issued a cross-border permit for the project, even though the state and federal environmental reviews were not complete.

The stakes are high. The proposed pipeline would carry up to 1.13 million barrels of tar sands oil per day, more than Keystone XL, across Montana's rivers, aquifers, agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, and areas of significance to Tribal Nations. The route would cross the Yellowstone, Missouri, and Poplar rivers, as well as numerous other smaller rivers and streams, putting Montana's water and communities at risk from a pipeline carrying one of the most carbon-intensive forms of oil.

Just last month, we were reminded that even one spill can have enormous consequences. South Bow, the company that owns a branch of the Keystone Pipeline in the midwest and is also involved in the proposed Bridger system, agreed to a proposed federal settlement stemming from a 2022 rupture in Kansas that released nearly 540,000 barrels of heavy crude into a creek and nearby farmland. The spill harmed more than 2,700 animals and was the largest onshore crude pipeline spill in the United States in nearly a decade. Under the proposed settlement, South Bow would pay more than \$26 million in civil penalties and spend an estimated \$40 million on measures intended to prevent future spills.

But there is some good news in Montana.

Earlier this year, DEQ granted Bridger a waiver that allowed the company to leave out certain financial information and baseline environmental data from its application, including an analysis of alternative routes. Those requirements exist for a reason: the public and regulators need complete information to understand a project's potential impacts and determine whether the company has the financial capacity to address them.

After Earthjustice, on behalf of two Montana residents and MEIC challenged the waiver, DEQ reversed course in July and revoked it. The agency is now requiring Bridger to provide the missing information and, importantly, the company's application is currently incomplete until it does so.

That is a meaningful victory for Montana communities. DEQ's decision means Bridger cannot move forward with an incomplete application while leaving critical questions unanswered. Before the project can advance through Montana's permitting process, the company must provide information it was previously allowed to omit—including how the pipeline could impact communities and the environment along potential routes, information Bridger argued was irrelevant to the project. The preferred route runs along the border of the Fort Peck Reservation, while an alternative route runs directly through the reservation, putting Fort Peck's land and water at risk. Communities facing the greatest threats from this project deserve access to the information they need to understand those risks.

The reversal also demonstrates why public participation matters. Montanans spoke up, challenged a decision that would have weakened the review process, and succeeded in getting DEQ to reconsider. But it raises an important question: Why did Montanans have to challenge the agency's decision before the public could access the information needed to evaluate a \$2 billion pipeline?

The waiver reversal is a step in the right direction, but the fight is far from over. Montana deserves a transparent and thorough review—not a fast-tracked pro-

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Montanans Demand all the Details of Keystone Revival

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cess designed to get a tar sands pipeline built before communities have a chance to understand the consequences. We know the risks of pipeline spills, and we know tar sands oil is among the dirtiest forms of

oil. Once this pipeline is built, Montana communities will live with those risks for decades. It's time to stand together in opposition to this proposed project.

EPA Announces Over \$2.9 Million in Grants for Tribal Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling in Montana, South Dakota

Contact Information: Region 8 News (Region8Media@epa.gov) | July 29, 2026

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-announces-over-29-million-grants-tribal-solid-waste-infrastructure-recycling>

DENVER – Today, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced over \$2.9 million for Tribes and Intertribal Consortia through the Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) grant program in Region 8. EPA selected the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe in South Dakota and the Fort Belknap Indian Community in Montana to receive grants.

"These grants further energize our American economy by improving recycling, cutting disposal costs, reducing waste in landfills and extending landfill life, and creating good paying local jobs," **said Acting Assistant Administrator for Land and Emergency Management Thomas Croci**. "By improving tribal recycling infrastructure EPA supports the recovery of domestic sources of raw materials, local economies and provides tangible health benefits to communities across Indian Country."

"Improving solid waste infrastructure is about more than cleaner communities – it's about building resilient systems that support economic opportunity and environmental stewardship," **said EPA Region 8 Regional Administrator Cyrus Western**. "Through EPA's SWIFR program, these grants will help Tribes expand recycling, create local jobs and develop practical, long-term solutions tailored to their communities."

"On behalf of the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, we are very grateful and appreciate the U.S. EPA selecting our Tribe for the SWIFR grant," **said Crow Creek Sioux Tribe Vice-Chairman Norman Thompson Jr.** "We look forward to working with the U.S. EPA on the SWIFR grant, thank you again for this opportunity."

The goal of the SWIFR grants is to improve local

waste management systems, meeting Congress' goal to create a stronger, more resilient, and cost-effective U.S. municipal solid waste recycling system. Projects funded in Region 8 include:

- **Crow Creek Sioux Tribe - \$1,425,890:** Grant funds will be used to establish a recycling and composting program on the reservation. The grant will create new employment opportunities by funding the hiring and training of operations personnel. It will also be used for market research in the recycling industry, helping to strengthen the Tribal economy.
- **Fort Belknap Indian Community - \$1,500,000:** Grant funds will be used to establish a solid waste infrastructure initiative to reducing concrete rubble waste and untreated wood waste in the community. The project will use a portable concrete crusher and industrial woodchipper to divert materials from illegal dumping sites and reuse the waste for road maintenance and mulch. This project will reduce landfill stress, improve environmental conditions and expand circular economy opportunities on the reservation.

By sponsoring a more efficient and robust solid waste management system in Tribal communities, these grants reduce the burden on landfill capacity, increase valuable materials for end-markets, establish collection services and composting programs, create new jobs, and improve quality of life.

Mitchell “Shafter” Healy to be Inducted into the Montana Indian Athletic Hall of Fame!

By the Little Rockies Horseshoe & Cornhole Club



A huge congratulations to Mitchell “Shafter” Healy on being selected for induction into the Montana Indian Athletic Hall of Fame Class of 2026!

Shafter has represented Fort Belknap and the Native community with pride throughout an incredible horseshoe pitching career. From learning the game on the reservation to competing at the highest levels, his accomplishments speak for themselves. He won his first Montana State Championship in 2012, has gone on to become a 9-time State Champion, and placed 2nd at the World Horseshoe Tournament in St. George, Utah, in 2017.

Now he can add Montana Indian Athletic Hall of Famer to that list.

Congratulations, Shafter! We are proud of you and everything you have accomplished on the horseshoe pits. This honor is well deserved, and you continue to represent Fort Belknap, Native athletes, and the sport of horseshoe pitching in a great way.

The induction ceremony will take place November 14, 2026, at Montana State University in Bozeman.

Keep believing in yourself, Shafter!



Many thanks to a great man, Bum Stiffarm, who nominated me over a year ago. I'm very humbled and very proud of myself this is one of the greatest accomplishments I have ever been a part of. Never ever thought that anything like this would ever happen. Growing up playing horseshoes, learning from the best horseshoe players on the reservation, that is how it started then venturing off and getting into horseshoe leagues off the reservation to playing sanctioned horseshoes and eventually winning my first state championship in 2012 and eventually winning 9 times total. Then placing second at the world horseshoe tournament in St. George Utah in 2017. These were great accomplishments to me but being inducted far exceeds this, and I am very proud and very humbled. So many people to thank, but I'll put it all together for the Induction. That's why my motto is the Bigfoot motto, to BELIEVE IN YOURSELF! Aho

- Mitchell Healy

Circle Speaker





Class of 2026 Montana Indian Athletic Hall of Fame inductees

We proudly announce the Class of 2026 Montana Indian Athletic Hall of Fame inductees!

Individual Inductees: Moke Eaglefeathers | Basketball / Scott McGowan | Running / John Allen | Football / Lloyd Pickett | Rodeo / Ray Augure | Coaching / Levi Horn | Football / Spike Guardipee | Rodeo / Keith Erickson | Basketball/Football / John Edgar Colliflower | Rodeo / Cindy Farmer | Coaching / Mitchell Healy | Horseshoes / Charlie Ereaux | Basketball / Jerry Small | Rodeo!

Team Inductees: Hi-Line All Stars | 1973/1974 State Baseball Champions / Heart Butte Warriors | 2000 & 2001 Back-to-Back Basketball State Champions / Browning Lady Indians | 1996 Basketball State Champions!

Over the next few weeks, we'll sit down with these awesome athletes & teams, gather their stories & memories to honor their journeys & show our young people the legends we have. This year's ceremony will be hosted by MSU! Stay tuned! Special thanks to all the Nominators!

More information on our website @ <https://identityincmt.org/indian-hall-of-fame/>

**MONTANA INDIAN
ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME**

2026 INDUCTEES

HONORING THOSE THAT CAME BEFORE US
MSU Bozeman - November 14, 2026

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Find our newsletters on <https://ftbelknap.org/forms%2Fdocuments> (EPA)

Fort Belknap Environmental Protection Department

Circle Speaker Newsletter Call for Articles for Volume 31, Issue 1 (October–December, 2026)

**Deadline for Articles:
Friday, December 4th, 2026
@ 5:00 p.m.**

Articles can be emailed to:
lonettebc@ftbelknap.org



To allow time for editing and layout of the newsletter, articles must be submitted on time in order to be considered for publication. Articles received after this deadline will be considered for the following issue. All articles submitted are subject to review and approval.

