

Circle Speaker

JULY–SEPTEMBER, 2025

Aaniiih & Nakoda Environmental Newsletter

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EPA Administrator Zeldin Reaffirms EPA's Indian Policy, Hosts National Tribal Caucus Meeting in DC

Contact Information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov) | July 17, 2025
<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-administrator-zeldin-reaffirms-epas-indian-policy-hosts-national-tribal-caucus>

WASHINGTON - Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) hosted the National Tribal Caucus (NTC) Executive Committee to discuss human health and environmental protection priorities in Indian country. During the meeting with National Tribal Caucus Executive Chair Tabitha Langston of the Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma, Vice Chair Scott Clow of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and Secretary Shavonne Smith of the Shinnecock Indian Nation, Administrator Zeldin reaffirmed the EPA Policy for the Administration of Environmental Pro-

grams on Indian Reservations (pdf) (Indian Policy).

"EPA is committed to working government to government with federally recognized Tribes," said EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin. "Our engagement with Tribes is central to achieving EPA's core mission of protecting human health and the environment and Powering the Great American Comeback."

"The EPA's unique federal trust relation-

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ship with Tribal governments is foundational to our shared efforts to ensure clean air, land, and water for all Americans,” said NTC Executive Committee Chair Tabitha Langston. “Administrator Zeldin’s reaffirmation today underscores EPA’s enduring commitment to the principles set forth in the Indian Policy.”

EPA was one of the first federal agencies with a formal policy specifying how it would interact with Tribal governments and to consider Tribal interests in carrying out its mission. The Indian Policy contains nine fundamental principles to guide EPA’s work with Tribes, including consultation and recognizing Tribes as the appropriate entities to set standards, make environmental policy decisions, and manage programs for reservations. The Indian Policy has been reaffirmed by EPA Administrators since it was estab-

lished in 1984, and it remains the cornerstone of EPA’s Tribal program today.

The NTC Executive Committee also met with other EPA senior leadership while in D.C., including representatives from the Office of the Chief Financial Office and the Office of International and Tribal Affairs.

The National Tribal Caucus is a group of high-level Tribal leaders and environmental professionals who work with EPA to exchange information and advice on EPA’s Tribal program planning and implementation. The NTC is comprised of 20 Tribal representatives from each of EPA’s 10 Regions. Collectively, the NTC and EPA’s senior leadership forms the National Tribal Operations Committee.

Brownfields Update

By Adrian Kulbeck, Brownfields Coordinator

➤ Burned homes project—

Fort Belknap Brownfields Program has collaborated with Fort Belknap Tribal Housing Authority (FBTHA) on the cleanup of (5) burned homes on the Fort Belknap Reservation. The Tribal Housing Program selected which homes to address in each community with 2 burnt homes at the agency, 2 homes in Hays and 1 in Lodge Pole. A public meeting was held May 15, 2025 to answer any of the public’s questions and receive some input on the workplan. We had an excellent turn out and lots of great questions! The project officially began August 18, 2025 with our crew beginning demolition of what was left of the structures & segregation of Hazardous materials and non-hazardous materials (metals, wood). Then it was hauled off to Havre Class IV landfill and Glasgow, Montana, landfill, a Class II facility. The backfill and site clearance is expected to be complete by the week of September 22, 2025.

➤ Assessment Homes—

Fort Belknap Brownfields Project has collaborated with FBTHA on the Assessment and Cleanup of 5 homes in low rent. Asbestos was identified in each home, so a plan has been drafted to abate the asbestos from these homes. FBTHA contracted abatement of 2 low rent homes and on September 12, 2025 a Technical memo documented Asbestos Final Clearance Air Sampling and Analysis, and FBIC Renovation Homes 104 and 107 asbestos cleanup and decontamination. The remaining 3 low rent homes are being abated by FBIC’s contractor and final clearance sampling and analysis will follow by the end of September, 2025.

➤ More projects to come—

The Brownfields program has also been working on the cleanup of Former Lodge Pole Elementary School, Former Agency Water Treatment Plant and Old Agency Dump. Be on the lookout for more updates and upcoming public meeting! Bids have been received and tabulated for the Former Lodge Pole Elementary School and Former Agency Water Treatment Plant. Bids have also been received and tabulated for the Old Agency Dump. Contracts have been drafted and should be awarded by the end of September, 2025.

Infrastructure Improvements in the Blackfeet Nation

By Kris Polly | Excerpted from *Irrigation Leader*, Volume 16, Issue 2
<http://irrigationleadermagazine.com/volume-16-issue-2-february-6/>



In our cover story this month, we speak with K. Webb Galbreath, the director of the Blackfeet Water Department. He tells us about how the Blackfeet Nation is making use of the water rights and funding it secured through the 2016 Blackfeet Water Compact and Settlement Act to improve the efficiency of its conveyance and irrigation infrastructure. We also hear about the Blackfeet's role in the St. Mary Siphon repair.

With an entitlement of 3.1 million acre-feet of Colorado River water per year, Southern California's Imperial Irrigation District (IID) cannot be overlooked. What it does has a major effect on the river as a whole, which is why its efforts to conserve water and engage in complex agreements to support urban water use are so significant. We speak with Water Department Manager Tina Shields about IID's past efforts and what the future holds.

Next, we move up the West Coast to southern Oregon's Rogue River Valley Irrigation District, which has been delivering water to farmers since the late 1800s. We speak with Manager Brian Hampson about operating under drought conditions, the district's work to become more efficient and resilient, and its efforts to secure funding.

The East Dakota Water Development District works to protect water quality in eastern South Dakota's Big Sioux River watershed, including by helping develop land-use ordinances that protect shallow aquifers; promoting best management practices among landowners; and engaging in projects, including riparian planting, to reduce loadings of sediment and bacteria into the Big Sioux River. Executive Director Jay Gilbertson tells us more.

The unusually direct relation between surface water and groundwater in Idaho's Eastern Snake River

Plain means that the area is particularly well suited to the conjunctive management of these two resources. We speak with Mathew Weaver, the director of the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR), and Brian Patton, the deputy director of the IDWR and the executive manager of the Idaho Water Resource Board, to hear about progress on the plain since a significant settlement agreement in 2015.

Next, we speak with Julia Stanford, the director of programs and communications for the Texas Alliance of Groundwater Districts, which connects and supports the state's groundwater conservation districts. Ms. Stanford tells us about the alliance's activities and the Texas Groundwater Summit that is its premier annual event.

Frank Dimick has spent nearly 60 years in the irrigation world. After many years at the Bureau of Reclamation, Mr. Dimick started a consulting business and was heavily involved in title transfer efforts; he has also been extensively involved in the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage.

All water users in Arizona know the importance of conservation, and all are pursuing strategies to reduce water use. We speak with Ethan Orr of the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, who runs one such strategy: the Water Irrigation Efficiency Program, launched in 2023.

From California to Oregon, from South Dakota to Idaho to Texas, growing demand on limited water supplies is requiring ever-more-meticulous management. Conserving water, securing funding for infrastructure upgrades, and coming to large-scale agreements are not easy tasks, but they are necessary. I hope you will be inspired by the accomplishments we cover in this month's issue.



Milk River Project

THE LIFELINE OF THE HI-LINE

UPDATE

<https://milkriverproject.com/>

From Our Social Media

Intro

The MRP originates in Glacier Park, traversing into Canada, crossing two tribal nations to deliver irrigation water to 120,000+ acres and drinking water to 18,000 residents while fostering miles of wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.



The Milk River Project

09/12/2025

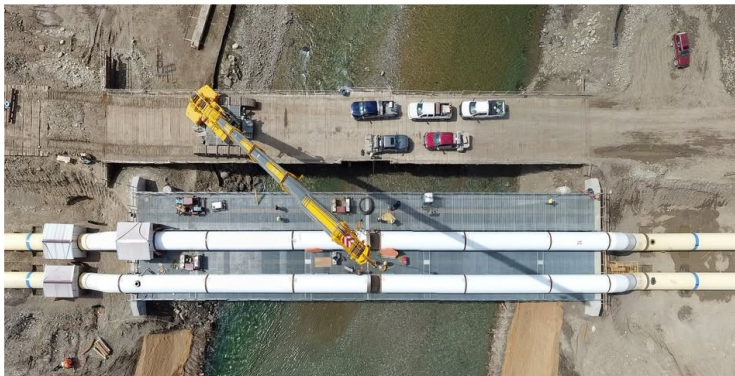
When a century-old siphon on Montana's St. Mary Canal catastrophically failed in June 2024, it cut off a critical water supply to more than 18,000 residents and 140,000 acres of farmland across the Milk River Basin. In response, the Milk River Joint Board of Control launched an emergency replacement effort, fast-tracking construction through winter conditions in one of the state's most remote regions.

inch diameter steel pipe for the new dual-line system, including InfraShield® joints to provide added resiliency at inlet and outlet structure wall penetrations where differential settlement is anticipated.

Read the full story to see how a coordinated effort by the project team helped restore this vital infrastructure ahead of schedule: <https://hubs.ly/Q03JbndY0>

Northwest Pipe Company supplied 6,500 feet of 90-

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Milk River Project

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The Milk River Project

09/09/2025

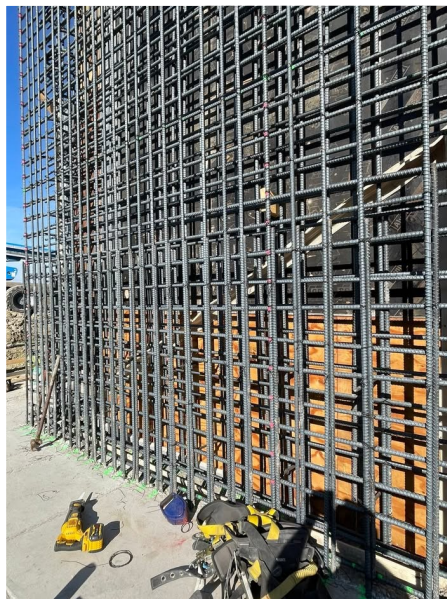
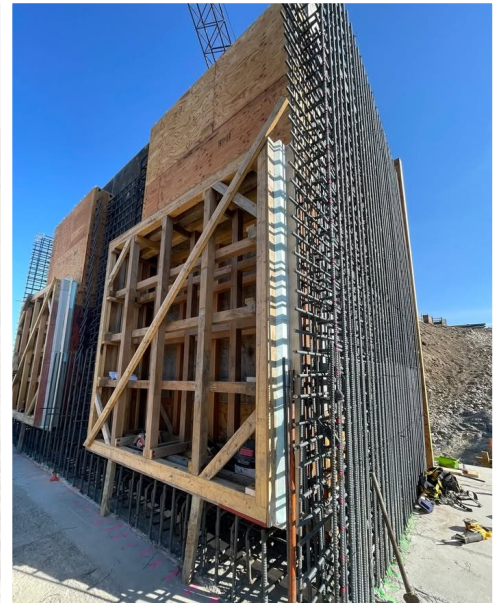
Sometimes you don't need to know exactly how the cake is made—you just know it's good. Well, we're back in business taking concrete from Cardston and rolling trucks through the border again!

We've all taken a crash course in Customs and Border crossings this past week, and one surprising takeaway you may find interesting is that most of the cement and admixtures that go into our concrete actually come out of Montana City and the State of Washington.

A huge thank you to everyone who stepped in and

made inquiries on our behalf. Special recognition goes to our ENTIRE Congressional Delegation and their staff, the Governor's Office and State of Montana agencies, the Port of Piegan, CBP-Homeland Security, the Blackfeet and Ft. Belknap Tribes, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Department of the Interior, and the Sweetgrass Border Director for helping us reach the right people.

This was an incredible team lift, and we are truly grateful. Everyone saw how critical this was to reach out and make those calls for northern Montana, and because of that, we're able to keep moving forward.



Tribal Water Quality Standards Update

By Mitchell Healy | September 9, 2025

Tribal Water Quality Standards (TWQS) are a major component of the Water Quality Program and a very technical document that takes time to develop. Below is a summary of the TWQS progress.

1. In 2007, the initial draft of the TWQS was submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for review and recommendations.
 - A. The initial draft mirrored the Montana Water Quality Standards Use Classifications, which did not include cultural uses.
2. In 2012, EPA responded to the 2007 draft, with comments, and TWQS were submitted back to EPA.
 - A. Major issues were the MT Use Classifications did not provide the full protection of tribal waters and a different approach needed to be discussed.
 - B. Other issues were of the Antidegradation Policy and Criteria Tables.
3. In 2015, EPA responded to the 2012 draft, and there were still major issues that needed to be resolved.
 - A. At this time, the TWQS underwent a complete overhaul and the entire document was changed in an effort to make it user friendly and more understandable.
4. In 2021, discussions picked up again, major revisions were completed, and the TWQS were submitted to EPA.
 - A. EPA received an overhauled document with the same required components.
5. In 2022, EPA responded to the new TWQS with several meetings set up to discuss the remaining issues.
 - A. First meeting discussion on the requirements and general process of getting the TWQS adopted by the Tribal Council.
 - B. Second meeting discussion on definitions and criteria tables. There are over 100 definitions, still included from the initial 2007 draft, and a majority are not necessary. The criteria tables needed some minor revisions in regards to certain concentrations and references. The MT Water Quality Standards that were used in the initial 2007 draft were replaced with the EPA human health and aquatic life criteria.

- C. Third meeting discussion on the antidegradation policy regarding the process of determining the appropriate Tier for a tribal water that may be subject to water quality degradation from all types of projects in or near the water.
- D. Future meetings are necessary to address the remaining issues, which at this point, are minor and need to be better clarified.

So, up to this point, the TWQS has been a major work in progress. It's a technical document that requires professional input and consistent focus. The WQ Program was established for a reason, with the initial purpose to monitor for mine impacts to specific waters entering the reservation. Eventually, the monitoring expanded to other waters throughout the reservation, and during my time, the Program has been strengthened to provide improved monitoring strategies, technical data assessments and reports, and overall capacity to obtain key data for reservation waters. The only component missing is having TWQS, which adds regulatory and protective measures under the Clean Water Act. This is the ultimate level of protecting tribal waters. However, in order to achieve this level of protection and authority, the process is technical and extensive, and is briefly summarized.

1. Obtain Tribally-adopted TWQS through the Tribal Council Resolution process. This is the current phase we are working towards. By obtaining Tribally-adopted TWQS, this aids in the TAS requirement of demonstrating the Tribal Capability to administer effective water quality standards and water quality certifications programs. Basically, a pre-requisite, not required, but definitely the route to go.
 - A. Included with this process is an optional step of providing a presentation to the Tribal Council prior to public comment period. This would provide a layout of the purpose of TWQS and the goals of the Water Quality Program.
 - B. Public comment period and public hearing opportunity for TRIBAL stakeholders and tribal members to provide input. Public hearings only apply to communities within

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Tribal Water Quality Standards Update

(Continued from page 6)

the reservation and tribal members.

- C. A response to comments completed after the public comment period. All comments taken into consideration and the TWQS updated with the legal guidance of tribal attorneys.
 - D. Final TWQS and supporting documentation sent to Tribal Council for prior review. Meeting scheduled to seek Tribal Council adoption.
 - E. Tribally-adopted TWQS could be adopted as tribal law, but would only pertain to tribal activities and members within the reservation. There would be no regulatory implementation from the CWA. Accomplishing this first major step, is progress towards the ultimate goal of EPA approved TWQS.
2. **Apply for Treatment in a Similar Manner as States (TAS) for a CWA Section 401 Water Quality Certifications and CWA Section 303(c) Water Quality Standards programs.**
 - A. Application can be completed anytime, but likely ideal after tribal adoption.
 3. **Seek EPA approved TWQS. The current TWQS draft includes all of the required components for EPA approval: 1) General Provisions; 2) Designation of Uses; 3) Water Quality Criteria; and 4) Antidegradation Policy. These components likely would be reviewed stringently to ensure the TWQS are prepared to implement CWA requirements. This process is similar to the tribal adoption process, but with key differences.**
 - A. Public comment period and public hearing opportunity for **ALL** stakeholders to which the CWA provisions would apply. This includes off-reservation stakeholders upstream of the border, as well as tribal stakeholders and tribal members. The public comment process extends well beyond the reservation and comments could be from other States, Tribes, and Stakeholders that wish to provide comments.
 - B. A response to comments completed after the public comment period. All comments taken into consideration and the TWQS updated with the legal guidance of tribal attorneys.

- C. Final TWQS and supporting documentation sent to the U.S. EPA for review and approval.
- D. If approved, The FBIC Tribal Government would have the ability to review and approve or deny 401 permitting activities both off-reservation and on-reservation that potentially could impact the water quality and designated uses of tribal waters.

Hopefully, this summary of TWQS provided awareness and more understanding of the significance and opportunity to protect tribal waters to the fullest extent. As we continue developing the TWQS and working towards achieving a significant goal, it's highly encouraged for tribal communities to be involved at all levels and provide any information of the waters in your areas. As an add-on, everything depends on water for survival, from our human bodies to the plants to the smallest of aquatic organisms, but not just any water, clean and healthy water, and as a luxury, we get to enjoy the water for our personal, recreational, and cultural needs, so it's very necessary to respect the water that is left and not take it for granted. With that, if there are suspicious activities occurring in or near the water that could be impacting the water, please don't hesitate to call the Environmental Protection Department or myself at 406-353-8433. Thanks for reading and wish all good health.

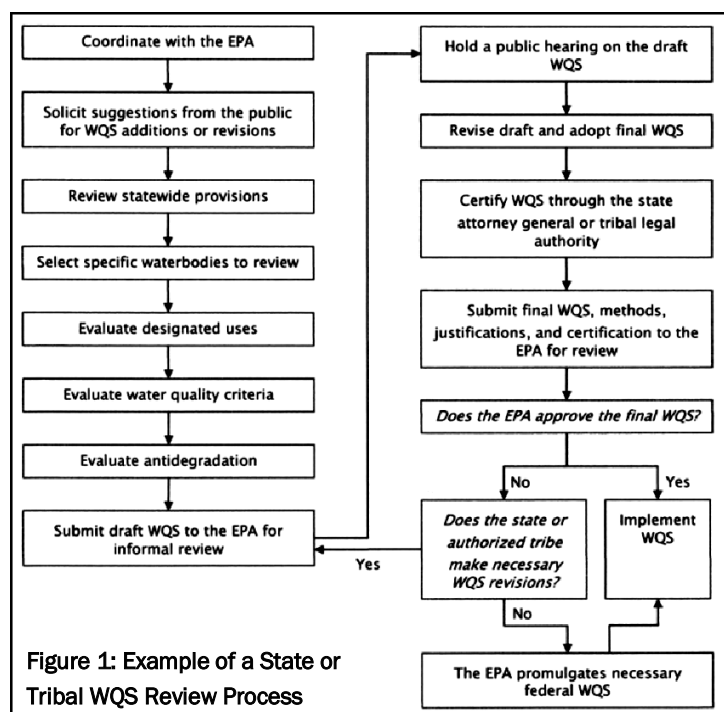


Figure 1: Example of a State or Tribal WQS Review Process

Native American Agriculture Fund Awards \$10 Million In Grants To Support Agriculture Across Indian Country

August 25, 2025

<https://nativeamericanagriculturefund.org/native-american-agriculture-fund-2025grantees/>



BISMARCK, ND — The Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) is proud to announce its 2025 grantees, awarding \$10 million in grants to 27 entities across 12 states, including Tribes, schools, nonprofits, and community development financial institutions. Grants are focused on increasing access to capital for producers and supporting them to feed communities, steward the land, and grow local economies. NAAF is a private drawdown trust in its seventh year of grant-making, reaching nearly \$86 million in grant funding since the first funding cycle in 2019, impacting more than 500 distinct projects across Indian Country.

View 2025 NAAF grantees at the link here.

<https://nativeamericanagriculturefund.org/2025-grantees/>

NAAF's mission is to ensure that the resources from the Trust are directed back into rural and Tribal communities in ways that strengthen producer operations, enhance economic opportunities, and open doors for the next generation pursuing a career in agriculture.

"NAAF grants continue to build upon past funding success to move forward with a clear understanding that agriculture is central to solving today's challenges," said NAAF Board of Trustees Chair Stacy Leeds. "This investment carries forward the work of Keepseagle claimants and the producers who dedicate their lives to this calling, enduring the challenging days because of their love for the work and recognition of the importance of cultural and economic prosperity through agriculture."

"For decades, the Keepseagle claimants endured challenges that made it difficult to access loan services and succeed as agricultural producers. NAAF grants are focused on ensuring farmers and ranchers are not burdened by the same obstacles when seeking capital for their operations," said CEO of NAAF, Toni Stanger-McLaughlin. "Local and regional economic growth is driven by keeping dollars circulating in the community, whether it's feed suppliers or equipment providers working with ranchers raising

cattle; local restaurants, schools, grocery stores, food banks procuring from a Tribal farm; or a teacher incorporating agri-science into the classroom to spark future career pathways for students. At its core, this funding is about the Native producers who feed families, fuel economies, and steward the lands and waters that sustain us all."

Projects funded in 2025 will expand access to capital, build skills and infrastructure, and advance food sovereignty across Tribal communities:

- **Expand Access to Capital & Financial Tools for Native Producers**

Many projects focus on overcoming one of the biggest barriers in Native agriculture: limited access to credit. They address this through direct lending, revolving loan funds, equity grants, succession planning, and financial literacy programs to help Native farmers, ranchers, fishers, and food entrepreneurs secure sustainable capital.

- **Build Skills, Education, and Infrastructure for Sustainable Agriculture**

Tribal colleges, schools, and nonprofits are investing in agricultural education (for both youth and adults) that blends traditional ecological knowledge with modern practices. Efforts include greenhouse and farm stand construction, training in agri-business, certifications in advanced technologies, regenerative farming, and youth entrepreneurship programs—ensuring the next generation is prepared to lead in both production and business management.

- **Strengthen Food Sovereignty, Land Stewardship, and Local Food Systems**

Many initiatives aim to reclaim and restore Tribal food systems by improving infrastructure (e.g., fencing, meat processing facilities, cold storage, irrigation systems), expanding community gardens and seed banks, and implementing climate-resilient and culturally grounded practices. These projects prioritize community self-sufficiency, healthier diets, ecological stewardship, and the preservation of traditional foodways.

EPA Announces Relaunch of Comprehensive Guidance Document Website, Advances Total Transparency of Trump Administration

Contact Information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov) | August 13, 2025

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-announces-relaunch-comprehensive-guidance-document-website-advances-total>

WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is announcing the relaunch of EPA's Guidance Portal, a streamlined website for accessing important guidance documents related to air quality, water protection, hazardous waste management, and more. Launched in President Trump's first term to promote transparency, it was abruptly shuttered and removed from public view during the Biden-Harris Administration. The website serves as a resource for all guidance documents managed across EPA's headquarters environmental programs. It is designed to be a one-stop shop to help users and small businesses easily and quickly locate and follow EPA's active guidance documents on topics of interest.

"This guidance portal will ensure that we reduce bureaucratic hurdles and increase transparency for everyone seeking information about EPA's programs by providing centralized access to guidance documents," said Deputy Administrator David Fotouhi. "This will bring much-needed clarity to small business

owners, farmers, and everyday Americans, and it reinforces our commitment to following the law and upholding fundamental fairness. The days of EPA relying on obscure and non-public guidance documents are over."

EPA guidance documents inform the public how the agency interprets an underlying statute and its regulations, and take the form of memoranda, policy statements, handbooks, manuals, and other documents formally titled as guidance. Guidance documents that have been superseded with newer guidance are not included in the updated website.

The launch of the Guidance Portal is the next step in the ongoing overall review of reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens.

Please see EPA's Guidance Portal for additional information. <https://www.epa.gov/guidance>



Join us in Celebrating
Native American Week
September 22-25, 2025
On Tuesday, September 23rd, come to the Environmental Protection Department for a Traditional meal from 11am to 2pm.

Native American Day
September 26, 2025
Fort Belknap Tribal Offices are closed on this day.

Fort Belknap Indian Community
Environmental Protection Department



White House Council on Native American Affairs Updates Access to Capital Clearinghouse for Indian Country

By Native News Online Staff July 30, 2025

<https://nativenewsonline.net/currents/white-house-council-on-native-american-affairs-updates-access-to-capital-clearinghouse-for-indian-country>



The White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNA) has upgraded the Access to Capital Clearinghouse—a comprehensive, searchable database of federal funding opportunities such as grants, loans, and tax credits available to tribal nations, individuals, and Native-owned businesses. Recent enhancements include the integration of data automation and artificial intelligence to improve user experience and efficiency.

Guided by input from Tribal Leaders, WHCNA has significantly improved the Clearinghouse's search and filter capabilities, making it easier for Tribal com-

munities to identify and access a wide range of federal resources. Users can now explore hundreds of funding opportunities more effectively and efficiently.

The Access to Capital Clearinghouse stands as a unique and essential tool for tribal leaders, Native entrepreneurs, and Native-owned businesses. It is the only federal platform that consolidates all tribal-specific funding—across 15 categories—in one centralized location. This initiative reflects a true inter-agency collaboration, demonstrating effective, streamlined government in support of the federal trust responsibility.

Making meals without microplastics: Tips for safer cutting boards

By JR Culpepper (EWG) | October 30, 2023

<https://www.ewg.org/news-insights/news/2023/10/making-meals-without-microplastics-tips-safer-cutting-boards>



Depending on the type of cutting board you use, your home-cooked meals could be contaminated with an unlikely ingredient – microplastics – according to a [recent study](#).

For the research, published in the peer-reviewed journal *Ecotoxicology and Public Health*, scientists tested contamination by cutting carrots on two types of plastic cutting boards, one made with polypropylene and the other with polyethylene. Their goal was to estimate the total per-person annual exposure to [microplastics](#) from using the boards.

They measured as many as 1,114 microplastic particles

– pieces of plastic less than five millimeters long – each time the board was used to cut carrots.

The researchers, led by scientists from the University of North Dakota, also found that cutting carrots on a plastic board can generate as much as 15 milligrams of microplastics per cut, or about 50 grams per year – roughly equivalent to the weight of ten plastic credit cards.

The amounts vary, depending on the cutting style of the cook, the sharpness of the knife and the type of food being cut. Scientists estimated that a cutting board sees about 500 chops a day, but this will vary with the meal

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Making meals without microplastics: Tips for safer cutting boards

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being prepared. Cooking a meal can involve many different steps, and not every bit of microplastic that's generated finds its way into the final product.

Potential health harms

[Growing evidence](#) suggests microplastics may be a public health concern. Microplastics have been found in human lungs, blood and even in the [placenta](#).

A group of scientists in South Korea recently sounded the alarm about potential health harms after reviewing research on microplastics. Microplastic shapes can interfere with digestive and respiratory systems, and the chemical additives they release can disrupt the endocrine and [reproductive systems](#).

Any plastic object can become a source of microplastics once it begins to degrade. A Pew Charitable Trust study pointed to [tires](#) as a major source of pollution, finding that 78 percent of microplastic particles in the ocean is from "tire dust."

A particularly worrying source of particles are the [caps of water bottles](#), since the particles drop directly into the drinking water inside the bottle.

Scientists are still learning about all the ways microplastics can affect human health. Most plastics don't break down in the environment, but they do break apart – these small plastic particles can absorb chemical pollutants and microorganisms that could pose [health risks](#) for humans. [Studies](#) have shown animals exposed to microplastics may experience developmental delays, behavior changes, infertility and weakened immune systems.

Depending on where microplastics are found, they can also be contaminated with toxic chemical additives during manufacturing processes. If a chemical hitchhikes a ride on microplastic particles and enters the body, it can leach into the body and be harmful.

Tips for avoiding microplastics

Microplastics are tough to avoid, because of all the ways we rely on plastic in our daily routines and the many potential sources of microplastics.

Some governments are taking steps to tackle microplastics. The European Union recently [restricted](#) intentionally added microplastics, banning them from most consumer

products. The U.S. does not regulate microplastics but did ban microplastic beads from consumer products in [2015](#).



You can also avoid microplastics by using alternatives to plastic cutting boards – neither glass, marble, bamboo nor wood will cause a microplastic mess. [Wooden cutting boards](#), which have [natural antimicrobial properties](#), are typically the cheapest.

If you want to keep using your plastic cutting board pay attention to how you slice – the carrots study found that the style someone cuts affects the amount of plastic generated. And remember to wash the board after each use.

To limit your exposure to microplastics, it's also a good idea to avoid using plastic utensils and kitchenware.

Besides switching to a non-plastic cutting board, you can:

- [Avoiding drinking from disposable plastic water bottles](#). If you do have to drink from them, try to keep them [out of the sun](#) in a cool, dry environment. Disposable plastic water bottles degrade very easily in response to temperature change or mechanical stress.
- Microwave your food in glass containers, rather than plastic or takeaway containers. Heating food in plastic containers can release [millions](#) of microplastic particles into your food.
- Filter your [water](#). Due to widespread use and pollution of plastic, water can sometimes contain microplastic particles. [Home water filters](#) can be effective at reducing many contaminants, including microplastics.
- Dust and vacuum regularly. Removing excess dust from your kitchen can help cut down on the amount of microplastic fibers in the dust that could contaminate your food.

Tribal Lands & Environment Forum (TLEF) 2025

The Land of 10,000 Lakes!

By Kermit Snow Jr, BTRP Compliance Officer

Wahey Neetine, hello my relatives. It was that time of the year I look forward to, the chance to meet up with old friends in another Tribes homelands, for the 2025 TLEF Conference. The TLEF this year was held in the land of 10,000 lakes, Minnesota and the homelands of the Anishinaabe Reservations & Dakota Communities. This year would be a little different, as I and our Brownfields Coordinator (Adrian Kulbeck) would be presenting on our Programs collaboration with Prairie Mountain Utilities (PMU), who deal with solid waste on the reservation and the Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan update. As I mentioned before, meeting up with old friends on the day we arrived, led to a dinner and meeting new friends on the first night. I was anxious for the first day of the conference, which for myself, involved a field trip to the Shakopee Dakota Gas Station for the UST presentation. We got to see what all goes into running a Tribal gas station, from the Underground Storage Tanks (UST's), the Automatic Tank Gauge (ATG), recordkeeping, and what all is involved with the fuel dispensers. We got to hear about when the ATG alarm goes off, what happens when a spill occurs and how to manage the spill. Before heading back to the hotel, we stopped at the Mystic Lake Casino for lunch and what a great stop, as I won some more per diem courtesy of one of their machines. After we returned, we all took a little break before a Cultural Welcome Night at the hotel. We got to listen to a local drum group Imnizaska and a father & son display by Sean & Jason Soukkala of not only the Grass Dance, but also a Flute demonstration as well. We finished

the night off with another dinner with friends at a local establishment.

The second day of the conference started with the Opening Plenary session. We began with the opening Colors brought in by the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Native American Veteran's Group and Honor & Flag Song by the local Drum group Imnizaska. A prayer and welcome was then said by Deuce Larsen (Lower Sioux Indian Community). We then were welcomed by the Great Todd Barnell (ITEP) and followed by Nikki Cooley (ITEP Co-Director)). Ann Vogel (Region 5 Administrator) gave a welcome for Region 5 and was followed by a welcome from Presidential Nominee for Asst. Administrator of OLEM, John Busterud. Rebecca Stevens (Coeur d'Alene Tribe & Chair of TWAR) gave her opening remarks and then welcomed Shannon Kesner of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). She talked about her time working for her Tribe and then talked about what she does for MPCA and her work with the Tribes in Minnesota. The next session after the Opening Plenary was on Get Past Expensive Paperweights- Waste Management Planning Done RIGHT! Adrian Kulbeck (Brownfields Coordinator) and myself (BTRP Compliance Officer) for the Fort Belknap Environmental Department, opened up with our presentation on Fort Belknap's Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan (ISWMP) and our collaboration with the Prairie Mountain Utilities (PMU) on updating the Plan to help them out and getting them headed in the right

(Continued on page 13)





Tribal Lands & Environmental Forum (TLEF) 2025

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direction. The first session for me after lunch was, UST Site Design & Construction Management, which was opened by a prayer from my good friend, Randy Bettelyoun (Oglala Sioux Tribe). This session was moderated by my good friend Victoria Flowers (Oneida Nation) and then we listened to my good friends Jeff D. (Source NA) and Ben Thomas (UST Training) talk about the different aspects that go into setting up a gas station, from what fuels, canopy design, spacing (Dispensers), tank placement, site selection, environmental compliance, community impact, and many more pieces that go into design & construction of your gas station. The afternoon ended with the Tribal Brownfields Knowledge Circle: Talking Circle. Oral Saulters and Jennifer Clancey, KSU and Tribal TAB, talked about finally getting to see everyone in person, as we all had only seen everyone via zoom. We ended the night with friends at the Minnesota Twins game.

Day three started with a welcome by Mehrdad Khatibi (ITEP Co-Director) of Special Keynote Speaker, Sam Olbekson (Native Architect), Founder and CEO of Full Circle Indigenous Planning + Design. He gave a presentation on Cultivating Collective Impact: Lessons from Dakota Homelands. He talked about the need for more Native American Architects to help in designing Native Communities. He talked about the 10 years + of working on the American Indian Cultural Corridor in Minneapolis. He showed a video of the Native American community from the 40's & 50's to present day. He talked about the Minneapolis American Indian Center, which we got to see later that night, and the input from the Native American community of Minneapolis. He also talked about what goes into making our com-

munities better for the next generations. The morning session for me ended with Developing and Implementing a Tribally Run Roadside Collection Service by Megan Poffinberger (Pechanga Tribe). She talked about cultural norms, accessibility, service area & roads, budget development, outreach & education, and challenges to get started. That was followed by Loren Jojola (Pueblo of Isleta) talking on Solid Waste Showdown. He talked about getting Grants for cameras, OOP's Tags, office recycling & battery disposal program, utilizing simple tech, and collection rules. The afternoon began with a session on Public Participation in Indian Country, Environmental Program Implementation by James Grijalva & Luke Jones of the University of North Dakota. They talked about the different engagement types and interest groups and ended with legal foundations. The day ended with the Multi-Media Meet-Up. The night ended with a group of friends attending the Back to School Pow Wow at the Minneapolis American Indian Center and then a dinner at the Union Roof Top restaurant.

The last day started with a session on The Five Sandoval Day School: Trials of the Tribal Brownfields Process by Tara Weston (Pueblo of Santa Ana). She talked about doing Phase I & II Environmental Site Assessments in 2021-22, which required additional funding. She also talked about getting help from KSU-TAB on developing Codes. She mentioned how she got funding from EPA to help in cleanup (\$4 million). She was followed by Oral Saulters, Jennifer Clancey, and Maggie Belanger (KSAU-TAB), who talked on Using BiT for Project Management and Community Asset Mapping

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Tribal Lands & Environmental Forum (TLEF) 2025

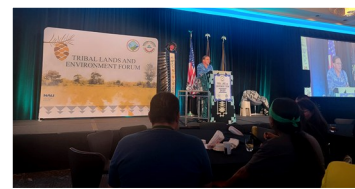
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in Tribal Programs. They talked about free technical assistance, understanding BiT, getting started, creating programs, photo & document storage, to name a few of the many things you can do with BiT. We then all participated in an exercise, sync BiT. The afternoon session started with Honoring Tradition While Developing Outreach Tools in Navajo Nation and Crow Creek Sioux Tribes. Frederick Sherman (Navajo Nation) talked about their Journey: The Road to Here and Now and open dumping and trash issues on their reservation. He opened with a hilarious video using one of their Grandmothers in a YouTube video as a form of outreach to get their point across to their people. He talked about using the mobile app for IHS open dump assessments, how do we stop it, and Tools: engaging the people with Navajo & English, using the radio station for PSA's, and moving forward creating a banner. Kay Koster (Crow Creek) talked on what they are doing with Solid Waste Management Assessing a Path Forward. She talked about collaborating with IHS and Alison Ruhs (R8 EPA) and Community Engagement. Next up was Augusta Edmund (Alakanuk Native Village) talking on Using Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Protecting our Environment. She talked about the knowledge past on from generation to generation, how were you raised, and culture. After the break, the Closing Plenary got underway with closing remarks from Todd Barnell, Tracy Horst, Nikki Cooley and then the taking down of the Colors. As Anthony Smith (Nez Perce) sang with his Hand Drum, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Native American Veteran's Group retired the Colors for this years conference. Then the ending of the conference everybody waits for, the raffle of various donations from attendees & Tribes. This conclu-

sion is always a favorite, especially for the last raffle item, the coveted Star Quilt which is donated annually from the Fort Belknap Indian Community Council. It is always my Honor to wrap the Star Quilt on the winner, last year it was my good friend, Mel Joseph from Lone Pine Paiute Tribe in California. This years winner was from the Pueblo of Isleta, Loren Jojola. It is always great to see the face of the winners when announced and especially seeing how emotional it is to them. That was evident when Loren was called, as I seen him up close when announced, as he is on the TWAR Steering Committee and sits at table in front of stage. I could see it in his eyes, as he came up on the stage and I wrapped the Star Quilt around him. He told me how much it meant to him and what it signifies. That's what really makes me happy, is when the person accepting the gift from my Tribe, understands what it means. This is a gift from Fort Belknap to Honor what ITEP is doing for all Tribes in the Environmental arena and helping Mother Earth. He told the crowd how thankful he was and what it meant and that made me feel so happy, not only for me, but for my Council who made this happen. Again, this has been a great conference learning, presenting, meeting old/new friends, having get togethers every night with people from the conference, but always a little sad when it ends and we all go back to our homelands. Thank you to the Anishinaabe and Dakota Tribes for hosting and welcoming us to your Homelands, it has been our Honor to walk amongst your people. Thank you ITEP & TWAR for putting on another great conference, we look forward to seeing what the future holds for us all. Until then, see you all next year. A'HO



**I would also like to thank those that donated
for this years Conference:
Fort Belknap Indian Community Council
Aaniiih Nakoda College
Little River Trading Post
Fort Belknap Brownfields Program
Kermit Snow, Jr.**



President Trump Meets With Chairman Of The Tunica-Biloxi Tribe Of Louisiana Marshall Pierite

By Katie Bourque August 16, 2025

<https://nativenewsonline.net/currents/president-trump-meets-with-chairman-of-the-tunica-biloxi-tribe-of-louisiana-marshall-pierite>



Tunica-Biloxi Tribe Chairman Marshall Pierite met with President Donald Trump on July 21, 2025. (Photo/Courtesy)

MARKSVILLE, LA – Late last month, President Donald J. Trump held a historic summit with the Chairman of the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana Marshall Pierite, weeks after the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe announced they would be formally nominating President Trump for the honor of the Nobel Peace Prize.

An article advocating for greater economic cooperation between America's Indian tribes and the U.S. government by Chairman Pierite reportedly caught the attention of President Trump earlier this year, prompting the summit. During their meeting, President Trump and Chairman Pierite discussed the unique position of Indian sovereignty and authority over tribal lands, and how to capitalize on the opportunity for the mutual benefit of the tribes and the American people.

"I believe we can foster a new spirit of cooperation that will see the expansion of energy production plants, data centers, housing, and technology through partnership between the federal government and Indian Country," Chairman Pierite said, adding that the cooperation between the Trump administration and various Indian tribes would be "a major catalyst for job creation and prosperity for both Native Americans and all Americans."

"As someone who spent a lifetime in the construction industry, I recognize the serious obstacles that over-regulation poses in building any new facility or business in America," President Trump said to Chairman Pierite.

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President Trump Meets With Chairman Of The Tunica-Biloxi Tribe Of Louisiana Marshall Pierite

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“Tribal sovereignty poses a great opportunity to bypass these unreasonable hurdles and create a major economic boom in the public/private partnerships between our Native American tribes and our business community.”

During the meeting, President Trump reiterated his support for “self-determination and the sovereignty of the country’s Native American tribes” and hailed what Chairman Pierite called a “post-gaming economic development for Indian country.”

Because of President Trump’s forward-thinking leadership and the support of visionaries like Chairman Pierite, Native Americans will have opportunities to build lasting prosperity for their families and communities. Chairman Pierite sees this partnership as a coalition-building exercise to bring prosperity to all Native Americans – something he’s referred to as “taking our seat at the table.” Despite hardships Indian Country has faced historically, Chairman Pierite believes Native Americans are ready to prosper along with the rest of the United States.

The President also expressed gratitude to the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe for their recent announcement that, based on their status as a sovereign nation, the tribe would recommend President Trump to the Nobel Peace Prize committee. “President Donald Trump will be remembered as one of the most influential world leaders in history, recognized for his unwavering commitment to global leadership and peace,” Chairman Pierite said. “By brokering the Abraham Accords, facilitating economic normalization between Serbia and Kosovo, negotiating the peace treaty between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, and mediating ceasefires between India and Pakistan and

between Israel and Iran, no world leader has dedicated more time and effort to promoting global peace than President Donald Trump.”

Chairman Pierite is encouraging other Native American leaders and communities to join and support the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe as they do the foundational work that will lift up the entirety of America’s Indian Country.

The Tunica-Biloxi Tribe has already made strides in pursuing economic development opportunities on their own. Through its business ventures, the tribe is committed to fostering partnerships and developing economic prosperity on behalf of its tribal citizens. Current investments include manufacturing and textiles, public infrastructure projects and AI and technology developments.

Pierite convened a roundtable discussion last month that featured several Trump administration officials to help lay the groundwork for this developing alliance. Diane Cullo, assistant administrator for the Office of Native American Affairs at the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), spoke at the summit, addressing dozens of tribal leaders who will form the core of this groundbreaking coalition.

“I believe President Trump’s vision during this administration emphasizes strong economic growth, deregulation, and the revitalization of communities that have long been forgotten. That vision resonates with many of us because tribal communities have known what it feels like to be overlooked. We are no longer asking for a seat at the table—we are taking our place at the table,” Chairman Pierite said.

Not for Sale: Tribal Colleges and Sovereignty in the Age of Datafication

Tribal College Journal | August 29, 2025 | Volume 37, No. 1 - Fall 2025

The pursuit of big data and profits has commodified nearly every aspect of human life. As intellectual hubs, tribal colleges are working to strengthen Indigenous data sovereignty.

<https://tribalcollegejournal.org/not-for-sale-tribal-colleges-and-sovereignty-in-the-age-of-datafication/>



Horseshoe Tournament Champion

By Mitchell Healy, Water Quality Coordinator



Crazy experience! Mother Nature definitely put her stamp on the most important game. I was on the brink of saying hell with it and let my opponent win or dig deep and give it one last push. Intense game, everyone watching. We each were 10-1, so whoever won the game would be

Champion. A game is 40 shoes. It was not raining when we started. I was fully focused and locked in. At 24 shoes in, I was up 22-9, I was in command, ringers were dropping on like magnets, I WAS NOT LOSING! Then the downpour came, we played to 30 shoes and stopped. I was soak and wet, shoes were wet and muddy, slipping out of my hands, he had on a glove, then the score was 22-19. I was disgusted, angry, frustrated, why did it have to rain during this game, felt like Mother Nature was trying to sabotage my title chances, the odds were ALL in his favor.

After 30min delay, we began playing again. Pits were filled with water, muddy. I had a rag this time, but still difficult throwing, I could not throw a ringer, let alone any points to save my life, then he passed me and at 36 shoes, he was winning 30-22. 4 shoes left, I need a miracle at this point, I need him to succumb to the pressure, he has never won a State Title. First 2 shoes, he leaves open, I score 4, 30-26, Last 2 shoes I score 4, he doesn't steal any points, TIED, OVERTIME, we throw down and back to decide a winner.

He throws first, scores 1 point, 31-30, his last 2

shoes no ringer but has 2 points setting there. I have 2 shoes to be the Champion, ONLY one option, I need a ringer. Big crowd watching, I've been under this pressure many times in all of my State Titles, he knows it, he tries to shake off the big no no that he just did, BUT I have the experience to make the big shots, I block out everything, my first shoe, nice spin, little to the left, one shoe left! For all the marbles. I reset, I look at the peg and let it fly, it feels like a good throw, it's lined up, it's turning good, it opens up on the peg, RINGER! 31-33! He puts his head down, not in surprise, but he was hoping for a miracle just as I was when I really needed one. The look on my face was, I can't believe this just happened, had everything against me, but somehow somehow it happened. The look on his face, heart broken, defeated, but I told him at the very beginning of our game before we played, (He always said he wanted to win just once, but it would never be handed to him, a Title is deserved, and some luck is needed) I said OK, you put yourself in this position, this is your chance that you wanted, focus and just throw your game, whatever happens, happens. In all honesty, normally in my class, if someone is up that much with few shoes to go, it's win, but this game was all mine before the rain came, then it turned into his game to steal, then things went crazy, and people told me afterwards, we really love watching games like that, I said, I don't like playing in games like that, lol.

Maybe Mother Nature took me on a wild one to bring out my horseshoe spirit that I used to have, because I was on the verge of retiring after this year if I didn't win and just move on to cornhole. Things happen for a reason. Let's run it back next year!



Excerpted from:

**Tribal Resource Center Weekly
Newsletter**

Week of July 14, 2025

Upcoming Webinars, Trainings, and Participation Opportunities

From: EPA Region 8 EPARegion8@public.govdelivery.com | July 16, 2025

Tribal Brownfields Grant Management Training

Save the Date - September 24 & 25. Mark your calendars now for this exciting virtual opportunity to hear about grant management best practices from peers with Tribal Response Program 128a and competitive EPA grants, as well as EPA and Tribal TAB staff. Additional details and registration will be available later this summer!

AWQMS Water Quality Data Entry

When: September 2025**Where:** Rapids City, South Dakota

Who: New or returning tribal water quality staff who need assistance with loading water quality data (lab or field data) to Gold Systems Elements Ambient Water Quality Monitoring System (AWQMS). New this year, EPA staff will assist tribal participants with revising and preparing their 2026 QAPPs for submission to EPA.

More details to come later in Summer 2025.

2025 National Nonpoint Source Training Workshop

When: October 27-30**Where:** Baton Rouge, LA

What: Tribal and state nonpoint source staff. This workshop will foster coordination among NPS program practitioners and partners by bringing together state, Tribal, territorial, federal, and other interested stakeholders involved with program activities under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act.

Agenda and more details to come later in Summer 2025. Contact Eric Trum at trum.eric@epa.gov if you would like to present or have ideas for the agenda.

QA Revision Workshop

When: November 2025**Where:** Denver, CO EPA Denver Office, 2nd Floor Conference Center

What: EPA staff will provide hands-on assistance to tribal participants with revising and preparing their 2026 Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) for submission to EPA and updating QAPPs to the new S-2 QAPP format. We encourage all tribal programs to plan to attend.

More details to come later in Summer 2025.



Heat illness signs and symptoms

Watch for signs of heat illness and act quickly. When in doubt, call 911.

If a worker experiences:

Headache or nausea
Weakness or dizziness
Heavy sweating or hot, dry skin
Elevated body temperature
Thirst
Decreased urine output



Take these actions:

- » Give cool water to drink
- » Remove unnecessary clothing
- » Move to a cooler area
- » Cool with water, ice, or a fan
- » Do not leave alone
- » Seek medical care (if needed)



**We do not inherit
the earth from
our ancestors;
we borrow it
from our children.**

NATIVE AMERICAN PROVERB



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Aaniiih & Nakoda Environmental Newsletter



**VOLUME 30, ISSUE 1
(October-December, 2025)**

**Deadline for Articles is
Friday, December 5th,
2025 @ 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.

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