



NEWS

U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs

**For Immediate Release:
October 29, 1999**

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FEDERAL WORKGROUP SEEKS TRIBAL DUMP CLEAN UP PROJECT PROPOSALS

In an effort to close solid waste dumps located on tribal lands and help tribes develop alternative solid waste management options, the National Tribal Solid Waste Interagency Workgroup is seeking proposals from tribes for solid waste projects. The workgroup, representing 8 federal agencies, provides funding for tribes to assist with solid waste management and closing open dumps. There are over 1,100 open dumps on Tribal lands in the United States. The deadline for submitting a pre-proposal is November 19, 1999, with the final proposal due February 25, 2000. "The pre-proposal stage is so that the workgroup can determine if the project is feasible, and assist the tribes to develop final proposals, which will then be considered for funding," said Jerry Gidner, Chief, Division of Environmental and Cultural Resources Management for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. A copy of the solicitation letter providing information needed to submit a proposal can be downloaded from the Environmental Protection Agency's Web Site at www.epa.gov/tribalmsw/finance.htm#fy2000. During FY 1999 \$1.6 million was awarded to 11 tribes and it is hoped that a similar amount will be available to fund projects in Fiscal Year 2000.

The effort to clean up or close the open dumps is well behind the schedule required to meet the federal government's deadline for compliance. "What to do with these open dumps is one of the biggest environmental issues in Indian country today. Its huge," said Gidner. According to a study by the Indian Health Service, it will take over \$120 million dollars to assist the tribes in cleaning up or finding alternative waste disposal sites. "Last year the various federal agencies contributed probably less than \$5 million dollars to the effort," Gidner said. "Given the modest amounts of funding that Federal agencies can contribute to this effort, we want to make the money go as far as possible, and avoid duplicating efforts. This workgroup provides a consolidated federal forum to coordinate funding to tribes for solid waste projects."

The National Tribal Solid Waste Interagency Workgroup was established in 1998 after Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt wrote to Carol Browner of the EPA asking for help in developing and implementing a federal plan to help tribes bring their waste disposal sites into compliance with the federal regulations. The interagency workgroup consists of representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Health Service, Department of Agriculture, Federal Aviation Administration, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of Agriculture and Defense.

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