Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs announced today that it has awarded more than $600,000 in grants to 18 tribes or tribal consortiums to support them in addressing the challenges of climate change as part of the President's Climate Action Plan to reduce carbon pollution, move the economy toward clean energy sources and prepare communities for the impacts of climate change.

The grants are designed to assist tribal communities on preparedness, including through planning projects and by supporting participation in federal initiatives that assess climate change vulnerabilities and develop regional solutions.

"As part of the President's Climate Action Plan, we are looking for ways that BIA can be a partner to tribes in preparing for the impacts of climate change," said Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Kevin K. Washburn. "American Indian and Alaska Native communities can be particularly vulnerable to impacts, so it is our hope that these grants will help bolster the efforts of tribal managers to adapt to climate change."

In the near future, the BIA will solicit FY 2014 proposals for additional grants from federally recognized tribes to support community-based preparedness and resilience efforts.

"The Department of the Interior recognizes that tribes can often face disproportionate impacts from a changing climate," said BIA Director Michael S. Black. "The planning and adaptation processes that these grants will support are important, not only for infrastructure, human health, and economic sectors, but also for the cultural and spiritual ties that tribes have with our land and natural systems."

The Administration is implementing the President's Climate Action Plan through a series of executive actions under Executive Order 13653, "Preparing the United States for the Impacts of Climate Change," issued by President Obama on Nov. 1, 2013. As part of supporting community preparedness, all federal departments and agencies are expanding efforts to help tribes, states, cities and localities prepare for the impacts of climate change.

The projects receiving the FY 2013 BIA grants announced today will support climate preparedness planning not only for the 18 tribes and tribal organizations that received direct support, but also for an additional 32 tribes and two local governments benefiting or cooperating in the projects.

BIA reports that numerous other tribes will benefit from the tribal capacity gained by these tribes as they pursue climate adaptation plans or advanced technical training. Individual plans will serve as templates as other tribes embark on the same planning journey and future tribal adaptation planning workshops will highlight the successes and challenges of these tribes.

Tribal grants can also have a broader impact through the participation of tribal technical professionals in Interior's larger climate networks – including the eight regional Department of the Interior Climate Science Centers and most of the 22 interagency Landscape Conservation Cooperatives.

In choosing the FY 2013 grants announced today, BIA considered proposals for more than $5 million and gave priority to those proposals that supported multiple tribes, among other considerations. The 2013 projects include:

- The College of Menominee Nation, in cooperation with the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, the Northeast Climate Science Center, and Pennsylvania State University, will build on a successful climate conference attended by 21 tribes presenting follow-ups on climate adaptation training in the Midwest.
- The Chugach Regional Resources Commission will coordinate regional adaption planning for six tribes in Alaska.
- The 1854 Treaty Authority will coordinate a vulnerability assessment and adaptation planning for off-reservation hunting and gathering concerns for two tribes and the authority itself in the Midwest.
- The Quinault Indian Nation, in cooperation with the Quileute Tribe and Hoh Indian Tribe, will evaluate potential impacts on culturally and economically important natural resources in the Northwest.
- The Nooksack Indian Tribe, in cooperation with the Lummi Tribe, Whatcom County, and the City of Bellingham, Wash., will perform a Nooksack River salmon vulnerability assessment leading to an adaptation plan that may benefit tribes that depend on salmon both in the Northwest and Alaska.
- The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation will develop a comprehensive tribal government climate adaptation plan spanning the range of tribal government functions. The plan will also serve as a model for other tribes addressing similar challenges, including climate impacts on infrastructure, hazard mitigation and human support systems.
- 13 tribes were awarded travel support for technical capacity-building through participation in interagency adaptation technical forums and implementation projects. The tribes include: Quinault Indian Nation, Upper Sioux Community, Walker River Paiute Tribe, Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians, Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria, Pueblo of Taos, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Sac & Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa, Hopi Tribe, Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria, Gila River Indian Community, and the Cherokee Nation.

The Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs oversees the BIA, which is headed by a director who is responsible for managing day-to-day operations through four offices – Indian Services, Justice Services, Trust Services and Field Operations – that administer or fund tribally based infrastructure, law enforcement, social services, tribal governance, natural and energy resources, and trust management programs for the nation’s federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages through 12 regional offices and 85 agencies.