



Trust Land Resources, Resource Stewardship, Results that Matter



Message from the Deputy Director

Greetings from Trust Services

The two-year anniversary of serving Indian Country in an almost 100% telework environment is fast approaching. We have learned Trust Services is comprised of more than the brick and mortar of our buildings. Our strength lies in the dedication of our employees to our mission. We collaborated virtually through MS Teams, continued outreach to tribal communities through improved use of technology and continued on-site field work with revised COVID restrictions throughout a successful 2021.

I am excited to announce a new training opportunity for Trust employees in Central Office, Regions and Agencies to attain a Land Management Certificate paid for by OTS. **If you are interested see Page 2** for more information. This investment in employee professional development is available through a partnership with the Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF). I encourage you to consider participating. My hope is that we can close skill gaps in Realty and Realty related programs.

I look forward to an exciting 2022!

Contact Information

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Photo header credit: Fabian Keirn, BIA AK Region Forester. View of Eagle Summit, a 3,652 feet-tall gap through the White Mountains of Central Alaska.

WE CAN HELP! LAND MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATES

OTS invests in BIA Central Office, Region and Agency employee training



Call for Interested BIA Trust Central Office, Region, Agency applicants

The Office of Trust Services (OTS) is embarking on a new venture to enhance the skills and knowledge of BIA land professionals through a partnership with the Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF). Trust Services will pay for Land Management Certificates for any qualified BIA Central Office, Region and Agency employees in Trust and Realty related programs. The OTS objective is to close skill gaps for new and existing employees.

Eligibility

- Full-time (non-seasonal) employees
- Supervisor approval email or a copy of a signed Individual Development Plan including the certificate program.
- Employee must be a self-starter committed to completing 12 online courses including self-study materials.

Tuition \$1,200 per person

The tuition for 12 courses at \$100 each for the full certificate program will be paid by BIA OTS for approved candidates. Payments will be made by credit card or by contract if the number of interested candidates exceed charge card limits.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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Land Management Certificate

Participants will obtain a Real Estate Certificate through the Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ILTF). See www.ntla.info/certification for course details. Students who successfully finish the course will receive a certificate of completion from United Tribes Technical College.

Course Information

Each course will take approximately 12 hours to complete earning 1.2 Continuing Education Units (CEU's) for each class completed. The certificate consists of 12 online courses. Testing is required in Level I courses. Summary of content by Level:

- Level I – general overview and introduction to land management issues
- Level II – encouraging critical thinking about common issues
- Level III – practicum with BIA to complete actual on-the-job work in an effective and meaningful way. Subject matter experts will be engaged to format Level III content.

How do I Register?

Scan the Bar code below from a BIA computer or BIA issued phone for a link to the registration form. Or [click here](#).



Once BIA OTS submits payment each student will receive an email from ILTF with a link to the CEU Admissions and Registration Form to complete the Level I, II or III class enrollment.

Upcoming Job Openings



JOIN OUR TEAM

You may apply for jobs online at <https://www.usajobs.gov> or setup an email alert for select BIA vacancies.

Branch of Environmental and Cultural Resources

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| Environmental Biologist (NRDAR) | GS-0830-13 | Albuquerque, NM | in process |
| Museum Staff Curator | GS-1015-12 | Washington | in process |

Branch of Geospatial Support

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Geographic Info System Specialist | GS-0301-7/9 | Lakewood, CO | in process |
| Geographic Info System Specialist | GS-0301-11/12 | Remote or negotiable upon selection | in process |

Division of Energy and Minerals Development

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------------|------------|
| Program Manager (Division Chief) | GS-03015 | Lakewood, CO | in process |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------------|------------|

Division of Forestry Management

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Forester (Strike Team) | GS-0460-5/7/9 | Billings, MT | in process |
| Administrative Officer | GS-0341-9 | Remote or negotiable upon selection | in process |
| Forester (Forest Resource Planning) | GS-0460-11 | Lakewood, CO | 2/24 – 3/21/2022 |

Division of Wildland Fire Management

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Assistant Aviation Manager | GS-2101-13 | Boise, ID | in process |
| Deputy Branch Manager Operations | GS-0401-13 | Boise, ID | in process |
| Audio Visual Production Specialist | GS-1071-11 | Boise, ID | in process |
| Equipment and Facilities Manager | GS-0401-12 | Boise, ID | in process |
| Fire Ecologist | GS-0408-13 | Boise, ID | in process |
| Budget Officer | GS-0560-14 | Boise, ID | in process |
| Supervisory Budget Analyst | GS-0560-13 | Boise, ID | in process |

Division of Program Management and Coordination

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| Audio Visual Production Specialist | GS-1071-11 | Albuquerque, NM | in process |
|------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|------------|

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Office of Trust Services (OTS) is committed to serving Tribal Communities and their members by ensuring the activities associated with management and protection of trust and restricted lands; natural resources; forestry and wildland fire management; irrigation, power and safety of dams; and real estate services are improving tribal government infrastructure and communities, along with other components of long term sustainable economic development, to enhance the quality of life for their tribal members and protect and improve trust assets of American Indians, Indian tribes and Alaska Natives.

There are 56 million acres of trust land and 45 million acres of land held by Native Alaskan state-chartered corporations. The BIA has 12 Regional offices and 83 Agencies.

News You can Use



BIA Trust Quarterly Newsletter

The Trust Quarterly Newsletter is produced collaboratively by the Trust Services Divisions under the direction of Deputy Director Johnna Blackhair. To find out more or to submit your ideas and suggestions for future issues, please contact editor Dawn Selwyn by email at Dawn.selwyn@bia.gov or BIATrustQuarterly@bia.gov.

Your input and photos are appreciated!



Please submit content for the April Issue by March 18, 2022

Newsletters are available for viewing on the [BIA Trust Services web page](#).

BIA's Reentry and Future of Work Plan

The pandemic has forced BIA to transition to a new way of working and reimagining our work environments with a return to regular operations after May 28. Supervisors will work with their staff, their managers, and Human Resources to complete remote or telework agreements. Your reentry plan will be in accordance with the phases listed in the [BIA's Reentry and Future Work Plan](#). The dates within are *tentative* dates for key milestones.

- **Phase 1** – February 28 continue maximizing telework and remote work, no return to on-site.
- **Phase 2** – March 28 employees whose positions require on-site activities
- **Phase 3** – April 28 employees who volunteer and/or would benefit from being on-site scheduling. Approximately 60% of employees transitioned from max telework status, completing reentry
- **Phase 4** – May 28 date 100% employees transitioned from maximum telework status, completing reentry.

Telework and Remote Agreements must be in place by Date Employee Returns to Office

Supervisors need to have their employee's Telework and Remote Work Agreements in place. Prior to entering into these agreements, employees are required to take training. Do not delay in reviewing the DOI Telework and Remote work policies and taking the [training](#). Please refer to [Personnel Bulletin 21-07, DOI Telework Program](#) and [Personnel Bulletin 20-06, DOI Remote Work Policy](#). These and other resources are found on the [DOI Telework/Remote work site](#).

DISCLAIMER

The U. S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Trust Services, strives to make the information within this newsletter as timely and accurate as possible; however, makes no claims, promises, or guarantees about the accuracy, completeness, or adequacy of the content, and expressly disclaims liability for errors or omissions in the content of the newsletter.

Reference in this newsletter to any specific commercial product, process, or service, or the use of any trade, firm or corporation name is for the information and convenience of the public, and does not constitute endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by Department of the Interior.



“The White House Council on Native American Affairs represents an important commitment to strengthen Tribal sovereignty, uphold our commitment to Tribal Nations, and honor the United States’ nation-to-nation relationship. Part of that commitment includes ensuring that Tribal leaders have a seat at the table and can work directly with federal leaders on issues of importance.”

Secretary Deb Haaland

White House Council on Native American Affairs

Secretary Deb Haaland, in her capacity as WHCNAA Co-Chair, will convene her Cabinet colleagues three times a year with Tribal leaders to share the work of the WHCNAA and listen to feedback, questions, and concerns from Tribal communities.

Web Page Launched

The Interior Department steps to better engage Tribal leaders through the White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNAA) through the launch of a [new website](#) to highlight the Administration’s progress in supporting Indian Country.

Secretary of the Interior’s Tribal Advisory Committee

The Department created the first-ever Secretary’s Tribal Advisory Committee (STAC), a foundational step toward modernizing the Department’s Tribal consultation plan and making permanent, long-lasting change to prioritize the Nation-to-Nation relationship. The STAC will facilitate intergovernmental discussions, serve as a forum for open dialogue between high-level DOI leadership and bureau officials with elected Tribal representatives.



White House with cherry blossoms

White House Tribal Nations Summit

This first annual White House Tribal Nations Summit, held in November 2021, was an opportunity for the President and senior leaders from his Administration to meet with Tribal leaders and engage in Nation-to-Nation dialogue on critical issues in Indian Country. Topics included strengthening the Nation-to-Nation Relationship

- Health Care and Health Disparities
- Tribal Lands, Treaty Rights, Climate Change, and Natural and Cultural Resources
- Agriculture and Rural Prosperity
- Ensuring Safety and Preventing Violence against Native Women, Children, and the Elderly
- Economic Opportunity and Community Development in Native Communities
- Education and Youth Engagement

White House Priorities



“The funding in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is central to the Biden-Harris Administration’s all-of-government approach to building more resilient Tribal communities and protecting the natural environment.”

Bryan Newland
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs

\$466 Million Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Tribal Funding

This bill includes investment in Tribal climate resilience and infrastructure.

\$250 million for construction, repair, improvement and maintenance of irrigation and power systems, safety of dams, water sanitation and other facilities; and

\$216 million for Tribal climate resilience, adaptation and community relocation planning, design and implementation of projects which address the varying climate challenges facing Tribal communities across the country.

\$2.5 Billion Water Settlements Funding

The Interior Department received a historic investment of \$2.5 billion to help fulfill the pre-existing settlements of Indian water rights claims. Assistant Secretary Newland underscored the Department’s commitment to upholding the federal government’s trust responsibilities and delivering long-promised water resources to Tribes, certainty to all their non-Indian neighbors and a solid foundation for future economic development for entire communities dependent on common water resources.

Tribal Consultations on Bipartisan Funds

The Department of the Interior began consultations with Tribes on the implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law January 26-28, 2022. The law invests more than \$13 billion directly in Tribal communities across the country to bolster community resilience, replace aging infrastructure, expand access to clean drinking water and help ensure that everyone has access to high-speed internet. Programs to be funded include tribal climate resilience, water infrastructure and drought resilience, wildfire resilience, ecosystem restoration, legacy pollution, and U.S. Geological Survey infrastructure law.

“The [Bipartisan Infrastructure] funding is central to to the Administration’s all-of-government approach to strengthening Indian Country. I look forward to these conversations providing a roadmap as the Department begins implementing the law”

Secretary Deb Haaland
U.S. Department of the Interior

Forestry



Wood Product samples

The Tribe is producing and filling small batches of lumber for customers



Ice Fishing shack under construction for sale



Turtle Mountain Portable Sawmill Investment Update

The Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians (TMBCI), Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Forestry program has made remarkable progress with the setup of a new Wood-Mizer LT50 production-model bandsaw mill, Wood Mizer edger (that trims both sides of the cut boards), and MP-260 Planer-Model funded with BIA forestry funds as part of a portable sawmill and infrastructure initiative featured in the July 2021 issue of this newsletter.



Demonstration of LT50 portable sawmill

Tribal DNR has been utilizing over-aged aspen timber that was formerly only used for firewood or left to rot in piles to produce rough-cut lumber for outhouses along trails, raised garden beds, benches and picnic table for the TMBCI Senior's Center, a park check-in entrance station, and partitions for the tribal office.

They have also been producing and filling orders for small batches of lumber and have been building and selling ice fishing shacks. The TMBCI are looking to expand operations, seeking the addition of a wood kiln, and considering purchasing wood from other Reservations.

Wildland Fire Management



Infrastructure Law Supports Wildland Fire Management

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law includes \$1.5 billion distributed over the next five years for the Interior Department's wildland fire management efforts.

The infrastructure funding is expected to be divided among the 4 bureaus including the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service, who oversee national wildland fire management. The work is in collaboration with the Forest Service. The distribution will include:

- Nearly \$900 million to plan and implement fuels management
- More than \$300 million to complete post-fire restoration activities
- Nearly \$250 million to increase preparedness to respond to wildfires, including workforce reforms
- \$10 million to further support the [Joint Fire Science Program](#)

This investment will help local, state, and Tribal communities tackle the climate crisis while creating good-paying union jobs, advancing environmental justice, and boosting local economies. Learn more about the law's wildland fire management support [here](#).

Interior and Agriculture 5 Year Monitoring Plan

The law requires the Interior and Agriculture departments to establish a five-year monitoring, maintenance, and treatment plan and publish a long-term strategy within five years. It also directs both departments to conduct restoration treatments and improve the fire regime on 10 million acres.

As climate change drives the devastating intersection of extreme heat, drought, and wildland fire danger across the United States, creating wildfires that move with a speed and intensity previously unseen, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides historic investments in wildland fire management for both the Interior and Agriculture departments.



Firefighters unloading drop from helicopter

In addition, the law provides support for wildfire reduction efforts in communities that have traditionally been overlooked, such as Tribal Nations, with priority given to each community's high-value infrastructure, cultural resources, and natural resources.

\$900+ million for Ecological Health

The law provides more than \$900 million to restore ecological health on federal, Tribal, state, and, in some cases, private lands to accomplish ecosystem restoration and invasive species mitigation through use of stewardship contracts and good neighbor agreements, which will further benefit wildland fire management efforts.

Geospatial Support



BOGS Web Services Available

The [Branch of Geospatial Support website](#) is being updated as part of a DOI wide project to modernize the look and functionality of the first customer point of contact on the internet.

BOGS staff met with a team of support specialists and contractors to review the existing site and model changes that reflect the future direction of the branch/division. Public content will be consolidated to make downloads easier.

- [Geospatial Licensing](#)
Provides stakeholder information on the current Enterprise License Agreement and how to access the right resources for customer mapping needs.
- [Geospatial Upcoming Classes and Registration](#)
Students may now apply for courses through links posted on a class calendar.
- [Geospatial Technical Assistance](#)
Call (405) 230-0480 between 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. MDT, Monday-Friday, or email geospatial@bia.gov

Land Area Representation (LAR) Team

The LAR working group finished evaluating how to make the data of the Land Area Representation (LAR) current.



LAR Team from (Left to Right): Dean Hacker, Regional Geographic Coordinator (RGC) Great Plains, John Mosley, RGC Pacific, Eric Thoman, BOGS contractor, Timothy Suto, BOGS Program Analyst, and Deborah Kirk, RGC Eastern Region

The initial goal of the project included changes to the BIA's geospatial priorities and the team determined creation of two datasets is the best possible solution going forward.

- **Trust Area Representation (TAR) Dataset** – The TAR dataset focuses on land areas held in trust
- **Reservation extent Representation (RER) Dataset** – The RER dataset shows the polyline (a continuous line composed of one or more line segments) extent of the reservations.

This two-dataset solution is believed to improve accuracy and more explicitly execute the goals of the project that led to the original creation of the LAR. In the next several months the working group will outline the details of this initiative.

Deborah Kirk, RGC Eastern will work on some of the specifics that affect lands that are outside the PLSS. The team is excited to create primary datasets in the next several months that will represent the BIA spatially at the national level.

Broadband



Broadband USA

The Broadband USA program, housed within the [National Telecommunications and Information Administration \(NTIA\)](#), serves state, local, and tribal governments, industry, and nonprofits that seek to expand broadband connectivity and promote digital inclusion.

BroadbandUSA promotes planning and funding efforts through solution-neutral guides and resources, hosting local and regional planning workshops that offer opportunities to convene with broadband stakeholders across the country, updates to a National Broadband Availability Map (NBAM), and promoting interagency coordination.

Tribal Engagement and Consultation

The [Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth](#) (OICG) conducted three government-to-government Tribal Consultations with Tribal Nation stakeholders to inform its development of the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program. With over 700 participants, the consultation provided tribal leaders with a forum to share input related to tribal sovereignty, eligible uses, and equitable distribution of the funding, among other issues, for consideration in drafting the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Broadband Grant Program Virtual Listening Sessions

Public virtual [listening sessions](#) were designed to collect stakeholder input to help inform program development and implementation on the five new grant programs authorized and funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). January and February 2022 sessions will be held at 2:30-4:00 p.m. ET each Wednesday, January 26, February 9, and February 23, 2022.

\$980M in Grants Available to Tribes

The Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program, which was funded by the Consolidated Appropriation Act of 2021, makes \$980 million available for grants to eligible Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian entities for broadband deployment, digital inclusion, workforce development, telehealth, and distance learning. The recently enacted Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provides an additional \$2 billion in funding for this program.

NTIA Awards \$1M in Grants to Tribes

Yavapai Apache Nation received \$500,000 for a planning study to establish the best and most cost-effective approach to update and expand broadband connectivity to the Nation. The plan will leverage experts in broadband operations, engineering, and design to develop and document a sustainable and feasible plan for future infrastructure deployment.

Lac Courte Oreilles (LCO) Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians received \$442,734 for a planning study to complete a detailed feasibility analysis and broadband design to determine the best way to provide services to its government, facilities, business enterprises, and its unserved housing units located on the Reservation.

Indian Energy Service Center



Photos (Left to Right): BIA logo, oil rigs in action, and the new IESC logo

What is an Orphaned Well?

An orphaned well is an oil or gas well that is past its useful life when it is permanently taken out of production and should be properly plugged and abandoned and the affected surface remediated. Orphaned wells have no owner so there is no responsible party to perform this work.

\$150M Appropriation to Plug and Remediate Orphaned and Abandoned Wells

Recently passed Infrastructure Legislation provides \$150 million to address the orphaned oil and gas well issue. This large-scale economic stimulus is a unique opportunity to reduce climate and local environmental impacts and protect public health by plugging and remediating orphan wells.

Video on Abandoned Well Management in Canada



Watch this YouTube video, [How are wells abandoned?](#) to see how Canada manages this issue

Development of Orphaned-Well Dashboard

The IESC, BIA Leadership and the Department's Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEP) are working together to establish a comprehensive inventory list of orphaned wells on Indian lands.

The Indian Energy Service Center is actively working with the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) to add an orphaned-well dashboard to the BIA Leadership toolkit. The BIA's program activity dashboards serve as a critical decision-making tool for BIA Leadership as they guide the Indian Affairs' all-government approach to optimizing use of trust program resources under our current Administration's historic focus on the Indian trust mission.

Grant Program in the Works for Tribes

The Department expects to make funding available to Tribes through an upcoming grant process funded by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The Department of Interior's, Office of Environmental Policy & Compliance is the lead on the Energy Community Revitalization Program (ERCP), which received \$169 million to help accelerate this remediation and reclamation work on Interior-managed lands and to support work on non-federal lands through grants to states and Tribes.

“There are roughly 2.6 million oil and 0.6 million gas ‘abandoned’ wells in the United States”

2020 U.S. EPA Greenhouse Gas Inventory

Indian Energy Service Center



Photos (Left to Right): BIA logo, oil rigs in action, and the new IESC logo

IESC Principles

Each of the four principles was a collaboration from each of the four agencies represented at the IESC.

Quality of Life (BIA)

Stewardship (BLM)

Accountability (ONRR)

Beneficiary Focus (BTFA)

Steering Committee attendance Growing

IESC hosted the Indian Energy Minerals Steering committee bi-annual meeting on December 8, 2021. The full day meeting was held virtually and attended by over 50 multi-bureau office representatives.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled to be held in person at the IESC office in Lakewood in June 2022.

IESC 5-Year Anniversary

In 2021, the IESC celebrated a 5-year anniversary. This would not have been possible without the incredible staff and the Executive Management Group leadership.

Condensed Indian Fluid Minerals Course offered to Executives

On December 7, 2021, IESC provided the first condensed Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for BIA, ONRR, BLM and BTFA executives. IESC normally leads a two-day training for DOI federal employees for the Onshore Energy and Mineral Lease Management Interagency SOPs for Indian Fluid Minerals Training.

“This was phenomenal training. I have attended the full course, and you all did an incredible job condensing it to a few hours. It was extraordinarily well-done.”

Senior Executive testimonial

Right of Way Reviews prep for Data Transfer to NIOGEMS

The IESC is partnering with the Division of Real Estate Services (DRES) and the Division of Energy and Minerals Development (DEMD) to review grants of easement for rights-of-way (ROWs) in the TAAMS ROW module. This effort supports DEMD as they work to populate ROW information into the [National Indian Oil and Gas Energy and Mineral System](#) (NIOGEMS) and to assure the information is consistent with TAAMS system-of-record information accurately reflecting current ROW status and metrics.

NIOGEMS is a software system only available to tribal offices, and tribal-supporting federal entities. The system allows users to track and make decisions on developing and managing resources by readily accessing financial, realty, and geo-technical information of Indian land with energy and mineral potential.

Indian Energy Service Center



Photos (Left to Right): BIA logo, oil rigs in action, and the new IESC logo

IESC welcomes Two New Employees

The IESC welcomes new talent to its Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA) beneficiary services branch.



Sunny Rasmussen
Accounting Technician

Ms. Sunny Rasmussen comes to IESC with experience as an Americorps Vista Volunteer, Virtual and Administrative Assistant. She brings to IESC her excellent customer service experience of providing administrative support to multiple clients including Tribal Leaders. She served as the Program Assistant of the White Earth Land Recovery Project relating to Tribal cultural preservation issues.

Ms. Rasmussen earned a Bachelor's degree in Spanish from Cornell University and is proficient in the Spanish language. She is an enrolled member of the Lac du Flambeau Band of Chippewa. On a personal note Sunny shared, "I like to watercolor paint in my free time".



Diane Cooka
Trust Accounts Administrator

Ms. Diane Cooka, Trust Accounts Administrator comes to IESC from the DOI, Appraisal and Valuation Services Office (AVSO), where she served as Program Analyst for the Land Buy Back Program Valuation Division.

Ms. Cooka has extensive experience researching Indian Trust property in TAAMS, OASIS, and ITSQ for encumbrance, conveyance, acreage and ownership information. She has served as an Accounting Technician with the Office of the Special Trustee, Office of Trust Funds Management, Branch of Probate and has worked 15 years in the federal government. She is of Navajo and Cochiti Pueblo descent. (Photos: In her free time she enjoys running and trail hiking and shared the above family photos of her visit to Antelope Canyon, Arizona and the Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico).

Land Titles and Records



Trust Asset and Accounting Management System (TAAMS)

The Trust Asset and Accounting Management System (TAAMS) is the Department of the Interior's integrated land management system. This system manages the leasing process including the invoicing and distribution of income to beneficiaries on the land held in trust for Tribes, American Indians, and Alaska Natives.

48.7 Million Acres

The Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) manages 48.7 million acres of tribally owned land, 6 million acres of Federally owned land, and approximately 181,000 acres of Federally owned land held in Trust status. The BIA is responsible for managing well over 125,000 leases, use permits, land sales, and other encumbrances, as well as interest on deposited funds.

\$650 Million in Collections

Approximately \$650 million is collected annually for approximately 163,000 Individual Indian Money (IIM) accounts.

Data source: September 29, 2021, TAAMS [Privacy Impact Statement](#).

Collaboration with EPA for Grant Distributions

The Division of Land titles and Records (LTR) is currently working on a data request initiated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to assist them in distribution of EPA grants for Tribes. The grant distributions on Trust land hinge on acreage data.

TAAMS has a "Qlik" query option to compile tract ID and tract acreage for surface (not sub-surface) tracts on a state-by-state basis. The Qlik results can be captured in an Excel format as a snapshot in time. Discussions are on-going on who would have access to the data (for example limited data sharing amongst sister departments within EPA only).

TAAMS is a working system subject to regular customer updates to addresses, ownership, etc. LTR is suggesting data provided be assigned an expiration date upon which time U.S. EPA would request a refreshed dataset. The initial Qlik query has been written and a response for all 50 states was to be ready January 2022.

EPA Tribal Clean Water Act Section 319 Grants

The EPA anticipates awarding Section 319 Base Grants to eligible tribes (depending on land area) on a noncompetitive basis. For tribes with 640,000 acres (1,000 square miles) or more the base allocation is \$50,000; for tribes with 640,000 acres or less, the base allocation is \$30,000.

Funds may be used to implement the tribe's approved Nonpoint Source Monitoring (NPSM) management program. Tribes monitor water quality data to characterize waters, identify trends, emerging problems, determine whether pollution control programs are working, help direct pollution control efforts, conducting education programs, provide training and travel, among other opportunities.

Museum Property Management



Photos (Left to Right): BIA logo, Chairman Hopi, Secretary Haaland, Staff Curator Justin Giles at presentation of Hopi flag, watercolor paint by Oglala Sioux artist Arthur Short Bull [online display](#)

Summer Intern Hired

The BIA Museum Program hired Kai Veney, for a summer internship. Kai is a student at Haskell University, and he is of Seneca and Cheyenne descent.

Indian Affairs Hall of Tribal Nations Update



A 2022 National Public Service Announcement was produced for a national outreach campaign to tribal governments to promote tribal participation in the Interior Hall of Tribal Nations Project. This project will provide the background and history to the collection of flags from all federally recognized tribes by informing the public about the oral history of tribal flags, symbols, and usage. The Hall of Tribal Nations expansion and official national outreach kick off is planned in 2022.

USDA Tribal Relations and BIA Program Collaboration

The U.S. Department of Agriculture invited Justin Giles, BIA Museum Staff Curator to speak at the USDA Tribal Relations Office ribbon cutting celebrating the opening of the USDA Hall of Tribal Nations and Indigenous Food Sovereignty Initiative. USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack offers a preview of the Hall [here](#).

Main Interior exhibits reflect Four Directions

Native objects on display in the Main Interior building will be placed reflective of the four directions of the building North, South, West, and East. For example, the NORTH side exhibits cultural material from Alaska and the northwest coast, the SOUTH side material from southern Puebloan, and Southwestern tribes, EAST, and WEST in the same fashion.

American Indians and Conservation Artist Series



Artist Dustin Twiss, Oglala Sioux, and work entitled "Ferrets"

Earlier this year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Museum and Archives commissioned three Indigenous artists to create contemporary art for its permanent museum collection. Each of the artworks will be featured in the museum exhibit, *American Indians, and Conservation*, which is scheduled to open in late 2022 at the Service's National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

Follow along the [blog series](#) to learn about the individual artists and their creation that will be an integral part of the upcoming *American Indians and Conservation* exhibit.

Pathways Program



Internships for Students and Recent Graduates

If you are a current student or recent graduate or have an advanced degree, you may be eligible for federal internships and job opportunities through the Pathways and other student programs.

Current students at high schools, colleges, trade schools or other qualifying educational institutions may be eligible for paid opportunities to work for the BIA and explore a federal career while completing your education. For more information [click here](#).

Where to Apply

We are continuously recruiting to fill internships. We post ALL job opportunities for Pathways Internships on USA jobs. For current opportunities and additional information, please visit www.usajobs.gov/students and grads/

BIA Trust Services Demographics



Welcome our New Program Manager



Mackenzie Neal joins the Office of Trust Services in Washington, DC on Monday, February 28, 2022, as the Pathways Internship Program Manager. She comes to us from George Washington University, where she managed academic and professional development programs at the Graduate School of Political Management and the AT&T Center for Indigenous Politics and Policy. She brings several years of experience in higher education programming, federal management consulting, and nonprofit project management with much of her work focused on Native youth workforce development and federal-tribal relations. Mackenzie has coordinated national leadership development and internship programs for Native and non-Native students alike, and she is eager to pivot back to a role that connects students and recent graduates to meaningful career opportunities in the federal government.

Mackenzie is a member of the Quapaw Nation and holds a B.A. in Government and Global Studies from the College of William & Mary. She completed coursework in indigenous self-governance at the University of Arizona's Native Nations Institute and American University's School of Professional and Extended Studies. She is a former Udall Scholar and an alumna of the Native American Political Leadership Program.

Pathways Program



Getting to know our New Program Manager

What event solidified your commitment to working with internship and leadership development as a career?

I previously managed an internship program for emerging tribal leaders, and in 2020 I had an exceptional student with exceptionally bad luck. She was a dream candidate, but each internship we found fell through at the last minute, and then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. She returned home and struggled to find Wi-Fi on her reservation. She stepped into a parenting role and cared for her siblings and cousins when her family members were hospitalized. She took on a part-time job when money was tight. Despite these difficulties, she managed to find time to complete her coursework and apply to internships. Each setback was a blessing in disguise, as we eventually secured the perfect placement with a prestigious nonprofit that offered flexible hours and excellent pay.

Six months later, she accepted a permanent job offer and she is absolutely thriving today. I love helping students jumpstart their careers and surpass their own expectation, but this individual represents the reason why I really love what I do. Indian Country is overflowing with potential and entrepreneurial spirit, and a little support and guidance can make a tremendous impact on a student's life.

What do you do for fun?

In my free time, I paint digitally and am a published illustrator. My most recent projects have been for an upcoming indigenous sci-fi tabletop game titled *Coyote and Crow*.



Makenzie paints concept art with an art tablet display and one of her original illustrations

What do you find interesting about a future working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs?

Indian Country is incredibly diverse, and BIA offers a world of opportunity to explore just about any profession you can imagine. Whether it's wildfire management or tribal broadband, I'm excited to learn something new every day while connecting young professionals to different careers within the Bureau.

Explain what it means to be a Udall Scholar.

Congress established the Udall Foundation in 1992 to honor the legacies of Morris K. Udall and Stewart Udall, whose careers significantly impacted tribal governance, health care, and environmental stewardship in the United States. Every year, the Foundation awards scholarships to students across the country who demonstrate a commitment to public service in these issue areas. Overall, the program and its alumni community promote collaboration, consensus-building, and leadership in environmental and tribal affairs, and the scholarship represents both an acknowledgement of students' past success and an investment in their futures.

Pathways Internship Program Success Story

Pathways Program hires former Intern

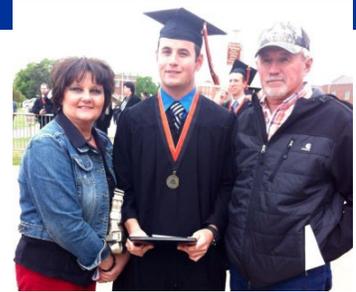
Weston Cain grew up on a small farm in eastern Oklahoma spending many of his younger years outdoors and his love for the wilderness began there. He earned his Associate Degree from Oklahoma State College and his bachelor's degree from Oklahoma State University, both in Forestry while earning his Type II firefighter certification while COOP (Pathways) student over 5 years.

His Pathways internship paved his way, upon graduation to a permanent Forester position at the BIA Northern California Agency as a Tribal Liaison for the Modoc National Forest, the USFS and NRCS. He went on to serve as an Inventory and Planning forester for the Branch of Forest Resources and Planning (BIA), assisting Tribes/agencies Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) field measurements; the Branch of Wildland Fire Management in Boise, Idaho and assisted a Helicopter Attack Crew at the White Mountain Apache Agency.



Truxton Canon Agency Firefighter Type II Crew

In 2020, I accepted a position as a Program Specialist with the Pathways program, which brought me full circle in my career. Through my time as a student trainee, I was able to build meaningful relationships with various individuals, agencies, and tribes, which I can now rely on to help further the careers of the current student trainees within the Pathways program. I hope to continue to watch the student trainees grow through their careers and become the next generation of leadership within the BIA.



Weston Cain and photo at graduation with his parents

Questions & Answers about Pathways

Weston, what did you like about the program as a student? It granted me opportunities to work, see places, and build relationships, that otherwise I would not be given. I traveled to MT, WA, AZ and OK, and worked at the Crow, Yakama, and Truxton Canon BIA agencies.

What were some of the benefits you received from Pathways? Implementing my educational background in forestry and wildland fire, to on-the-job experiences. His led to learning about different agencies and how they operate uniquely.

What would you say to someone thinking about Pathways as an option? Absolutely if you see yourself wanting a career within the Federal Government. This provides you with an opportunity to gain experience and build relationships while furthering your educational studies.

List three words that describe your current position. Rewarding, challenging and impactful.

What are your hobbies and what do you like to do in your free time? I continue to enjoy my time outdoors, hiking, camping, hunting, and fishing.



Real Estate Services



Regional Strike Team Members



*Sherry Johns
Northwest*



*Lorrae Russell
Pacific*



*Luree Livermont
Great Plains*



*Christina Varela
Western*



*Russell Baker
Midwest*

Fee to Trust Strike Team achieves Results

A national Fee to Trust (FTT) Strike Team was established under the direction of the BIA, Central Office Division of Real Estate Services (DRES). Team members are FTT subject matter experts working remotely from their duty stations on 120-day details which began September 15, 2021, through January 15, 2022.

The Team has had the following priorities and focus:

- Advancement of FTT applications
- Updates to the Trust Asset and Account Management System (TAAMS)
- Analysis of report data
- Provide responses to FTT data calls
- Review Indian Affairs-Performance Management System (IA-PMS) annual reporting requirements and discuss updates to the definition and scope of these requirements

Team Accomplishments

In 80 days the FTT Team identified 1,108 pending applications nationwide and reviewed 357 recognizing submissions ripe for a Notice of Decision (NOD) or Acceptance of Conveyance (AOC). The team drafted a total of 52 NOD's (31 approved) and 12 AOCs prepared for regions have been accepted and maintained close communications with each region. The status of all transactions was updated in TAAMS.

Fee to Trust Training

DRES hosted FTT training for Alaska and invited one person per region for the 2-day training. Topics included the 16-step process, FTT Handbook, 25 CFR 151 regulations, FTT association overview, and TAAMS encoding. A total of 24 field staff were in attendance.

Branch of Water Resources



Our Focus

The Branch of Water Resources programs focuses on management, conservation, and utilization of Indian reservation water resources.

Our Priority

BIA provides technical research, studies, and other information for Indian Tribes and Alaska Natives to serve as informed and prudent managers in these areas:

- Adjudicated, decreed water rights or
- Water otherwise appurtenant (connected) to tribal or Indian trust lands, including public domain allotments

Congressional Funding Allocations and Requests

Branch of Water Resources Congressional Funding Allocations & Requests
The anticipated Fiscal Year 2022 Budget changes from 2020 (A), Requested (B), and Changes from 2021 (C) shown below:

| Program | 2020 Enacted | 2021 Enacted | Changes from 2020 (A) | Budget Request (B) | Changes from 2021 (C) |
|---|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Water Resources | \$4.1M | \$4.21M | \$0.11M | \$4.142M | -\$0.09M |
| Water Management Planning & Pre-Development | \$8.525M | \$9.052M | \$0.527M | \$13.092M | \$4.04M |
| Water Rights Negotiation & Litigation | \$8.1M | \$11.155M | \$3.055M | \$11.204M | \$0.049M |
| Litigation Support /Attorney Fees | \$1.8M | \$11.155M | \$3.055M | \$11.204M | \$0.049M |
| Federal Power Energy Regulatory (FERC) | \$0.651M | \$0.656M | \$0.005M | \$0.665M | \$0.009M |

Critical Issues

BIA provides staff and technical support Approximately 40 active Indian water rights cases nationwide. Technical support to 20-25 active Indian water settlement assessment, negotiation, and implementation teams nationwide BIA partners with affected Indian Tribes to implement Secretarial authorities under the Federal Power Act (FPA) (16 U.S.C. §§ 739a-825r). The program and technical work for these cases and teams is supported by the BIA water program and funding identified above.

The Division is in the process of developing an internal *Decision Support Tool (DST) application* allowing staff to access information quickly for project reporting, tracking project performance milestones, identifying areas of concern for timely assistance to the Tribes and tracking cost associated with program projects through the Country.

Branch of Water Resources



Federal Coordination

BIA coordinates this program with the United States Department of Justice, the Department of Interior, Office of the Solicitor, and the [Secretary's Indian Water Rights Office](#).

The Water Rights Negotiation and Litigation program funding is distributed using Indian Affairs' published process (Notice of Revised Instructions for Preparing and Prioritizing Water Program Funding Requests, [70 Federal Register 60846, Oct. 19, 2005](#)).

Annual Request for Proposals

Indian Affairs annually solicits technical water rights funding proposals for eligible projects from tribes and regional offices. All proposals are reviewed by a Water Funding Prioritization Team, and the Deputy Director of Trust Services makes final funding distributions. Non-recurring funding is provided at various levels, subject to the constraints of available yearly discretionary allocations.

Purpose of the Water Rights Negotiation and Litigation Program

The purpose of this program is to confirm and define Indian water rights through litigation and court decree or through negotiated settlement. The priority for the program funds is to provide all documentation and other materials deemed necessary to further the United States' water rights claims on behalf of Indian tribes or individuals. These materials may include:

- Preparing hydrographic survey reports
- Determining surface and ground water supplies
- Identifying arable lands
- Completing a practicably irrigable acreage (PIA) assessment
- Determining point(s) and means of diversion, purpose(s) and place(s) of use, and amount of water diverted or depleted
- Conducting studies to determine the water needs of fish, wildlife, or other resources for which Indian tribes have reserved rights

Funds may also be used to provide similar materials as necessary to facilitate active Indian water rights negotiations undertaken by the Secretary of the Interior.



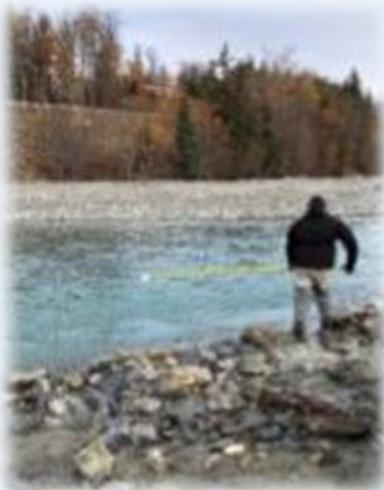
San Luis Rey Water Rights Settlement, San Luis Rey River, Pala, California

Branch of Water Resources



Photos (Left to Right): BIA logo, stream photo, Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribe logo

Chilkat River Water Sampling



Collecting samples from Chilkat River



Labeled water Samples

Water Management and Pre-Development

The BIA manages the Water Management, Planning, and Pre-Development Program for the purpose of managing, conserving, and utilizing reservation water resources.



Chilkat River water sampling event near Hanes, Alaska conducted by the Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes (October 2019)

The priority for these program funds is to provide necessary technical research, studies, and other information for Indian tribes to serve as informed and prudent managers of their water resources.

These efforts may occur through partnerships or through coordination with other governmental entities to obtain information describing surface and ground water assessments, inventories, monitoring, modeling, and gauging. Additionally, these funds are used for the preparation of comprehensive reservation water management, and development plans, use surveys, interagency drought management planning, and necessary assessments to define and characterize tribal water resources. Non-recurring program funds are awarded through the same process referenced in the Water Rights Negotiation and Litigation Program section.

Branch of Water Resources



Tribes Compete for Funding

Tribes compete for funding that meet the criteria and exceptions identified in 25 CFR Part 89.40 through 89.43, which include situations where legal representation is denied or cannot be provided to tribes by the Office of the Solicitor or the United States Department of Justice.

Payments for court-ordered settlements that may include payment of attorney fees and expenses are also made from these funds.

\$2.5 Billion Water Settlements Funding

The Interior Department received a historic investment of \$2.5 billion to help fulfill the pre-existing settlements of Indian water rights claims. The Department of the Interior begins consultations with Tribes on the implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law January 26-28, 2022.

Attorney Fees and Litigation Support Services

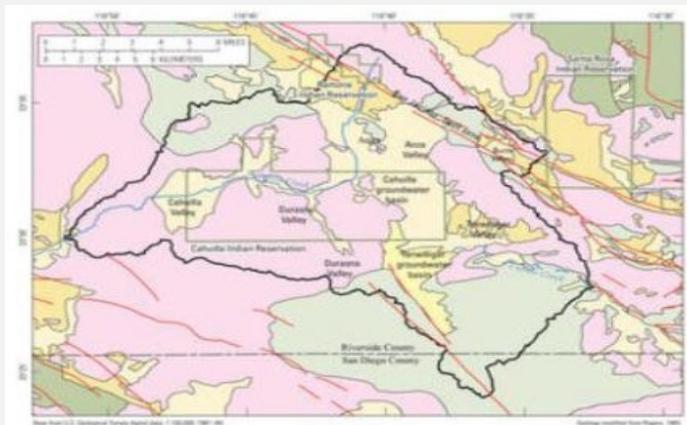
Funds from this program allow the tribes to retain experts that can help the Tribes assess and respond to a variety of ecological threats to natural resources that are the subject of Indian rights, both on and off reservation. Projects considered for funding within this program are requests for Litigation support services and requests to support Attorney fees

Financial Assistance for Attorney Fees

Financial assistance for attorney fees requested by tribes is used to procure legal services to assist the Tribes in establishing or defending tribal rights or protecting tribal trust resources guaranteed through treaty, executive order, statute, court decision, or other legal authority. Congress has directed that the Federal government represent the tribes in "all suits in law and equity." Occasionally, the Federal Government cannot represent Indian interests for various reasons, including conflict of interest.

Example of Technical Report

USGS Evaluation of Ground Water Resources of the Anza-Terwilliger Basin, Anza, California. *United States v. Fallbrook Public Utility District, No. 51-1247-SD-C (S D Cal filed Jan 1951).* Click for [more](#) information on the Anza-Terwilliger evaluation.



Branch of Water and Power



Hydropower Technical Support Available

Hydropower licenses are issued for a period of between 30 and 50 years. BIA's Hydroelectric Power Program provides technical support and assistance to tribes when:

- Evaluating effects
- Determining appropriate mitigation
- Determining financial compensation
- Interpreting the Financial Power Act interpreting other statutes and regulations as they pertain to hydropower licensing

There are numerous hydroelectric facilities on, or affecting, Indian Trust and other Indian resources.

Federal Power Compliance Program (FERC)

The Bureau of Indian Affairs' Federal Power Compliance Program (also known as the Hydroelectric Power Program) works with affected Indian Tribes as BIA implements Secretarial authorities under the Federal Power Act (FPA) (16 U.S.C. §§739a-825r). Actions under this program generally include:

- (1) Identification of non-federal hydroelectric projects affecting Indian reservations, tribal resources (e.g., land, fish, wildlife, and cultural resources), and/or other resources important to Indian tribes.
- (2) Development and implementation of studies to address potential effects on tribal and natural resources, including fish and wildlife, water supply, cultural resources, and tribal economies,
- (3) Development and negotiation of settlement agreements, license recommendations, terms and conditions, and amendments to address project effects on tribal lands and resources; and
- (4) Long-term implementation of settlement agreements and other measures necessary to protect tribal interests. This includes actions necessary to defend terms and conditions, including participation in trial-type hearings or alternatives analyses under the Energy Policy Act of 2005.



Grand River Dam Authority's Pensacola Dam and Grand Lake, Eastern Oklahoma

Spotlight on the BIA Alaska Region



Logistics of Service

The BIA Alaska Regional Office is in Anchorage, Alaska. This Region includes staff located at 2 BIA agencies (Fairbanks & Juneau) on or near the 229 Tribes in this geographic service area.

Trust Branches in the Region

Programs at the Regional level are more hands on when it comes to working with Tribes. Branch Chiefs work closely within the Tribes to respond with services in the following program areas:

- Land Titles and Records
- Natural Resources (Forestry, Geospatial Information Systems, Fire Management)
- Probate
- Real Estate Services
- Rights Protection
- Environmental and Cultural Resources
- Archeology
- Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act
- Subsistence

Service Area Map

The Alaska Region has jurisdiction working with Tribes in Alaska. For a link to a map of Alaska Native Federal lands [click here](#).



Alaska Tribes

The Alaska Region encompasses 663,268 square miles of land, an area that would stretch from Atlanta, Georgia in the east to San Francisco, California in the west and to Minneapolis, Minnesota in the north. Within Alaska are a dynamic and diverse mix of Tribes, Tribal organizations, and natural features.

The entire state of Alaska falls under the jurisdiction of the Alaska Region, with the small exception of the Annette Island reserve, which falls under the Northwest Region. More than 180,000 tribal members make up the 229 Federally Recognized Tribes under the jurisdiction of the Alaska Regional Office – from Ketchikan in the Southeast Panhandle to Barrow on the Arctic Ocean and from the Yukon Territory border to Atka in the Aleutian Chain.

Trust Leadership

The Deputy Regional Director for Trust maintains and discharges the Trust responsibility of the Secretary of the Interior for all individually allotted lands issued under the 1906 Native Allotment Act and the 1926 Native Townsite Act. The position works closely with the Fiduciary Trust Officer (FTO) from the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA) to administer trust asset management activities within the Region. The Deputy also works closely with tribal governments and tribal organizations to provide long-range program planning, budgeting, management, and technical and administrative supervision of Trust programs.

Mr. Lynn Polacca, Deputy Regional Director-Trust Services agreed to an interview on his experiences (See Interview on pages 26-28).

In the Spotlight: Alaska Deputy Regional Director



Photos (Left to Right): BIA logo, Lynn Polacca outdoors at a river, tribal forest land with no trespassing sign

LYNN POLACCA Biography

Lynn Polacca is half Hopi and Navajo. He earned a degree in Wildlife Conservation Biology from Arizona State University and upon graduation worked with the Hopi Tribe in developing the Hopi Wildlife Ecosystems Management Program and conducting population dynamics surveys of golden eagles on the reservation. He began his federal career in 1999 with the USDA as the first District Conservationist working on the Hopi reservation. He transferred to the BIA Hopi Agency in 2002 as a Natural Resources Specialist. In 2007, he transferred to Fort Apache Agency to serve as the Deputy Superintendent-Trust Services and in 2015 he moved to Anchorage, Alaska as the Deputy Regional Director-Trust Services.

Interview

Mr. Polacca joined the Trust leadership team as a Deputy Regional Director in 2015 and was recently interviewed about his experiences. Here is what he had to say.

What was your first government job?

In 1999, I was hired by the Natural Resources Conservation Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture as the first District Conservationist on the Hopi reservation. In this position I was responsible for managing and delivering range, irrigation, wildlife, and drought management projects to the Hopi reservation.

Which Trust duties were an unexpected surprise?

All of the Alaska Regions' programs were an unexpected surprise because there is the lower 48 way of conducting business and the Alaska way. The programs are the same but the environment, people and their villages and communities that we serve are tied together in a unique way which makes our work different.

The Tribes in Alaska are organized at several levels: the federally recognized Tribe, the Providers, the Tribal/Village corporation, and the Regional Consortiums. The BIA works directly with the Tribe and Service Providers in carrying out our trust responsibilities.

Seasons are broken into two timeframes which revolve around the winter freeze up and break up. In early spring as the villages begin to thaw, our trust programs begin their field season (a time for surveys, site visits and inspections). Any field work not completed during this time will have to be rescheduled the following year. Unlike the lower 48 programs there is a limited window to complete field work.

What is your favorite Trust program, and why?

Fire has always been near to my heart since my father and brothers were fire fighters. I used to hear the story of how firefighters for the village were called. All of my BIA career I have supervised fire programs. As Deputy Superintendent, Fort Apache Agency, I helped manage a high complexity fire management program that had numerous Type 1, 2 and 3 incidents and these were both challenging and rewarding times.

In the Spotlight: Alaska Deputy Regional Director

What do you do for fun?

I am an outdoors person. I enjoy fishing, camping, hunting especially archery hunting, and participating in my Hopi ceremonies.



Share a positive work memory.

A positive work memory has to be our Region's initial roll out of the [Alaska Native Vietnam-era Veterans Allotment \(ANVVA\) program](#) following the passage of the John C. Dingell Act, Public Law 116-9 in 2019. Our Realty, Tribal Operations, Land Titles and Records Office, and Probate team collaborated with the Bureau of Land Management to develop a process to screen over 2 million Alaska Vietnam Veterans. This difficult task resulted in a list of around 2,000 Alaska Natives qualified for this program in a short amount of time.



The BIA and BLM initial outreach to potential applicants required obtaining copies of DD-214 Service Records, Certificates of Degree of Indian Blood, or, for those heirs of Veterans, appointing a personal representative from the State of Alaska court while keeping information flowing to Tribal Governments, Alaska Native Corporations and Alaska Regional Service Providers regarding the program through Dear Tribal Leader Letters (DTLL), mass e-mails, coordination meetings, and consultation sessions. Kudos goes out to all the were involved.



Alaska Region must locate more than 700 potentially eligible veterans and families

What do you see as your greatest challenge in FY2022?

Our regions greatest challenge for FY2022 will be the implementation of the Alaska Native Vietnam-era Veterans Allotment Act. We currently have two individuals that have been granted land. We are working on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for encoding these individual tracts of land into the Trust Asset and Accounting Management System (TAAMS). At the same time, we are working to locate more than 700 potentially eligible veterans and families.

What advice would you give others who would like to be a Deputy Regional Director?

Spend the time with all trust programs and learn how they operate and function. As you gain knowledge test it and take on new challenges. Be willing to go to places that test your abilities, this can be physical or mental. Learn new ways to get the job done.

How would you like others to remember your time as Deputy for Trust?

I would like to be remembered as an individual that was willing to listen. A person willing to do as much as I could for the Tribes, Providers, and landowners. Our job is to make lives better for all the people we serve.

In the Spotlight: Alaska Deputy Regional Director

Who is the person you most admire in BIA?

The person in BIA I most admired was my former supervisor, Nona Tuchawena. Despite fitting the stature of a true Hopi woman at only 4'10" she ran her Agency with a commanding strength. She offered me advise on how to be a leader and here are a few of her memorable quotes:

“Be fair with people”

“Give the tribe the support they need even during the times they don’t agree with you”

“Get to know your regulations and programs so well that you can make decisions at the local level”

**Nona Tuchawena (Hopi Tribe)
Former BIA Superintendent**



Hopi Tribal logo

What is your greatest BIA success?

The Village of Newtok in southwest Alaska had been facing extreme erosion relating to permafrost degradation for years. In 2015, I became directly involved with the Newtok Village Relocation effort to move the village to Mertarvik. After countless meetings the BIA was able to jump start the relocation efforts.

In 2017, the Region was able to approve the environmental documents to make approximately \$4 Million in Tribal Transportation Program project funds available. The Tribe awarded a professional services contract for engineering, environmental, and permitting services to design new roads and other transportation facilities in Mertarvik. The tribe was able to start construction in 2017, and completed equipment acquisition, mobilization, constructing an access road to the rock quarry, and developing the rock quarry. The stockpiling of gravel is ongoing.



Mertarvik Village Relocation (October 2019)

The Alaska Region TTP funding was the seed that started the growth of the new Mertarvik Community and supported the tribe’s engagement with state and federal partners to assist Newtok Village with their on-going relocation effort. I still remember the Tribal members thanking the BIA for getting the ball rolling.

Alaska Region: Judicial Districts



Gold Discovered in 1880

“Of all the gold ever mined in the world, approximately 1 to 2% (more than 33 million ounces) has come from Alaska. 72% of this Alaskan gold was mined...from sands and gravels deposited by streams and rivers.” See USGS.gov for [more information](#).

Oil Discovered in 1968

Prudhoe Bay Oil Field is the largest oil field on Alaska’s North Slope. It is the largest oil field in North America, covering 213,543 acres and originally containing approximately 25 billion barrels of oil. Production of oil started in June of 1977.



Prudhoe Bay Oil Field

With the discovery of oil in Prudhoe Bay, it was necessary to settle the indigenous people’s claim to the land and its resources. The Alaska Native Claim Settlement Act was passed in 1971 after much contentious debate between Natives and non-Natives.

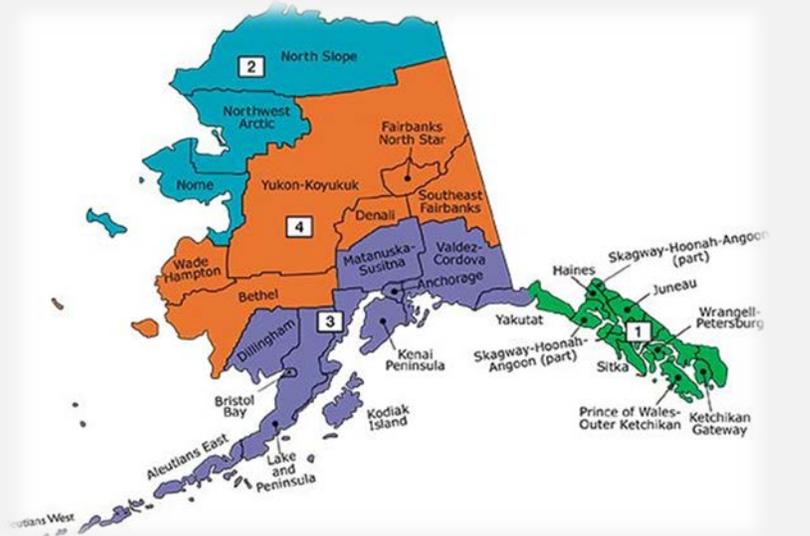
State Judicial Districts

Alaska became the 49th State in 1959. Alaska does not have counties like in the Lower 48 States, there are boroughs. When a document is notarized, it is based on the Judicial District where the document is signed.

Naming Judicial Districts

Naming the Districts followed the discovery of gold in Alaska and the need to record mining claims in the late 1800’s. The Judicial District remains to this day. See map below for area of coverage.

Map of Alaska State Judicial Districts



District 1 in the **South** – Juneau area

District 2 in the **Northwest** – Nome area

District 3 in the **South Central** – Seward area

District 4 in **Central** – Bethel area and beyond

Alaska Region: Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA)



Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Signed

On December 18, 1971, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) was signed into law. Congress enacted ANCSA to provide a means by which Alaska Natives could derive economic benefits from the resources around them.

Native corporations are the largest private landowners in Alaska, with title to 44 million acres of selected land throughout the state. Development of the resources beneath their lands offers Native corporations an opportunity to generate jobs and other economic benefits for their Native shareholders and fulfill the implicit promise Congress made to Alaska Natives in exchange for extinguishment of their aboriginal claims.



Historical photo of ANCSA signing ceremony

ANCSA established Twelve Geographic Regions

Twelve geographic regions (also referred to as “Regional Corporations”) were established by ANCSA as depicted in the map below. Each region contains numerous smaller “Village Corporations,” totaling about 225 in all. The village corporations selected the surface lands around their villages. ANCSA required every corporation to be organized under Alaska law. A 13th Regional corporation was subsequently formed for *non-resident* Alaska Natives.

Map of 12 Geographic Regions established by ANCSA



50th ANCSA Anniversary Celebration

On December 18, 2021, Alaska Pacific University (APU) hosted the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act at the Atwood Center. See [Alaska Public Radio coverage](#).

In 1971, Alaska Native delegates met at the APU Atwood Center to discuss and approve ANCSA before President Nixon signed the bill.

Alaska Region: Forestry



Wildlife Awareness



Alaska's Forestry program is unique in that the landscape requires staff to take bear awareness and aviation training. It's not too uncommon for staff to take shotguns out for field activities. Below are pictures of a Regional Forester on Raspberry Island near Kodiak. He is carrying a can of pepper spray on his belt for safety reasons.



Foresters always equipped with bear spray for field work

Required Personal Protection Equipment

Field work has its own unique hazards and personal protection equipment (PPE) are essential to reduce the risk of injury. Hard hats are used to minimize head injuries, personal flotation devices for water hazards, and gloves for thorny and sharp objects. Additional items field staff take with them into the field are bear spray and firearms to provide a deterrent for charging moose and bears. Cow moose with calves are very protective and will charge, especially during and after the spring calving season in May.



Forester carrying firearm during field survey

BIA forestry employees are authorized to carry firearms as they frequently work in remote areas and are standard issue items for bear country. Travel logistics for bear spray is more difficult than firearms because it is a hazardous material and is not allowed on commercial flights. When possible and necessary, bear spray can be purchased once finished with the commercial flights and is usually given to the allotment owner or tribe before jumping on the return flights. Forestry employees have been active in supporting development of regional policy regarding the use of these vital safety options.

Alaska Region: Environmental Cleanup Efforts



Photos: Site of former 27-acre Bethel BIA Headquarters, historical photo of children in Alaska BIA School

BIA Bethel AK Demolition

The former 27-acre Bethel BIA headquarters demolition, abatement, and disposal efforts continue to comply with U.S. Public Law 102-497 (1992). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) and BIA are partners in with current actions and potential future remediation efforts. The Alaska Region and USFWS have collectively obligated approximately \$2.5M and BIA plans to fund another \$1.2M for this project.

55 Gallon Drums at White Mountain School

A sampling of 55-gallon drums located at the White Mountain BIA School was performed in the summer of 2021. The logistics of field activities were complicated during the pandemic.

A 2001 US Corps of Engineers evaluation indicated the White Mountain site did not contain hazardous substances and the drums contained fuel used at the BIA boarding school between 1948 and 1955. See [site report](#).

The Division of Environmental & Cultural Resources Management (DECRM) is active in diverse environmental issues affecting DOI lands and/or trust responsibilities. A few are highlighted here.

120 BIA Schools transferred to State of Alaska

DECRM is developing a path forward with communities, state, and federal agencies to address BIA schools, most of which were transferred to the State of Alaska or local school districts through agreements formalized in 1963.

Diesel Spill in Kotzebue

One of the largest diesel spills in Alaska involved a former BIA school located in Kotzebue, Alaska. The historic spill is reported to have occurred between 1950 and 1980 with an estimated 100,000 to 200,000 gallons of fuel impacting 10 or more acres. The Region completed groundwater well installations for groundwater sampling and did some soil sampling this past summer. Due to the cold weather, groundwater sampling did not occur this year but is planned for next season when the water thaws.



Google Earth graphic from AK Dept of Environmental Conservation

Alaska Region: Forestry



Photos: Campground with dead trees beginning to decay due to infestation, spruce bark beetle

Fire Harvest to provide Safety for Allottee Home

A Native allotment on the Kenai Peninsula near Soldotna was affected by the spruce beetle outbreak. This beetle had killed most of the mature white, lutz and larger diameter black spruce. This presented a significant wildfire risk to the allotment owner's home, a physical risk from falling trees, and a continuing forest health issue.

The allotment owner requested the BIA Forestry program sell her timber to address these concerns. In 2021, an almost 50-acre harvest unit was identified and offered for a salvage timber sale. Harvest activities were expected to occur in the winter when a sale is finalized.

It is fortunate this occurred in Southcentral Alaska, one of the Region's most accessible areas to a network of highways, and their associated timber markets. In many areas, there is no road infrastructure and no markets to handle even a modest sized beetle outbreak.

Spruce Bark Beetle Outbreak affects 1 Million+ Acres

Southcentral Alaska has been experiencing a widescale spruce bark beetle outbreak which has affected over 1 million acres. This ongoing outbreak is located within the Cook Inlet region where the BIA Forestry program has direct service trust responsibilities on the Native allotments.

BIA reached out to individual Native allotment owners to tailor management responses to owner needs. In 2019, a hazardous tree removal project was completed on approximately 8 acres of an allotment that is used as a commercial campground located off the Parks Highway near Talkeetna. The bark beetle infestation had killed all the mature spruce trees in the designated campground area as depicted in the photo above. The standing dead trees were beginning to decay, presenting a safety issue that required closing the campground to the public and resulted in reduced income for the allotment owner.

Operated by one of our trust service providers, Chugachmiut, the Yukon Type 2 Indian Affairs Fire Crew was hired to safely remove the hazardous trees and clean up the resulting slash. A total of 110 dead or hazardous trees were felled, bucked into firewood and the slash chipped to reduce fire danger.



Campground reopened after hazardous tree removal

Alaska Region: Fuels Management



Photos: Workers from the Tanana Chiefs Conference implement a fuels reduction project using a BIA-funded wood-chipper, woody debris piles in a shaded wildfire fuel treatment adjacent to Eagle Village, Alaska

Logistical Challenges

Fuels management projects in Alaska face two unique logistical challenges. First, the sheer **geographic scale** of Alaska coupled with the lack of roads across much of the region makes physical access to our communities and other interests challenging. The BIA has approximately 1.1 million acres and over 14,000 Native allotments spread across Alaska's >420,000,000 acres.

Second, our northern climate precludes safe fuels work for much of the long winter. When the temperatures are warm enough to allow safe field operations, we are often in **wildfire season**.

Regional Fuels Specialist Hired

For the last 10 years the management of BIA Alaska's fuels program has been a collateral duty of the regional fire management officer or natural resources manager.

The Region had 8 fuels management projects active with dozens of communities within fire-prone ecosystems that have never had a fuels program or one active in years. We realized we faced a growth challenge and hired a regional fuels specialist in February 2022 to manage the expanding program.

Fuels Management to Mitigate Wildfire Risk

The BIA Alaska Fuels Management Program is growing with the uptick in funding made available to develop and implement fuels treatments to mitigate wildfire risk to communities across the country. The BIA has two principal funding streams for wildfire fuels management.

The traditional, "base" fuels program pays for **hazardous fuels reduction** projects on trust lands. The newer **Reserved Treaty Rights Land (RTRL)** program provides funding for Tribal entities to perform land stewardship work, including hazardous fuels reduction, on ancestral lands that may currently be owned by any government agency or private entity. RTRL ability to do projects on multiple ownerships is ideally suited for Alaska, where many communities are adjacent to lands currently owned by Alaska Native corporations or various government agencies.

Funds to Expand established Tribal Programs

BIA is funding Tribes and Alaska Native non-profit corporations with established fuels management programs (e.g., Tanana Chiefs Conference, Chugachmiut) to expand their existing capacity by adding positions and developing personnel and purchasing equipment (e.g., TCC's chipper and support vehicle) to develop and implement fuels management projects.

We began public outreach regarding the increased funding opportunities to mitigate wildfire risk through fuels management at the August 2021 Providers' Conference.

Alaska Region: Geospatial Coordination



“I love my job. Our environment shapes our language, and our language shapes the way we think. In my language we do not have the words left and right. We have “to your east” and “to your west”. My grandmas only ever use the four directions to describe the location of something, which has had such a lasting impact that I have made [GIS] my career.”

Jessica Rodriguez (Laguna Pueblo)
AK Region Geospatial Coordinator

What I find interesting about my job

I am passionate about GIS because everything in this world is tied to a geographic spatial location. This can be anything from covid tracking, measuring erosion, caribou migration to internet infrastructure. GIS can do it all. For example, statistics can be run on acreage versus population versus the number of Rights Protection Specialists and these numbers means something for decision makers and that something usually translates into money for our programs.

Part of my role is to assess Regional and Tribal GIS software and training needs. As a local Regional Geospatial Coordinator, I have built rapport with users and understand the region’s uniqueness, therefore, I can advocate for local needs to be met.

GIS Software available to Internet-Challenged Tribes

Downloading software via the internet in a matter of minutes is a luxury taken for granted. So much so that software companies no longer provide software hardcopies to customers. GIS software for most is a simple download. However, it is not the same in remote tribal locations where broadband isn’t available and software downloads can take eight hours. For some Tribes, this challenge has been an absolute deterrent for acquiring GIS.

Working with ESRI® and the Branch of Geospatial Services (BOGS), a BIA process was put in place to download ArcGIS to thumb drives to mail to requesting Tribes. Such a simple solution, yet it hadn’t been done. A handful of Tribes have now taken advantage of this service and their programs are getting GIS capabilities for the very first time.

Specialized Training by Region

In the past, GIS training courses were chosen annually from the Central office headquarters. Today, RGCs work directly with trainers to address region specific issues, which is incredibly important for the state of Alaska. A few months ago, a Tribal Consortium reached out asking about drone (unmanned aerial systems) training.

Tribal users were surveyed to gauge experience levels and working with ESRI®, the Alaska Region now has two drone trainings scheduled, one for beginners and one for experienced users. This is just one example of how GIS can help Tribes on their path towards Self-Determination.

Alaska Region: Land Titles and Records Office



LTRO Mission

Provide timely and certified Federal land title ownership and encumbrance services to *record, maintain and certify land title documents* including:

- *Patents*
- *Deeds*
- *Probate orders*
- *Leases*
- *Rights-of-ways*
- *Cadastral surveys*
- *Plats*
- *Subdivision*
- *Other Alaska Native and Indian land title documents*

Title Status Reports

LTRO provides Title Status Reports (TSRs) that are accurate, timely, accountable, and efficient. The TSR includes the complete status of title ownership and encumbrances for Federal Alaska Native and Indian trust and restricted Lands.

Introduction of LTRO Staff Members



Colleen LaBelle
Land Titles Officer

I am an enrolled member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate of South Dakota. I have worked for both the Indian Health Service (IHS) and BIA. In 2005, I was initially hired as a BIA Legal Instruments Examiner in the Great Plains Region, before moving to the Pacific and Alaska Regions. I enjoy the diversity of the workload as there is always something new and challenging.

This is a very historic time for Alaska Region as we implement the Vietnam Era Veteran's Allotment Act of 2019. The LTRO recorded its first Native Allotment Certificate under this new Act. Alaska Region LTRO is bringing these new allotments into active status within the Trust Asset and Accounting Management System (TAAMS), our official system of records and it is very exciting.



Marie Gregg
Land Titles Examiner

I am affiliated with the Inupiaq tribe and started working in LTRO in September 2008. I enjoy the challenges of researching title, taking apart a tract, reviewing all documents involved while attempting to pinpoint the location of where a small problem turned into a big one and why it happened.

Our program implemented Land Description Reviews (LDRs) for all transactions including requests for certified BIA Inventories (BIAINVs). *Before the Title Plant was established, many title documents were recorded with the State of Alaska* and great measures were taken to locate the records and record them in TAAMS. Our LTRO verifies legal descriptions to ensure all Allotments and Townsites managed by the Region have been reviewed and a signed LDR is imaged to the tract. Decision makers can be confident they are working with the most accurate records in TAAMS.

Alaska Region: Land Titles and Records Office

Introductions (Cont'd)



Chante Johnson
Legal Instruments Examiner

Cama-i, everyone! My name is Chante and I'm part Yupik and was born and raised here in Anchorage, Alaska on Dena'ina lands. My maternal family lineage historically traveled between camps and villages along the Kuskokwim River. I graduated with a B.S. in Natural Science in 2016 from the University of Alaska -Anchorage and moved to Washington State a few months later to work as a chemist for a few years but eventually became homesick for this beautiful State.

My husband and I moved back to Alaska in 2021 when he accepted a job with the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island and I was hired by the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Realty Services, where I performed title research and conveyed deeds as a Patent Officer. I really enjoy issuing clean title to landowners and am excited to use this experience on behalf of the BIA's LTRO.



Christine Reft
Legal Instruments Examiner

I have been working in the Land, Titles and Records Office for 6 years. Since joining the Bureau of Indian Affairs, I have enjoyed the challenges of researching and ensuring our landowners have a clean title with correct ownership. I also enjoyed learning how to read maps and correct land descriptions. I have the privilege of working with a great team and we can collaborate and come together as a group to accomplish tasks set before us.

My parents are originally from Kodiak, Alaska and I was born and raised in Anchorage. My hobbies include reading, baking, and hiking in the summers.



Dwane Tomalonis
Legal Instruments Examiner

I enjoy working in LTRO as it brings on challenges knowing that researching title ownership sometimes never ends, whether it be a missing document, or a missing heir. Completing the task before me and helping others in our LTRO department is worthwhile. I have been with LTRO since June of 2003. Prior to 2003, I was a Cook Inlet Tribal Council intern performing data entry tasks contracted with Datacom for 2.5 years. It was there I first learned about original land ownership concerning maps and documents and the process regarding who is able to inherit lands.

I moved to Alaska in 1987 from Virginia. My mother's father is an Inupiaq, while my mother's mother is Yupik. My Inupiaq grandfather called my village people the "Fish River tribe", since it is located by the Fish River. My favorite hobbies are watching football, basketball, mystery shows, and documentaries. I also like to draw.

Alaska Region: ANCSA Museum Collection



“ANCSA @ 50”

In December 2021, Alaska celebrated the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) being signed into law. Noteworthy impacts the Act has had on Alaska and Alaska Natives since that time have been the subject of statewide discussions in 2021 under the banner of “ANCSA @ 50.”

Native Regional Corporations allowed Title to Historical Places

The Alaska Region’s “ANCSA Program” was established to fulfill the BIA’s regulatory responsibilities for the implementation of ANCSA Section 14(h)(1), which allows Native Regional Corporations the opportunity to obtain title to historical places (e.g., former settlements, seasonal camps) and cemetery sites across the state.

Section 14(h)(1) is the only part of the ANCSA legislation that affords Alaska Natives to claim lands based specifically on their significance in cultural history and traditions.

BIA Field Investigation required on 2,300 Sites

Pursuant to Section 14(h)(1), the BIA is responsible for conducting field investigations of historical places and cemetery sites applied for by the Regional Corporations - the purpose being to verify each site’s physical existence, location, and extent. Every investigation includes:

- Archeological, historical and/or ethnographic research to document the site’s history of Native use.
- Completion of a report compiling all relevant findings.
- Certification as to whether the site satisfies the eligibility criteria that must be met to allow conveyance of the land to the Native applicant.

ANCSA Museum Collection

BIA’s implementation of Section 14(h)(1) has been ongoing for more than 30 years generating a massive, nationally unique, and irreplaceable collection of records officially designated the “ANCSA Museum Collection.”

The ANCSA Museum Collection are the records containing thousands of site reports and photographs, taped oral history interviews with Alaska Native elders (most containing extensive Native language dialogue), and information about virtually any topic imaginable related to Alaska Native history and traditional life. It is particularly rich with respect to subsistence activities, settlement and land use practices, Native place names/ethnogeography, human/animal relationships, and culture change.

The collection holds incredible value for efforts directed at preserving Alaska Native languages and cultural heritage, and the development of culturally relevant educational curricula for Alaska Native students. For more information contact Ken Pratt, ANCSA Program Manager at Kenneth.Pratt@bia.gov.

Alaska Region: Natural Resources



Photos (Left to Right): Rosalie Debenham, Fish and Wildlife Biologist/Tribal Resilience point of contact, fawns at a Reindeer camp, and a summer student using a microscope.

Program Scope

Alaska is a vast state. Working and living in Alaska can be challenging for Fish and Wildlife Biologists given the size, scale, and diversity of the state. The wide range of program issues including managing fisheries, climate change, subsistence, invasive species, and other events.

The following examples are part of working this land and help to sustain the rich cultures of Alaska's many Tribes.



Subsistence example - Girl drying fish for traditional family food supply



Student intern working with invasive species

Summer Youth Programs

Rosalie Debenham, started out in biology with a BIA-funded internship working on an inter-tribal fisheries restoration project and went on to earn her degree in biology. She remains a strong advocate for tribal youth programs, where young people get the type of buy in, engagement and inclusion an internship-type experience brings. Other Tribal Youth programs include scientific training and cultural preservation of landscapes and fisheries. All of these programs play an important part in building future Tribal leaders.

Reindeer Camps for Tribal Youth

Bering Sea and Seward Peninsula Alaska Tribes have a proud and fruitful history of Reindeer Herding. Those tribes maintain their ties to historical reindeer herding by supporting on-going youth programs to teach the art of Reindeer herding to young people. Tribes have developed tribal youth camps for tribal members of all ages to gather together. These "Reindeer camps" have been all about providing the best traditional experience for Alaska tribal youth.



Rosalie helping take care of Reindeer fawns. Her main focus is technical advice, providing guidance (and encouragement), and being a sounding board for Tribal biologists

Alaska Region: Climate Resilience



Climate Impacts

Some of the Alaska Native Villages located on coastlines and river bends are experiencing extreme erosion, permafrost melt, and frequent flooding. Increased temperatures and lack of thick sea ice are some of the drivers of these events.

Historically, Villages have been prime locations to provide subsistence harvests and transportation for goods and commerce. Many of those locations experiencing climate impacts such as frequent floods, extreme erosion, and permafrost melt have a tremendous amount of work and decisions to make. While other Alaska Tribes face less dramatic but no less important decisions regarding adaptation and planning for the effects of climate changes.



Alaska landscape photo by BIA

\$9.9 Million in Grants for Planning

The BIA Tribal Resilience Program has provided annual grants over the past 9 years to assist the tribes in gathering information and hiring outside expertise to help them in their planning. Over the past 3 years, the program has awarded \$9.9 million in 239 grants to Alaska Native tribes to assist 78 Tribes with climate challenges.



Moose swimming in a river

Alaska to Gain Climate Resilience Employees

The Region will be better equipped to help Tribes build a better future with program support growing from 1 to 6 staff members in 2022. Alaska is vast, and the 238 federally recognized tribes all have distinct traditions and histories.

The work to preserve lands for future generations is complex and continuous. BIA staff assist Tribes with funding opportunities and connect them to the resources helpful to meet their goals.

Alaska Region: Probate and Estate Services



Probate Team (Left to Right): Jessica Harkreader, Supervisor, Bonita Nipper, Legal Admin Specialist, Karen Wassillie, Legal Admin Specialist, Oliver Holmstrom, Contact Representative, Dominique Behaylo, Legal Admin Specialist, and Selena Petersen, Enrollment Clerk

Alaska Region Probate Team

Each probate team member brings unique experience and diverse skills that range from Indian law, probate law, legal research, LTRO, Realty, and Enrollment knowledge and education. A solution to the pandemic, outreach and modernizing communication for our customers was launched. The BIA Probate Team developed virtual training and technical assistance curricula for Service Providers and Tribes.

Probated Estates Exceed Performance Target

The Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) target measure #1553 is to close 93% of eligible cases within the time frame as stipulated by CFR. For FY 2021, the Alaska Region, along with one other Region, surpassed its target.

Curriculum Developed and Virtual Training Available



Sherry Mills, Hoonah Indian Association, and the Probate Team at the conclusion of a two-day tailored training

Alaska Region Probate and Estate Services initiative created a curriculum enabling them to hold multiple training sessions and technical assistance to Service Providers and Tribes virtually at a moment's notice. Training topics ranged from Governing Authority, the Probate Process Overview, to assistance with the specifics on forms and documents. Sessions are easily tailored for either the seasoned or novice probate specialists.

Reporting a Death

The team offered an efficient death reporting process by instituting a single email address individuals to report a death to BIA Probate. Parties may email AK_PES_DeathNotice@bia.gov or call (907) 271-3911. The death of an Alaska Native member with trust or restricted assets must be reported to a Service Provider, Tribe, Bureau of Trust Funds Administration, BIA Probate and Estate Services. Publication of this single reporting location simplifies the process for customers.

Alaska Region: Probate and Estate Services



Photos: (Left to Right): Jessica Harkreader in Barrow, Supervisory Legal Administrative Specialist next to whale bone arch, Alaska stream, Little Susitna River, and photo of lake and mountains near Seward, Alaska

Jessica Harkreader Biography

I began my federal service on March 16, 2020, only four days prior to a nationwide “shut down.” I have a Master of Jurisprudence in Indian Law from the University of Tulsa, Oklahoma and a Bachelor of Science in Paralegal Studies from Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma. I began my career as a Realty Specialist with the Cherokee Nation in 2005 while earning my bachelor’s degree. Serving my fellow American Indian is a way of life for me, which is why working for my tribe was a natural choice.

Oklahoma born and raised, I am a Cherokee Nation tribal member, married to my husband Nick for 21 years, and a mother to Alayna and Gunner. I am a member of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), volunteering my time being an advocate in court for abused and neglected children.

What I like to do for fun

Food and Thrifting! Trying out foods indigenous to Alaska, seeking out local favorite eateries, and hunting for those bargains to reuse or reimagine are what fills my weekends.

How many probates are you currently assigned?

I am working on 54 cases plus reviewing the work of my staff. My staff and I have 472 cases prepared by the Service Providers and Tribes for our review.

What could BIA do for new employees like you to help integrate you into a remote work environment?

My experience was unique; it was at the exact time of the shutdown. There are various departments involved when bringing on a new federal employee: Property, Information Technology, Human Resources, Budget, etc., and not every department is in one place or even in one state! I feel that a designated group to onboard a person remotely would be beneficial to a new federal employee working remotely.

Share two probate experiences you have had working with Indian people.

At the Cherokee Nation, full-blood Cherokees (all full blood members of the Five Tribes in Oklahoma) must have their last will and testament signed by a district court judge. This is due to a stipulation in an Act written in 1926. I was called to an elderly gentleman’s home, who had expressed he wanted to make a will for his restricted assets. Not only did I draft the will, but I accompanied him to court and was there as he was sworn in by the judge. I can remember his hands shaking. Afterwards, the relief I saw in his eyes and weight visibly lift off his shoulders made me realize that protecting the land rights of those I serve is my passion.

It doesn’t matter the tribe that I work with, most American Indians and Alaska Natives aren’t just inheriting “property” or “land” from their ancestors. To the Native American, it is a connection from the past to the present. The land is sacred to the Indian people and not in simply for the monetary value. Tribes assess a spiritual value to a way of life connected to this Earth.

Alaska Region: Probate and Estate Services

Are there probate issues unique to Alaska?

Alaska is organized differently than the lower 48. For starters, there are 229 federally recognized tribes, 13 separate land area codes, and more than 180,000 tribal members. All probates for an Alaska Native with trust or restricted assets that deceases must come through (the Region) my office for probate.

Also, an Alaska Native can be a member of a village, tribe, regional corporation, tribal corporation, or all four. Alaska Native membership comes from a direct lineage to an original enrollee on the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) roll, which was only enacted in 1971. By enacting ANCSA, Congress took a new approach to federal Indian policy, which extinguished aboriginal land title and divided the state into twelve distinct regions. Unlike the lower 48 reservation system and the Five Tribes in Oklahoma and allotment, ANCSA deviated drastically with this approach of corporations. It can be difficult pinpointing membership to a federally recognized tribe.

Not necessarily an issue, but unique to Alaska federal probates, the succession laws are based on state laws, Alaska Statutes Title 13, Chapter 12, Intestacy, Wills, and Donative Transfers. Alaska state law is even unique in and of itself.

What have you had to do to prepare for the AK winter that you didn't need to do in OK?

Taking vitamin D is a must! With little to no sunlight during the winter days, it is easy for one to become low in vitamin D. You must purchase a Happy Light! Changing over my car tires from regular to studded tires was something I didn't have to do in Oklahoma. Also, investing in real winterized coats, boots, and outerwear. Back home, I could get away with a jacket or something light. In Alaska, you must dress in winterized boots and coats because your life could depend on it.

Describe a memorable BIA experience.

I was invited to attend a *blanket toss ceremony* in honor of the whaling season in Barrow, AK, following a training session for two service providers. Barrow is the northern most town in the Unites States and is home to the Inupiat people who have inhabited the area for thousands of years. The community gathers in 20-degree weather (their summer), and whaling teams serve food to the entire community. Speckled-belly goose soup, muktuk (whale skin and blubber), boiled whale intestine, fermented whale, and raw whale all served to the community. The Inupiat people are all so welcoming, generous with their culture, and, in good spirit, would laugh with the newcomers tasting the fermented whale for the first time.

I saw beautiful mukluks and parkas, each colorful and unique, made from seal or caribou, some even wolverine fur. Singing in their language, the children running, playing, and laughing, light snow began to blanket the arena. The Artic Ocean, where the very whales we just ate came from, only a few steps away. I was humbled and honored to share in their culture.

My department is working with the Native Village of Barrow, Fairbanks Agency, and other federal departments to probate the five estates of restricted townsite lots along 5 miles of the Artic Ocean coastline for a seawall construction. It's a race against the ocean and weather to save the homes on the coastline.



The "Blanket Toss" is a favorite event during whaling festivals. It is conducted for entertainment and originated when an Inupiaq hunter would be tossed in the air, enabling him to see across the horizon to hunt game. Today, 30 or more Inupiaq gather in a circle, holding the edges of a large skin made from walrus hides, and toss someone into the air as high as possible. The person being tossed throws gifts into the crowd and loses their turn when they lose their balance. The object is to maintain balance and return to the blanket without falling.

Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Program



Photos: Vietnam Service Medals flanked by BIA and Bureau of Land Management

Legal Authority

Public Law 116-9, [John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act](#), Section 1119, more commonly known as the Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Program, was enacted on March 12, 2019.

2.5 to 160 Acre Allotments available to eligible Alaska Native Veterans

The Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Act Program (Act) will allow eligible individuals to receive an allotment of a single parcel of available Federal lands in Alaska. The parcels will contain not less than 2.5 acres and not more than 160 acres. This special project allows an individual to apply for allotments beginning on the effective date of the regulations to five years from that date (*December 28, 2020, to December 29, 2025*). The legal authority for this subpart is 43 U.S.C. 1629g-1(b)(2). To apply [click here](#).

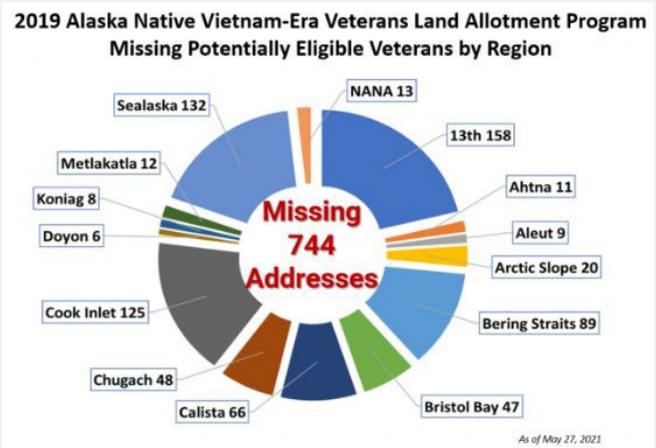
Estimated 2,100 Applications

As of December 8, 2021, The Bureau of Land Management received 138 applications with an estimated 2,100 outstanding Applications expected:

- 2 Certificates of Allotment issued
- 44 undergoing Adjudication
- 43 due Deficiency letters
- 49 within a Public Land Order withdrawal needing review

Missing Applicants Sought

Implementation of the Act will be a monumental task but will bring justice to those Alaska Native Veterans who were unfairly locked out of the allotment land claims. In doing so, BIA anticipates receiving an estimated 2,100 approved allotment applications from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). BIA is working to find addresses on 744 individuals who served in the military between 1954 and 1971.



Available Lands Map

The Bureau of Land Management created an interactive map to help individuals identify BLM-managed public lands currently and potentially available to them for selection. The map is updated in real time as additional lands are made available.

Currently, lands identified as available for selection by eligible Alaska Vietnam Veterans are located within the Forty-mile, Good News Bay and Bering Glacier areas. See [map](#) for real time availability.

Alaska Native Vietnam Era Veterans Land Allotment Program



Photo: Vietnam Service Medals flanked by BIA and Bureau of Land Management

P.L. 116-9 an Unfunded Mandate

The Real Estate services staff has reviewed and submitted two initial Certificates of Allotment for recording with the Land Titles and Records Office. The implementation of P.L. 116-9 did not come with additional funding for BIA to carry out additional management of services needed for the estimated 2,100 new restricted landowners. The following list of outreach, application and coordination activities have been performed or are on-going.

Outreach

- Technical assistance and training on P.L. 103-413 for tribes
- Travel to the Native Allotments as part of site visits to coordinate outreach events with Alaska Native Regions and Villages
- Corporations to prepare and sign MOUs to share contact information
- Prepare outreach handouts/info sheets
- Coordinate with enrollment offices to obtain Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood forms
- Identify potential applicants based on statutory eligibility requirements
- Assist with locating contact information for applicants or their heirs

Pre-Application Stage

- Identify and reach out to potential applicants or their heirs
- Counsel applicants or heirs of eligible deceased Veterans
- Communicate with Alaska Legal Services regarding appointment of personal representatives

Application Stage

[Click here](#) for an Application Form AK 2569-10.

- Travel to communities to assist individuals' complete application process
- Prepare and review US Surveys and encumbrances
- Review rights-of-Way issues
- Conflict resolution for overlapping issues
- Search and investigate legal descriptions

Coordination with BLM

- Provide updated/current addresses to BLM
- Prepare and mail correspondence pertaining to applications that are complete or incomplete

Estimate of Administrative Costs

Management of the additional workload is estimated to require 4 additional full-time employees (4 FTE) at a cost of \$415,874 in Fiscal Year 2022. Other Indirect Costs for future Probate and Estate Services, LTRO, Archeology, Environmental program activities are not including in this cost estimate.

Alaska Region: Real Estate Services



Working in the Last Frontier of Alaska

The BIA Alaska Region encompasses 663,268 square miles of land inhabited by a diverse group of more than 80,000 Alaska Native tribal members that is comprised of 229 federally recognized tribes.

Note: The Northwest, not Alaska Region, solely manages the Annette Island Reservation land base within Alaska.

Pre-Pandemic to Pandemic

The regional realty office leveraged technology to maintain internal communications and problem solving (cell phones, internet e-mail, Microsoft Teams weekly meetings). A 25% occupancy rate was established for staff in-person work. Client requests for in-person meetings were accommodated by “appointment only” with meeting space properly sanitized before and after each visit.

Alaska rejected the Lower 48 States Reservation System

Alaska is unique in the administration of the BIA. Because of the failure of the Reservation system (lands being subject to federal jurisdiction) in the “Lower 48” Alaska’s Native population chose not to push for federal control over their lands. The alternative, Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), enacted on December 18, 1971, including a grant in full fee title of 44 million acres of land to Alaska Natives, a payment of \$962.5 million to Alaska Natives, and a requirement that the assets be managed through regional corporations.

Map of Far North, Interior, SW, Southcentral, SE Regions



Real Estate Services Available

Gift Deeds

Subdivision/Partitions

Fee to Trust

Sand & Gravel Leases/Permits

Fee-to-Trust

Mortgages

Removal of Restrictions

Rights-of-Way (ROW)

Service Line Agreements

Business, Residential, Wind Solar Leases

Pending Native Allotment Applications

Rights Protection/Trespass

Leasehold Mortgages

Invalid Conveyances

Alaska Region has 15 Full Time Employees (Realty Assistants and Specialists in Conveyances, Contract Management and Rights Protection). For service call (907) 271-4104 or email Cyril Andrews, Regional Realty Officer at Cyril.andrews@bia.gov

Alaska Region: Real Estate Services Staff Introductions



Photos (Left to Right): BIA Logo, **Cyril Andrews**, Regional Realty Officer, decorated tree in front of the Alaska Regional Office, **Amanda Gonzalez**, Realty Administration. Other staff members identified below



Diane Sam is new to the Anchorage Regional Office with a wealth of knowledge in land and natural resources accumulated over 35 years. She has traveled to 70 villages and rural sites by helicopter, small plane, snow machine, ATV, or ferry. She worked 7 years as a realty officer on the Arctic Slope, acquiring title and managing allotments in the oil fields, national parks, and wildlife refuges.



Marty Williams works for the Bureau of Land Management as a Cadastral Surveyor. He was assigned to the Alaska Region and BIA staff feel very lucky to have him on board. He loves his job and Alaska. He also is an avid hunter.



Rebecca Shellikoff works in Realty (Contracts Management).



Donna Kerrigan is a Rights Protection Specialist working from home.



Alma Elia works for the Realty Admin Department from home.



Tommy Andrew works in Realty, Acquisition & Disposal. He came from the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) Realty Department in southwest Alaska, with a 6.5-million-acre service area with 56 federally recognized tribes. Yupik dialects are the primary language for many of its residents.



Merna Lomack Wharton is a Realty Specialist for Contract Management with experience as Land Technician & Title Examiner for Fairbanks North Star Borough and 12 years as Realty Specialist for Tanana Chiefs Conference. This photo was following dip netting Salmon in Kasiloff, Alaska.

Alaska Region: Real Estate Services



Core Mission

The Alaska Regional Branch of Real Estate Services (RES) mission is to provide technical assistance to restricted and trust landowners and protect their land resources and future land management decision making. The Region also collaborates with contracted tribal organizations whose land area jurisdictions over Native allotment lands and townsite lots are held in trust and restricted status.

Scope of Collaboration

The Alaska RES program is integral to the Bureau's mandate to provide realty services to Alaska Native Tribes and individuals, who own interests in Trust or restricted lands and tribal lands. This important core function would not be possible if RES were unable to collaborate with colleagues in the following Trust program areas and DOI offices:

- *Probate*
- *Real Estate (Land Acquisition, Disposal, Land Titles and Records, Rights of Way, Leases/Permits)*
- *Archeology*
- *Environmental Programs*
- *Natural Resources (Water Resources, Forestry/Fire, Irrigation, Safety of Dams)*
- *Agriculture (Reindeer herds)*
- *Fish, Wildlife & Parks*
- *DOI Appraisals & Valuation Services*
- *DOI Office of the Solicitors*

Technical Assistance and Training

Alaska Region interacts daily with landowners by responding to their requests for land information or land management services. RES works collaboratively to provide technical assistance and training to P.L. 103-413 and P.L. 93-638 Tribal Service Providers all across the State of Alaska. RES offers several instructor-led transaction trainings as well as individual training for new tribal realty staff.

Benefits of a Fur Parka, Alma Elia, Realty



The traditional Indigenous Yup'ik fur parka is made of muskrat fur, known for its water repellency. A wolf ruff at the top helps to keep blowing snow out of the face when the hood is pulled up. Lynx trim at the bottom is decorative, as is the strip of beaver skin depicting a sled dog team running around the bottom of the coat (above the lynx trim). Lynx trim graces the bottom of the arms and helps to keep out the wind and snow along with more decorative dog sled trim. The white ermine tails are decorative. Fur garments in Alaska are windproof and coldproof. If your car breaks down in minus degree weather, you won't succumb to the elements if you are wearing garments made from fur. Engineered, high-tech garments made from synthetic materials do not compare to the weatherproof properties of fur. Alaska Natives have advantageously used the natural resources of their environment and have made both functional and beautiful trademark garments.

Alaska Region: Self-Governance



Federal Recognition in 1993

Alaska Villages or Tribes were officially federally recognized in 1993 with the same privileges and government to government relationship as other Tribes. Prior to 1993, they were listed as Tribal entities. In 1994, Congress passed the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 which included the list of Alaska Villages. There are now 229 Federally Recognized Tribes in Alaska.

All but one tribe in Alaska is administered by the BIA Alaska Region. Metlakatla, the only remaining reservation in Alaska and geographically the most southern Village, receives administrative services from the BIA Northwest Regional Office in Portland, Oregon.

Tribal Share Negotiations

In 1994, Title IV of the Indian Self Determination Act was passed so tribes could enter into tribal self-governance compacts with the Department of Interior and enter into Annual Funding Agreements (AFAs) with Indian Affairs and other DOI Agencies. Over the next several years, the Alaska Native Villages and Tribal Organizations negotiated with the BIA Alaska Region to develop a tribal share process of the funds received by the BIA Alaska Region and Agency offices. This would be the basis for a tribe or village decision to contract or compact those programs, services, functions, and activities (PSFAs) the BIA was currently operating on their behalf.

Regional Tribal Non-Profit Organizations

Several regional Tribal Non-profit organizations, made up of one or more tribes or villages in that region, had been developed to push for land claims prior to the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA). These organizations provided BIA and other government programs and services to member tribes and villages after the Indian Self Determination Act was passed.

The Compact Consortia

In the mid-90s, these tribal organizations entered into tribal self-governance compacts and funding agreements as compact consortia with tribal resolutions authorizing programs services on their behalf. Today, there are thirty-five self-governance agreements with tribal consortia and villages.

- 24 are individual villages or tribes
- 11 are tribal consortia with approximately 162 individual tribes participating with one or more programs in a self-governance compact consortia agreement.



Tribal consortia membership ranged between two to fifty-six individual tribes or villages participating in the agreement. The benefit of the self-governance consortium is a tribe can leverage the small amount of BIA funding by pooling it with multiple tribes to receive a greater level of services than they would typically be able to provide on their own. For this reason, many of the trust programs are either in a compact consortium or are Tribes receiving direct services provided by BIA Alaska Regional Office programs.

Alaska Region: Subsistence Branch



Photo: (Left to Right) Subsistence hunters field dressing a harvested moose, subsistence fishers prepare their salmon harvest for drying and smoking, Athabaskan Elder Katie John successfully led efforts to expand jurisdiction for Federal subsistence fisheries in Alaska.

Subsistence

For thousands of years, the harvest and sharing of wild natural resources has been vital to Alaska's indigenous people. The subsistence practices associated with the gathering, preparation, and use of fish, wildlife, and plants obtained from the lands and waters are a key cultural foundation for Tribes in the Great North — and are also an economic necessity, given the high costs of transporting food and goods to our remote areas.

Alaska Native people prefer to describe their subsistence practices as “Our Way of Life”, as this more accurately captures the cultural importance of these vital traditions.

Program Responsibilities

The BIA Alaska Region Subsistence Branch is responsible for a unique Federal program that directly benefits many Tribes in our state. This function comes from Title VIII of the Alaska National Interests Land Conservation Act (ANILCA), which accords a priority for the subsistence harvesting of fish and wildlife on Federal lands/waters, to Tribal members (and others) who reside in rural areas. See BIA [Subsistence website](#) for more information.

Federal Subsistence Board

The BIA is one of the agencies within the Department of the Interior responsible for implementing this Federal priority, and our Branch works with the Regional Director (who is a member of the Federal Subsistence Board; the FSB is a body designated by the Secretary to carry out the duties of ANILCA) to ensure that our rural Tribal members can continue with such important traditions. We assist in the scientific review of regulatory proposals that are acted upon by the FSB and support the positions of the Tribes — plus provide direct technical and financial assistance to them — as they advocate for their subsistence rights. Our staff works extensively with indigenous people in every region within our state, and these efforts have been well received by many Tribal folks across Alaska.

\$2.7 Million Competitive Applications for Tribes

Enabling Alaska Tribes to become managers of their subsistence resources has long been a focus within our Branch. This program has recently received a major boost via a special Congressional appropriation designated for Alaska Tribal entities, to support their collaboration with the Federal agencies involved with ANILCA Title VIII. Up to \$2.7M per fiscal year (awarded through the BIA via a competitive application process) has been provided to as many as 5 Inter-Tribal organizations, and these funds (augmented by additional dollars from the Alaska Region) have enabled them to achieve much success in their collaborative subsistence management endeavors.

Program contacts

- Dr. Glenn Chen, Subsistence Branch Chief, Glenn.Chen@bia.gov, 907-350-4102
- Patricia Petrivelli, Subsistence Anthropologist, Patricia.Petrivelli@bia.gov, 907-272-4172

Alaska Region: Water Resources



Most Villages are Adjacent to Water

The State of Alaska has vast natural resources that the Alaska Native people have utilized since their existence. The water resources found in the oceans, rivers and lakes have served as both a means for transportation and the necessary habitat for many of the primary subsistence resources Alaska Native people depend on. Most of the Alaska Native Villages and restricted status Alaska Native allotments are found adjacent to one of these bodies of water since most allotments were approved based on use and occupancy of the land. They typically were subsistence camps for hunting, fishing, and gathering activities. Without the water resources, the Alaska Native people would not have the subsistence resources needed to survive on nor the ability to access those resources.

Alaska Constitution Declares Water a “Public Resource”

The State of Alaska recognized the importance of water resources when water was declared a public resource in the state’s constitution. The *Alaska Water Use Act* was passed includes statutes for the adjudication of water resources based on the prior appropriation doctrine. Also, included in the Water Use Act was the opportunity to apply for an instream flow reservation to protect and support a particular lake level or stream flow to support certain uses. These can include the support of fish and wildlife habitat, migration, and propagation; navigation and transportation; parks and recreation; and sanitation and water quality.

50 Years of Development

Over the last fifty years the State of Alaska has seen a significant increase in development in many areas. Alaska Native Tribes are increasingly concerned many of the current and proposed developments will cause harm or impact water resources that fish, and wildlife depend on.

Water Quantity and Quality Data Collection

The Water Management, Planning and Pre-Development Program funds Alaska’s water resources programs by project. As a result, Alaska Tribes and tribal organizations have been applying to the BIA to address some of these concerns. Several tribal projects have been collecting water quantity and baseline water quality data to support an instream flow application through the State of Alaska’s adjudication process.



Gaging stream with price meter

Alaska Region: Water Resources



Photos: (Left to Right): BIA logo, gaging a stream with a price meter, photo of the Fish River

Native Village of White Mountain Data Collection

The Native Village of White Mountain recently completed five years of data collection and will be submitting a request for an instream flow reservation on the Ichupak River which is a tributary of the Fish River that flows past the Village of White Mountain.

The State of Alaska has been proposing opening the area to development and the tribe wants to ensure there is enough water and of good quality to sustain the salmon runs. The tribe established the gaging site and collected the data over several years to meet the states requirement and will be requesting a flow reservation to support the salmon spawning and rearing habitat on the river.

Several members of the tribe developed new skills in setting up the gage site with a pressure transducer and datalogger. They were able to use their surveying skills to establish benchmarks and set up and reference the staff gage. They also completed the stream gaging using a tape, wading rod and current meter and recorded the data for processing water discharge of the site.



Village of White Mountain from the air



Ichupak Gage Site

Logistical Challenges of Travel to Remote Villages

A 2018 monitoring site by a BIA Natural Resources member is a perfect example of how Alaska field work may require extensive travel. Weather delays may extend these trips.

- Trip begins with a 570-mile flight from Juneau to Anchorage
- Second 537-mile flight to Nome with an overnight stay
- Third 60-mile flight in small plane to Native Village of White Mountain with overnight stay
- Morning 2 to 3-hour riverboat upriver trip to worksite before returning to Village for overnight stay. Repeat return travel to duty station.

Financial Management



Jim Anderton, Chief Financial Officer, is an avid outdoorsman sharing some of his favorite activities above.

Economic Development benefits to Indian Country

Indian Affairs is working with the Department of the Interior to revise the Buy Indian Act, which provides the Department with authority to set aside procurement contracts for Indian-owned and controlled businesses.

The [proposed rule](#) was published in the Federal Register on October 27, 2021, and the comment period ended December 27, 2021. The Department is scheduled to publish the final rule in early 2022, with proposed changes providing significant benefits for small and large Indian owned businesses by:

- Eliminating barriers from Indian Economic Enterprises (IEE) from competing on certain “covered” construction contracts
- Expanding IEEs’ ability to subcontract construction work consistent with other socio-economic set-aside programs, and
- Giving greater preference to IEE’s when a deviation from the Buy Indian Act is necessary.

For more information on the purpose of the Buy Indian Act [click here](#).

About James Anderton, Chief Financial Officer

James Anderton has been with Indian Affairs since March 2018 and is responsible for management and oversight of all financial accounting and reporting, acquisitions, financial systems and internal controls for the BIA, Bureau of Indian Education and Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs. Jim has overseen the recent revisions to the Buy Indian Act due to publish in early 2022. Watch for updates in the coming months. Over the past four years Jim’s focus has been on increasing economic opportunities for Indian small business, improving the condition of Indian schools, and reducing the administrative burden on Tribal members.

Improving Efficiency and Reducing Administrative Burden

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) worked with key Program Offices to increase electronic collections and reduce paper check collections across Indian Affairs by continuing to promote the use of [Pay.gov](#), Online Bill Pay or other electronic collection tools

- Reduced # paper remittances by an additional 7.5%
- Increased electronic collections by 56%.
- Converted 33% of all utility companies to E-bill
- Reduced 24% of paper invoices

Reduction of paper and conversion of work into an electronic format provides efficiencies of service, secure transport of PII data and reduces data entry errors. Electronic collections are processed immediately, reducing the possible interest and penalties incurred by taxpayers. The electronic payment option is offered 24-7 at no cost to the customer or the BIA and was important when offices closed during COVID.