



**TRUST LAND RESOURCES**

**RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP**

**RESULTS THAT MATTER**

**Message from the Deputy Director**

I'm excited to share this issue with you – there's so much great work happening across OTS, and I hope you will take a few minutes to explore the updates. Our teams continue to show what is possible when technical expertise and dedication come together in support of Tribal communities.

We celebrate modernization through the upcoming launch of NIOGEMS Version 5, giving Tribes faster, more accessible information for energy and mineral planning. You will read about the Timber Team's hands-on support for Tribes, including helping the Karuk Tribe establish long-term forest inventory plots in Northern California.

You will see how the Division of Energy and Mineral Development is strengthening federal coordination on Tribal energy, including their role in the DOE/DOI planning workshop. And you will hear how the Mundo Lake Recreational Improvement Project is already boosting community use and supporting economic benefits for the Jicarilla Apache Nation. The Branch of Environmental Services delivered a well-attended NEPA Categorical Exclusion training course, with additional NEPA-focused webinars planned throughout the year.

There's a lot to be proud of, and a lot worth celebrating. I hope you enjoy this issue and feel encouraged by everything we're accomplishing together across Indian Country.



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“You must speak straight so that your words may go as sunlight into our hearts”.

- Cochise Tribe

## TRUST SERVICES OVERVIEW

### Mission

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; 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.

Employee	Title	Service	OTS Division
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### Calendar Year (CY) 2026 Employees Recognized for Length of Service

Darin Begay	Supply Management	5 years	Program Management & Coordination
Velda Garcia	Management Analyst	30 years	Program Management & Coordination
Dawn Selwyn	Trust Officer	40 years	Environmental & Natural Resources
Charlene Toledo	Division Chief	30 years	Trust Asset & Ownership

### Separations

John Trebesch (Retired)	Civil Engineer	20 years	Water & Power
Christopher E. Clopper	Civil Engineer		Water & Power
Johnna Oberly	Division Chief		Indian Energy Service Center

### Faces of the Office of Trust Services

We are thankful for our dedicated employees in OTS. A few are pictured below.



Top Row (L–R): Thomas Mendez, Rangeland Management Specialist, Justin Giles, Museum Staff Curator, Coral Avery, Tribal Community Resilience Team, Dawn Selwyn, Trust Officer, Winter Jojola-Talbert, Acting Division Chief, Indian Energy Service Center, Bottom Row (L–R): Johnna Blackhair, Deputy Bureau Director–Trust Services, Sharon Kidman, Realty Specialist, Jordan Matula, Pathways Intern, Christina Torrez, Program Analyst, and Ken Bixby, GIS Specialist



### Alaska Department of Health Announced New Agreement to Enhance BIA Probate Process

This DOI and Alaska Department of Health memorandum of understanding signed March 5, 2026, strengthens coordination to support timely and accurate probate services for Alaska Native Communities. The memorandum of understanding (MOU) facilitates access to vital records maintained by the AK Division of Public Health’s Health Analytics and Vital Records Section essential to BIA preparation of probate case files for Alaska Native individuals to determine trust estates.

Under the agreement, the parties will:

- Establish a streamlined process for BIA to request and AK to provide vital records needed for probate case development.
- Develop mutually agreed upon processing timelines to improve predictability and efficiency.
- Identify opportunities to support the state’s capacity to meeting increased record request demands.
- Create follow-on agreements, such as data sharing arrangements, to implement the agreement’s objectives in alignment with federal and state privacy requirements.



### OTS Trust Quarterly Newsletter

The Trust Quarterly Newsletter is produced collaboratively by the Trust Services Division under the direction of Deputy Director, Johnna Blackhair. Please email feedback on past newsletters or recommendations for future issues to [Dawn.setwyn@bia.gov](mailto:Dawn.setwyn@bia.gov).

Our library of all past and present OTS newsletters can be found on the BIA Trust Services web page at <https://www.bia.gov/bia/ots>.

### July newsletter content is due Thursday, June 18, 2026



### DISCLAIMER

The U.S. Department of the Interior’s (DOI) Bureau of Indian Affairs’ (BIA) Office of Trust Services (OTS) strives to make this newsletter’s information as current and accurate as possible; however, OTS 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 this newsletter. References 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 the DOI.

## DIVISION OF ENERGY & MINERAL DEVELOPMENT (DEMD)



*Winter Jojola-Talbert, presenter with Caddo Nation representatives at 2026 Reservation Economic Summit*

### DEMD Mission

The mission of the Division of Energy and Mineral Development (DEMD) is to provide the best possible technical and economic advice and services in assisting Indian mineral owners to achieve economic self-sufficiency by creating sustainable economies through the environmentally sound development of their energy and mineral resources.

### Interagency Alignment for Tribal Energy – DOE/DOI MOU Planning January 2026

A Collaborative Workshop between the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Office of Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs and the U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of Indian Energy brought the two agencies together for a structured discussion on improving federal coordination in support of Tribal energy development.

As part of the Interior delegation, the DEMD contributed its technical, programmatic, and on-the-ground project expertise, helping ensure that interagency planning efforts reflect the practical needs, challenges, and opportunities encountered across Tribal energy and mineral projects.

Over the course of the two-day agenda, DEMD supported discussions on financial assistance, technical support, data and analytical tools, and capacity-building programs, grounding the workshop’s information-sharing in real-world project experience and providing insight into where coordinated federal support can directly enhance Tribal energy project outcomes.

The workshop concluded with a focused set of actionable next steps, advancing the groundwork for a potential formal Memorandum of Understanding. The two-day effort strengthened interagency alignment and contributed to long-term initiatives aimed at supporting Tribal energy sovereignty and capacity development.



*Magan Begler, Tax Administrator and Chairman Bobby Gonzales of the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma, Winter Jojola-Talbert, Acting Division Chief, Indian Energy Service Center*

## ELEVATING TRIBAL ENERGY OPPORTUNITIES ON A NATIONAL STAGE

### Reservation Economic Summit 2026

DEMD staff attended the 2026 Reservation Economic Summit (RES) in Las Vegas from March 23-27, 2026, participating in one of the largest national gatherings focused on Tribal economic development. The event brought together Tribal Nations, industry leaders, and federal partners for a week of sessions, business matchmaking, and networking designed to advance opportunities across Indian Country.



*Reservation Economic Summit Break out session*

DEMD maintained a presence throughout the conference, including participation in two breakout sessions. Mining and Energy Sovereignty, and Empowering Tribal Economies through Energy and Mineral Development. These discussions informed conversations with Tribal leaders, federal partners, and industry representatives, reinforcing DEMD's role in supporting energy and mineral development through technical assistance, data and program expertise.

### NAPE 2026

At the North American Prospect Expo (NAPE) on February 18-19, 2026, the DEMD provided targeted technical and strategic support to the Osage Nation as the Tribe promoted opportunities within its mineral estate to the broader oil and gas industry. NAPE serves as one of the sector's leading marketplaces for presenting and evaluating exploration prospects, and DEMD's involvement helped elevate the Osage Nation's visibility among potential partners and investors. DEMD staff supported on-site engagement, facilitated industry outreach, and helped communicate the Tribe's strengths in responsible, well-planned resource development.

The Osage Nation Reservation consists of approximately 1,475,000 acres in Osage County, Oklahoma. The Osage Tribe owns all mineral rights within Osage County and receives income from all oil and gas produced there.



*Osage Mineral Council*

## NATIONAL INDIAN OIL AND GAS, ENERGY AND MINERALS SYSTEM (NIOGEMS)

NIOGEMS is a map-oriented computer application that provides Tribes and federal users with access to natural resource data. NIOGEMS is exclusively available to Tribal offices and Tribal-supporting federal entities.

### NIOGEMS Version 5 Launch is Coming Soon!

Division of Energy and Mineral Development (DEMD) is pleased to announce the NIOGEMS Version 5 will be released this spring. This next-generation release marks a major step forward in DEMD's commitment to strengthening Tribal sovereignty through improved access to energy and mineral data, modern analytical tools, and streamlined decision-support capabilities.

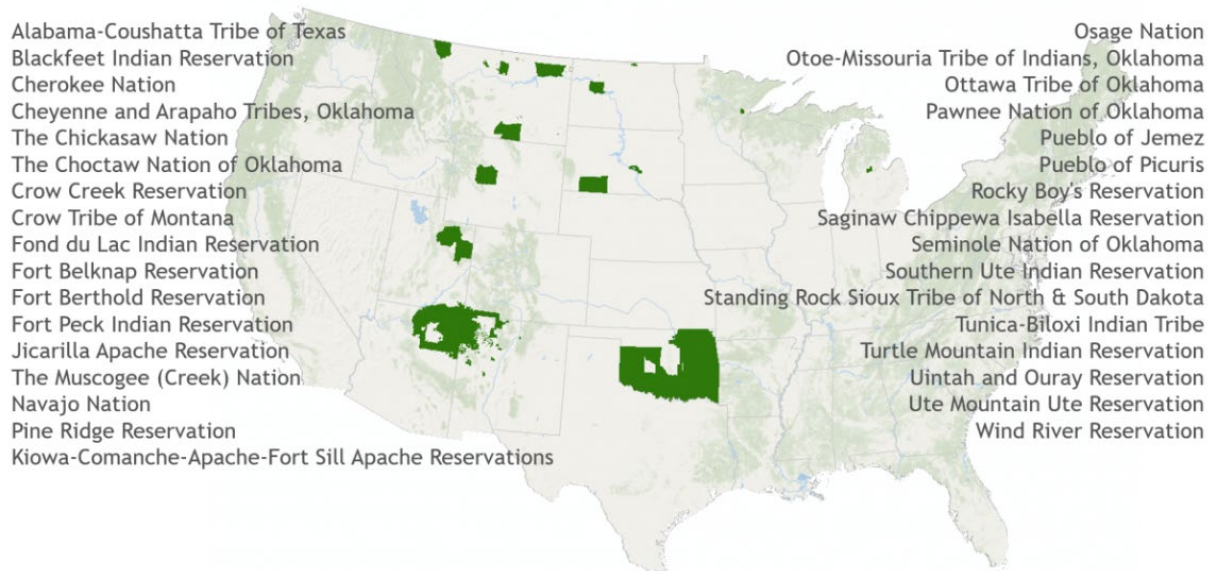
Building on the strengths of previous versions, NIOGEMS v5 transitions to a fully web-based, centrally hosted platform, making it more accessible, efficient, and resilient. The new version incorporates multiple authoritative datasets to deliver a unified, map-based resource for Tribes, federal partners, and DEMD staff. This integrated approach enables faster, more comprehensive evaluations of energy and mineral opportunities across Indian Country.

By modernizing the platform's architecture and expanding its analytical capabilities, NIOGEMS v5 empowers Tribal communities to make data-driven decisions, improve resource management, and pursue economic development opportunities with greater confidence. This release represents not only a technical upgrade but an important investment in Tribal self-determination and long-term energy and mineral planning.

The work builds on months of preparation in coordination with the Osage Minerals Council, including the development of refreshed promotional materials such as brochures, banners, seismic stick maps, and booth displays. Through this combined planning and on-site presence, DEMD helped strengthen industry relationships, promote investment interest, and advance the Osage Nation's long-term goals for economic development tied to its oil and gas resources.

In preparation for the session, DEMD coordinated development of a full suite of technical maps assembled by the Data Services team to ensure the Tribe had access to accurate, decision-ready information. Maps included oil and gas well data, geothermal potential, biomass potential, hydropower, and transmission.

**Map of Federally recognized Tribes whose land and mineral resource information is currently available through NIOGEMS, see <https://www.bia.gov/bia/ots/demd/niogems>**



These materials were refined through multiple internal reviews and cross-team collaboration captured in the Technical Assistance workflow, enabling DEMD to present high-quality, customized products that support long-term energy strategy development for the Blackfeet Nation.

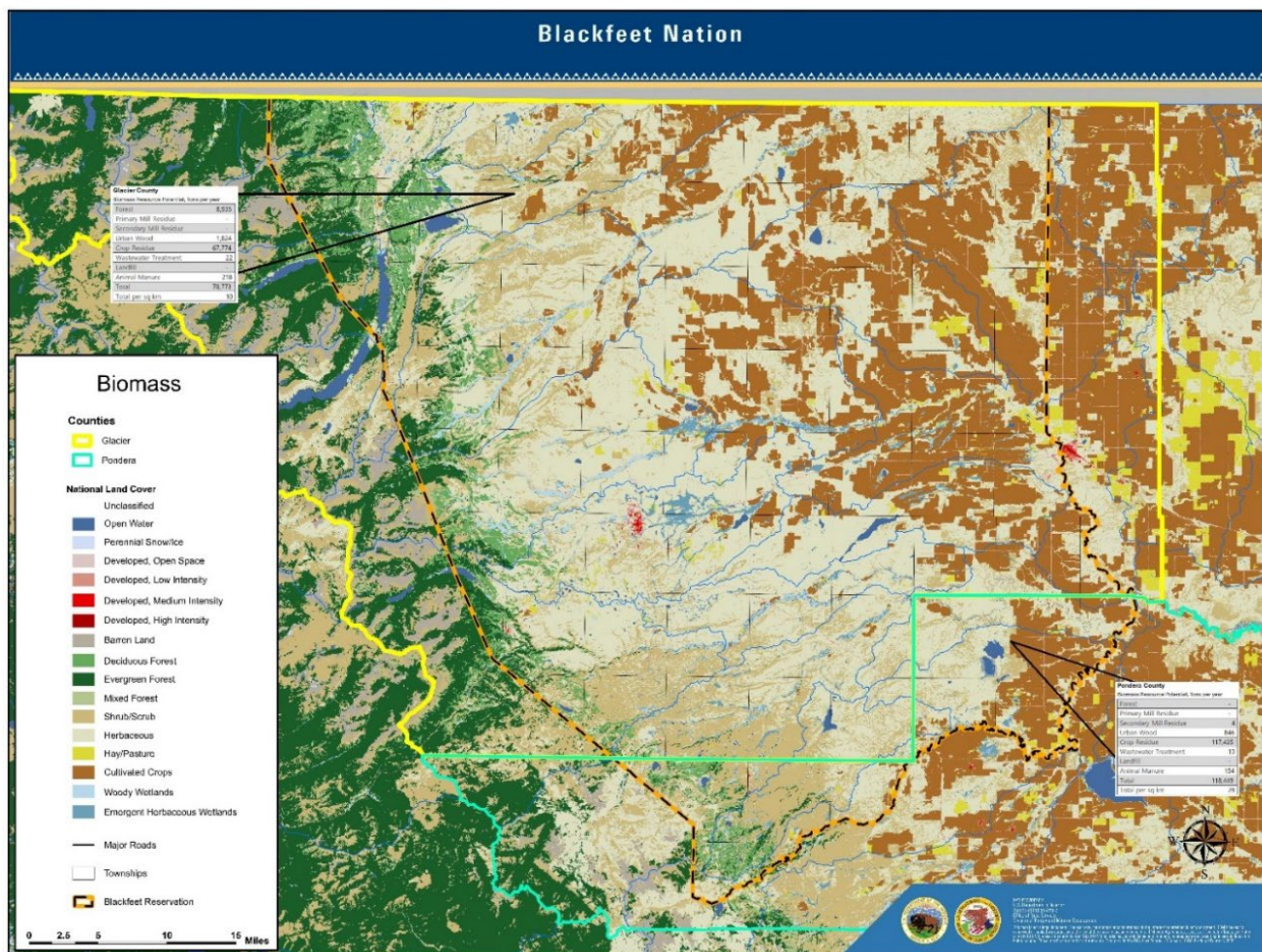
Through these activities, DEMD strengthened working relationships, provided targeted technical support, and helped the Tribe build a clearer understanding of near- and long-term opportunities for advancing energy development, workforce planning, and infrastructure readiness.

## Blackfeet Nation Coordination and Technical Engagement

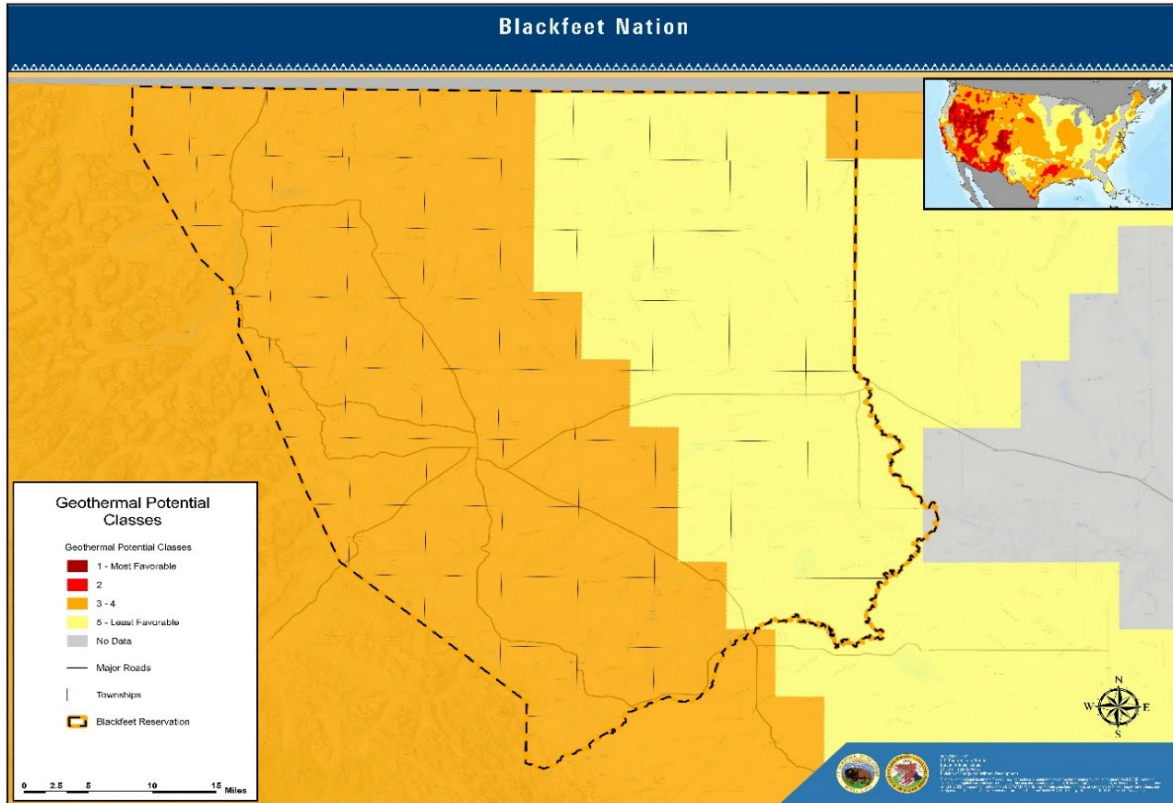
DEMD staff undertook a coordinated series of technical assistance and planning activities with the Blackfeet Nation and Blackfeet Community College in March 2026, supporting the Tribe’s efforts to evaluate energy development pathways and strengthen local energy planning capacity.

Division representatives worked closely with Tribal stakeholders to prepare for and participate in an onsite, two-day energy planning session in Browning, MT. These engagements included discussions on foundational energy concepts, considerations for potential Tribal Energy Development Organization (TEDO) formation, and opportunities for advancing community-driven energy priorities.

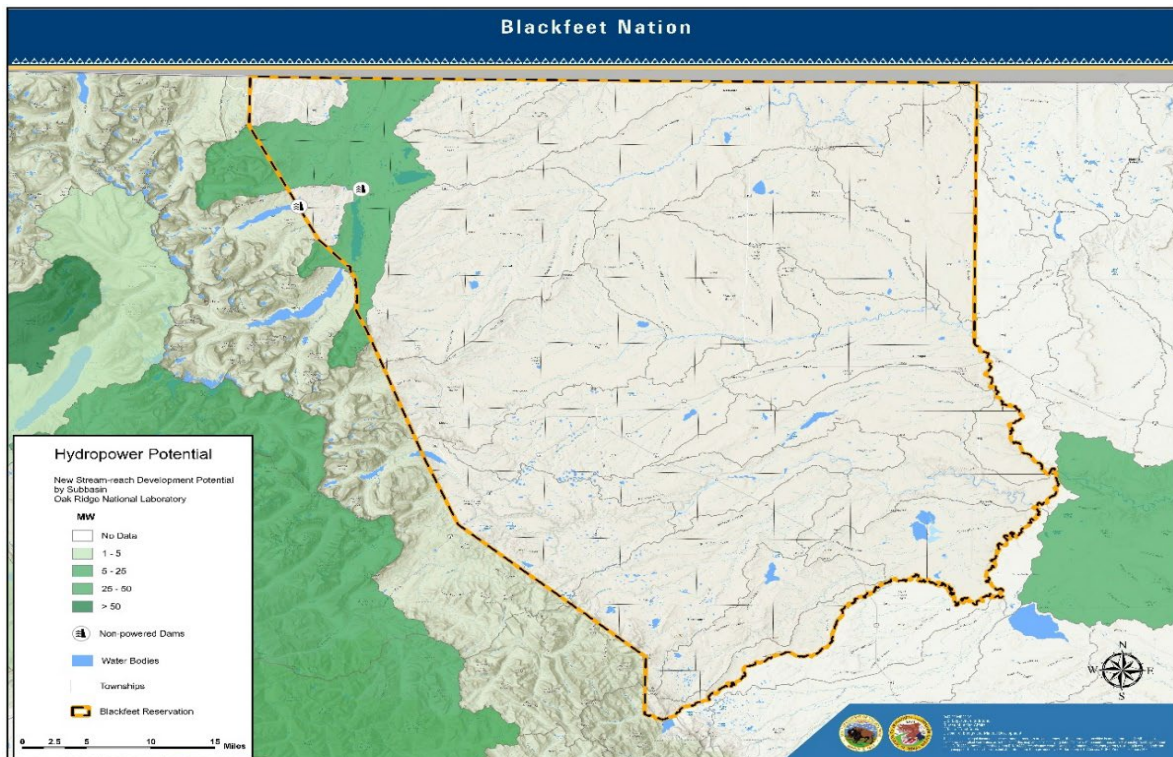
## Blackfeet Nation Biomass



## Classes of Geothermal Potential Mapped by DEMD



## Hydropower Potential Mapped by DEMD



## DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES & CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (DESCRM)



### DESCRM Mission

The mission of the Division of Environmental Services and Cultural Resources Management is to work with Tribes to protect, develop, manage and enhance American Indian and Alaska Native environmental, cultural and historical resources by providing technical assistance, service and support to Tribes and through administration of federal laws and regulations.

### BRANCH OF CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (BCR)

PROTECTING ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE ACROSS INDIAN COUNTRY

#### A Strengthened Commitment to ARPA Protection

The Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA), enacted in 1979, remains one of the most important tools for safeguarding ancestral places on federal and Tribal lands. Rooted in earlier preservation laws, ARPA established strong protections, clear definitions, and enforceable penalties to deter looting and damage. Equally important, ARPA reaffirmed the federal responsibility to work collaboratively with Tribal Nations—a principle that continues to guide the BIA Branch of Cultural Resources Management (BCRM) today.

#### Supporting Tribal Nations and Advancing Shared Stewardship

Across Indian Country, the BIA Branch of Cultural Resources Management continues its mission to protect culturally significant sites while empowering Tribal Nations through training, technical assistance, and collaborative decision-making.

This work aligns closely with federal recommendations—including the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) 2021 report emphasizing the need for improved coordination, information-sharing, and Tribal consultation in responding to archaeological resource crime.

#### Partnership With Archaeology Southwest: Expanding Capacity and Expertise

Through a longstanding Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) agreement, BIA partners with Archaeology Southwest (ASW) to strengthen ARPA implementation nationwide. Since 2018, ASW specialists have worked directly with BIA archaeologists, BIA and Tribal law enforcement, Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, and cultural heritage programs to:

- Conduct field damage assessments and technical reviews
- Support ARPA investigations and reporting at federal standards
- Provide targeted training opportunities, including advanced ARPA courses and strategic planning efforts
- Expand Tribal capacity to lead protection efforts on their own lands

Recent trainings—such as the Advanced ARPA Course and the ongoing ARPA Assistance Program—continue to broaden the network of ARPA-trained professionals. These events emphasize Tribal leadership, practical skills development, and field-ready tools.

## **ARPA Assistance Program: Building Tribal Capacity**

The ARPA Assistance Program focuses on four core areas: **Detection, Response, Prevention, and Restoration**. Increasingly, the program delivers training and technical assistance tailored specifically for Tribal cultural resource staff. Capacity-building efforts include:

- Training in ARPA processes, reporting standards, and evidence documentation
- Guidance for working with law enforcement partners
- Outreach materials to support Tribal-led education and site-protection strategies
- Collaborative development of community-based stewardship initiatives

These efforts reflect BIA’s enduring commitment to supporting Tribal sovereignty and the protection of irreplaceable cultural heritage.

### **Looking Ahead**

As the Branch continues strengthening ARPA response, it is also advancing broader cultural resource priorities—from workforce development and training needs to streamlined consultation processes and improved coordination across regions.

Ongoing partnerships, Tribal leadership, and expanding technical expertise ensure that the protection of sacred places remains not only a federal duty, but a shared effort grounded in respect and collaboration.

## **BRANCH OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES (BES)**

### **Environmental Management, Assessment, and Performance (EMAP) Program**

The [EMAP Program](#) implements BIAs' responsibility to perform environmental audits at BIA-owned facilities and for BIA programs and activities over a three-year cycle. The EMAP Program also provides technical assistance to Facility Managers and Senior Line Officials during and after audits to reduce operational risk and hazards to staff and visitors.

EMAP multi-media audits ensure bureau accountability in implementing and maintaining environmental regulation standards through [Departmental \(515 DM 2\)](#) and [IA \(59 IAM 2\)](#) policy.

This year, the Branch of Environmental Services (BES) is kicking off its’ next three-year EMAP audit cycle with a bureau-wide webinar to be delivered by the EMAP team of third-party auditors and the BES EMAP Program lead. Audits will focus on high- and medium- priority environmental risks to human health, welfare, and the environment. For this audit cycle, BES has contracted Navancio, LLC, with subcontractors from Benesh, to perform the BIA-wide audits.

### **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Categorical Exclusion (CE) Training for Internal BIA Staff**



On March 4, 2026, BES delivered a virtual training titled “Navigating the NEPA Categorical Exclusion (CE) Process” for internal BIA staff, with over 120 participants in attendance. The training provided an overview of key topics, including what a categorical exclusion is, recent changes to NEPA and the CE process, criteria and eligibility for applying a CE, best practices and strategies for CE decision-making, and use of the NEPA tracker in relation to CEs.

Participants engaged in an interactive breakout session focused on determining when to appropriately use a CE, followed by a wrap-up discussion and Q&A. The session supported the goal of ensuring CEs are applied consistently, appropriately, and in alignment with departmental and bureau policy and NEPA regulations.

### 2026 NEPA Webinar Series Quarterly Schedule

BES will continue offering a quarterly webinar series focused on strengthening NEPA knowledge, consistency, and application across BIA programs. These virtual sessions are designed for internal staff, with future offerings being developed for Tribal partners.

Quarter	Months	Training	Dates
FY 2026 Quarter 2	January–March 2026	Navigating the NEPA Categorical Exclusion Process	March 4, 2026
FY 2026 Quarter 3	April–June 2026	NEPA Foundations and BIA Priorities	June 3, 2026
FY 2026 Quarter 4	July–September 2026	Indian Affairs Implementation of Energy Emergency Alternative NEPA Procedures	September 2, 2026
FY 2027 Quarter 1	October–December 2026	NEPA Tracker & Performance Management	December 2, 2026

## DIVISION OF FORESTRY (DOF)



### Mission

The mission of the Division of Forestry (DOF) is to provide for the efficient, effective management and protection of trust forest resources for the benefit of American Indians and Alaska Natives through recognition and support of their resource management goals – all with the spirit of self-determination, and consultation with the Secretary of the Interior’s trust responsibilities.

### TIMBER TEAM

The Timber Team began the year by assisting the Quinault Indian Nation in Taholah, Washington, where they measured 60 timber cruise plots and collected detailed data needed to calculate timber sale volumes. They also completed frequency cruise strips to estimate road-clearing volume and measured 51 timber stand improvement plots, providing Quinault with information to guide precommercial thinning priorities.

In February, the Team supported the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in Minnesota by marking four timber sale areas focused on thinning red pine plantations to reduce fuel loading and release hardwood regeneration. Over 10,800 trees were marked across 108 acres, with frequency cruise methods used to collect essential inventory data and demonstrations provided on data processing techniques with FSCruiser. Additional work included completing stand exams, coring trees for site index, and measuring regeneration to help guide future management decisions.

Most recently, the Team worked with the Karuk Tribe in Northern California to establish around 40 Continuous Forest Inventory plots designed for long-term monitoring. Using a nested plot approach, they collected precise measurements on tree growth, crown characteristics, and defect to support high-quality remeasurement in 10–15 years. The resulting data will help the Tribe calculate sustained yield, determine annual allowable cut, and make informed long-term resource planning decisions.

After a busy winter, the Timber Team will be working in North Carolina and Colorado early this spring.

### Timber Team’s tentative schedule and openings for the remaining calendar year

Dates	Region	Tribe	Activity	State
March 16-27, 2026	Eastern	Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians	Sale/Prep	NC
April 6-17, 2026	Southwest	Ute Mountain Ute	CFI	CO
May 4-16, 2026	Northwest	Warm Springs Reservation	Sale/Prep	OR
June 1-12, 2026	Midwest	Menominee Reservation	ITC Symposium & Project Assistance	WI
June 21-27, 2026	Rocky Mtn.	Crow Reservation	Sale/Prep	MT
July 12-25, 2026	Western	Tentative Hualapai Reservation	Sale/Prep/CFI	AZ
August 3-14, 2026	Northwest	Puget Sound Agency	Sale/Prep for Hoh & Lower Elwha	WA
August 23-Sept 4, 2026	Northwest	Tentative Colville Reservation	Silviculture Rx/Sale Prep	WA



Photo: Timber Team forester coring a tree to determine site index while assisting the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in central Minnesota.

**2026 Northwest Region Timber Sales Workshop**

Over 100 BIA and Tribal foresters gathered at the Spokane Tribe Resort and Casino for the Northwest Region Timber Sales Workshop held March 10–12, 2026. Attendees represented the Northwest Region, Northwest Tribes, Central Office, Alaska Region, Midwest Region, and Western Region. Spokane Tribal leaders opened the workshop with a welcome address and song.

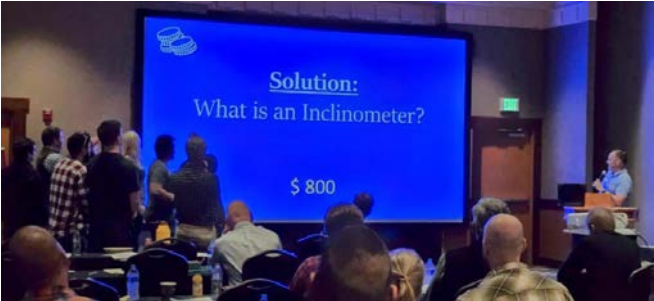
Workshop discussions covered a wide range of topics, including federal legislation, manuals and handbooks, appraisals, forest officer’s reports, environmental compliance, artificial intelligence, scaling, the Trust Asset Accounting Management System (TAAMS), the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act (ITARA), allotment sales, financial accounting, and sale closeout.

Beyond formal sessions, the workshop also provided valuable information-sharing opportunities between regions. Central Office, Northwest Region, and Western Region consulted ahead of a scheduled April 2026 training in Phoenix.

Since it has been several years since Western Region hosted training, the workshop provided especially meaningful insights to support their upcoming event.

The Northwest Region also reflected on its 2024 timber sales workshop in Ocean Shores, Washington, where Shawn Hartzler led a Forestry Jeopardy icebreaker that brought together representatives from Tribes, regional offices, and Central Office. The Colville Tribe claimed the championship title in 2024 — and successfully defended their title in 2026, once again earning Forestry Jeopardy bragging rights.

Congratulations to the Northwest Region for organizing another successful and informative workshop. Looking forward to many more collaborative events in the future.



Shawn Hartzler AKA “Alex Tree-bek” leads a round of Forestry Jeopardy

## Karuk CFI Installation

In the months leading up to the Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) kickoff, staff met virtually with the Forestry Program Manager to determine inventory location and logistics, as well as what measurements would be most important for helping Karuk with their planned Forest Management Plan update. Through this collaboration, staff developed inventory training manual, tablet data collection software, CFI tracker tool and inventory database.



*Whether it's pouring or sunny, a forester always greets the day with a cheerful attitude.*

The collected data will be analyzed and used to update the Forest Management Plan for Karuk.



*Crew crossing steep, rugged forests in Northern California*

Once on site, staff provided field training on how to collect the necessary plot, tree, cover type and site index measurements that will be analyzed to determine forest health and stand characteristics within the inventoried forestland. Despite working in steep terrain and occasional heavy rain, each morning, the foresters were rewarded with beautiful views of fog rising off the Klamath River.

## **Advancing Forestry Data Integrity Through AI Powered Document Analysis**

*By Christopher LaCroix, Forest Analyst, Branch of Forest Inventory & Planning (FIP)*

The Branch of Forest Inventory & Planning (FIP) is piloting a new AI powered tool to streamline verification of key forestry metrics across Forest Management Plans (FMPs), Forest Inventory Analysis Reports (FIAs), and the Indian Forestry Database (Info Dat). What once required manually locating documents, scanning for values, and running comparisons can now be completed in minutes.

The tool extracts metrics such as planning years, commercial volume, allowable annual cut (AAC), indicated allowable cut (IAC), and regulated annual cut (RAC). It analyzes FMPs and FIAs simultaneously, displays extracted values in one place, and compares them to Info Dat to flag potential discrepancies.

The system includes:

- A Power BI library to filter and download documents
- An AI document upload portal
- A results dashboard with extracted values
- A live Info Dat Power BI interface for side-by-side review

Built entirely in the Microsoft Power Platform within the secure DOI environment, the tool inherits all BIA and DOI security and compliance protections. No information leaves the DOI network, aligning with current DOI AI guidance.

A core design principle is keeping a human in the loop. Analysts validate any mismatches, using document citations automatically generated by the tool. These references help verify accuracy, refine prompts, and support continuous improvement during the testing phase.

Early feedback from tribal forestry programs has already identified outdated documents and mismatched database values—demonstrating how the tool supports proactive data quality checks and policy compliance.

As testing continues, FIP is refining prompts to accommodate unique document formats and edge cases. By reducing manual workload and improving data reliability, this AI enabled approach strengthens forest management planning, reporting accuracy, and the long-term integrity of forestry information across Indian Country.

In late February, FIP and the Timber Team sent 8 foresters to the Pacific Region to help install the new Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) at Karuk. The spring timing was selected with the hope of arriving after the last snow and before the poison oak leafed out (spoiler alert – missed the snow by a week!). Over the following two weeks, BIA foresters worked with forestry staff at Karuk Department of Natural Resources (KDNR) to tag and measure over 1000 trees at 40 plots. Despite working in steep terrain and occasional heavy rain, each morning, the foresters were rewarded with beautiful views of fog rising off the Klamath River.

KDNR will continue to measure the remaining CFI plots and intends to complete the inventory later this spring. FIP and KDNR can monitor the progress of the inventory measurement using the CFI Tracker tool developed by FIP using Microsoft Power BI, which provides regular updates from the inventory database. The data collected will then be analyzed and used to write the updated Forest Management Plan for Karuk.

The entire application was designed and built in house using the Microsoft Power Platform, which operates fully within the secure DOI Microsoft 365 environment. Power Platform tools inherit all security protocols, data protections, and compliance controls established by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior. This ensures that no sensitive data is released or accessible outside the DOI network and aligns with DOI approved AI and Power Platform usage described in DOI AI guidance and FAQs.

## INDIAN ENERGY SERVICE CENTER (IESC)



### Mission

The mission of Indian Energy Service Center (IESC) is to fulfill the Department of the Interior's (DOI) Indian trust responsibility in the energy and mineral development arena. We do this by modernizing business processes to efficiently develop the Indian energy and mineral estate while protecting trust assets by removing barriers to energy and mineral development on Indian lands.

### Multi-Bureau Service Center

The IESC is a multi-bureau collaboration between the BIA, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA), and the Office of Natural Resources and Revenue (ONRR).

### How Do I Request Assistance?

Email requests to [IESCRequest@bia.gov](mailto:IESCRequest@bia.gov). IESC subject matter experts work in all phases of energy leasing and management activities. Technical support and guidance are available in processing all types of Indian energy and mineral, leasing and development activities, and actions including drafting of policy

IESC requests a [Referral Form](#) be completed detailing the type of assistance requested.

## Available Energy Services

Real Estate Services (BIA)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communitization Agreement adjudication</li> <li>• Lease Reviews and Modifications</li> <li>• Advice on Environmental Impact Statements</li> <li>• Oil and Gas Leases, Assignments, Permitting</li> <li>• NEPA (<i>Environmental</i>) Processing Support</li> <li>• Conduct Lease Sales (<i>Local &amp; Future Online</i>)</li> <li>• Rights of Way and Trespass</li> <li>• TAAMS Title Review, Encoding and Modifications</li> </ul>

Engineering Services (BLM)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• APD Engineering review and assistance</li> <li>• Adjudication</li> <li>• Cadastral Surveys</li> <li>• Production Accountability Reviews</li> <li>• Processing Space Orders</li> </ul>

Beneficiary Services (BTFA)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requesting IIM account updates and disbursements</li> <li>• Explanation of quarterly statements</li> <li>• Locate Whereabouts Unknown Beneficiaries</li> <li>• Information about your trust assets</li> <li>• Estate planning or financial management</li> <li>• OHA and probate hearings</li> <li>• BIA Realty issues</li> <li>• Supervised accounts or guardianships</li> </ul>

Mineral Services (ONRR)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production Reconciliation</li> <li>• Advise on Indian related Royalty Questions</li> <li>• Identify Royalty Discrepancies, refer reviews</li> <li>• Outstanding Liability Reviews</li> <li>• Coordinating ONRR reviews of proposed IMDA's</li> <li>• Compliance and Audit Support</li> <li>• Standing Operating Procedure (SOP) Training</li> </ul>

## STAFFING CHANGES



Winter Jojola-Talburt and Johnna Oberly-Spriggs

### Welcome

The IESC is pleased to welcome Winter Jojola-Talburt as the new Acting IESC Division Chief. Winter has been serving as the Acting Chief of the Division of Energy and Mineral Development (DEMD) in Lakewood, CO, where Winter provides technical assistance and project management support for Tribal energy and mineral development initiatives. Winter is a member of the Piro-Manso-Tiwa Tribe of New Mexico and brings more than 19 years of experience with BIA DEMD.

Winter holds a Master of Science in Global Energy Management from the University of Colorado-Denver and a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Colorado-Boulder. Welcome, Winter!

### Farewell

The IESC would like to bid a warm farewell to Johnna Oberly-Spriggs, who has served as the IESC Division Chief since January 2025. Johnna (Comanche, Osage, Eastern Shoshone, and Northern Arapaho) has devoted more than 25 years to the Department of the Interior, holding several key leadership roles throughout her career.

## KEY PROJECTS

### Energy

In response to the National Energy Emergency and the unleashing Alaska's Extraordinary Resource Potential Executive Orders, the DOI Secretary issued Secretarial Orders in accordance with the Executive Orders on energy dominance aimed to reduce regulatory barriers and promote the development of energy resources, including oil, gas, and renewable energy, on federal and tribal lands.

### Permitting

In response to President Donald J. Trump's declaration of a National Energy Emergency, the U.S. Department of the Interior and BIA are preparing emergency permitting procedures to accelerate the development of domestic energy resources and critical minerals. These measures are being designed to expedite the review and approval, if appropriate, of projects related to the identification, leasing, siting, production, transportation, refining, or generation of energy within the United States.

### Tribal Energy Resource Agreements (TERA)

TERA is an agreement between a Tribe and DOI for the Tribe to manage leasing, business agreements, and rights-of-way for the purposes of developing energy resources on Tribal land. IESC provides training and technical assistance to Tribes interested in submitting a TERA proposal. To date, one Tribe (*Southern Ute Tribe of Colorado*) has submitted a TERA application.

## TRAINING

### TAAMS Mineral Virtual Training

Trust Asset and Accounting Management System (TAAMS) is the DOI's integrated land management system. TAAMS is a contractor maintained, and contractor operated major application. It is the system of record for title and land ownership data for land held in trust by the DOI for Tribes, American Indians, and Alaska Natives. The system manages the leasing process including the invoicing and distribution of income to the Department's beneficiaries on the land held in trust for Tribes, American Indians, and Alaska Natives.

Past Training:	<b>February 18-19, 2026</b>
Upcoming Training:	<b>June 10-11, 2026</b> <b>September 9-10, 2026</b>

## Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

**Training** - Over 1,000 Federal & Tribal employees have attended SOP Training since 2015.

### Course Description

Employees attending the SOP for Indian Fluid Minerals (oil and gas) training will gain an understanding of the independent roles and responsibilities among U.S. Department of the Interior Bureaus and Offices involved in the development of fluid minerals on trust lands across the United States.

### Course Objectives

Outline the roles and responsibilities of each agency with the primary focus on the independent responsibilities and handoffs between agencies for fluid mineral development on trust lands.

### Instructors

Subject Matter Experts from BIA, BLM, ONRR, and BTFA



### Upcoming Fluid Minerals Training:

- **April 21-22, 2026** – Farmington, NM
- **July 21-22, 2026** – Lakewood, CO

**CPE:** Contact Agency for Details

**Registration:** Access course registration in DOI Talent <https://doitalent.ibr.doi.gov>

## DOI-DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE) COLLABORATION WORKSHOP

On January 22-23, 2026, the IESC Division Chief, along with the IESC BTFA Branch Chief, participated in the DOI-DOE Collaboration Workshop. The U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Indian Energy Director, Eric Mahroum, and his staff met with representatives from the DOI, U.S. Indian Affairs at the National Laboratory of the Rockies to discuss potential collaboration opportunities concerning energy development for Tribes. Both agencies presented information regarding their respective programs on various topics related to Tribal energy development, including financial assistance, technical support, and capacity building.



Jarrod Lowry, Senior Advisor Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs (AS-IA), Ken Bellmard, Deputy AS-IA for Policy & Economic Development



Eric Mahroum, Director of the Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs, U.S. Department of Energy and Kate MacGregor, Deputy Secretary of the U.S. DOI



DOI and Department of Energy Workshop attendees

### FY2026 Federal Partners Meeting Schedule

The Indian Energy Service Center (IESC) organizes and facilitates multiple federal partner meetings to communicate, coordinate, and resolve issues that impede energy development opportunities and provides a platform to expedite nationwide trust functions.

Federal Partner Charters	Meeting Dates	MST Time
Fort Berthold (Feds Only)	Thursday, June 4, 2026 <i>Thursday, August 6, 2026</i>	8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Fort Berthold with MHA Nation	Tues/Wed, June 9-10, 2026 <i>Tues/Wed, August 11-12, 2026</i>	8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Navajo Federal Partners Meeting	Tuesday, October 28, 2025 <i>Tuesday, April 7, 2026</i>	9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
U&O Federal Partners Meeting	Tuesday, November 17, 2025 <i>Tuesday, May 5, 2026</i>	9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Southwest	Tuesday, January 6, 2026 <i>Wednesday, July 8, 2026</i>	9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas	Tuesday, February 3, 2026 <i>Tuesday, August 4, 2026</i>	9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Rocky Mountain Region	Tuesday, March 3, 2026 <i>Tuesday, September 8, 2026</i>	9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

## DIVISION OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR)



*Mundo Lake area*

### **Mission**

The mission of the Division of Natural Resources (DNR) is to support the fish, wildlife and agriculture stewardship of trust lands in Indian Country. The Division assists Tribes in the management, development and protection of the Indian trust resource landscape. The Division enables Tribal and Indian trust managers and landowners to optimize the use of conservation of resources while providing benefits such as revenue, jobs, and the protection of fish and wildlife, agriculture husbandry and cultural, spiritual and traditional knowledge resources.



### **About the Division of Natural Resources**

DNR provides funding support in the direction and guidance for all activities related to the planning, management, conservation, development, and utilization of soil, water, farmland, rangeland, fish and wildlife resources, endangered species, invasive species, conservation law enforcement, youth and education within natural resources. DNR offices are in the BIA central office in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

## BRANCH OF FISHERIES, WILDLIFE AND RECREATION

### **Mundo Lake Recreational Improvement Project**

The Jicarilla Apache Game & Fish Department recently completed the Mundo Lake Recreational Improvement Project awarded through the Branch of Fish, Wildlife, and Recreation in FY 2021. Mundo Lake is the Jicarilla Apache Nation's most popular fishery and is their keystone of their recreational fishing program. Utilized by the community of Dulce, NM and the Jicarilla Game & Fish Department (JGFD) for yearly youth groups, educational outreach, camping, and fishing derbies as well as visited by approximately 2,000 Tribal and non-tribal anglers per year.

The project was successful in achieving the following goals and objectives:

- Establish graveled all-weather road
- Replace deteriorating culverts
- Increased roadway damage
- Camping area improvements included 10 new picnic/camping areas, graveled parking area, leveled tent sites, and pull through recreational vehicle parking

Rehabilitating and enhancing this important recreational area have led to immediate increase in user and their overall satisfaction. Increased use equates to increased economic growth for the community but has directly increased fishing permit sales revenue for the JGFD. These funds are exclusively used to benefit conservation programs at the JGFD.

This project has garnered support from not only the local community but also reinvigorated the Nation's desire to build upon this memorandum and invest further tribal dollars into the Mundo Lake area in 2026 and beyond. The Nation has already purchased a pavilion structure to be erected in the spring of 2026 to further develop the sites this grant was able to rehabilitate.

## Mundo Lake Campground Renovation in photos



*Aerial photo of Mundo Lake Campground renovations, BIA June 10, 2025, and completed road near the entrance to Mundo Lake off Jicarilla Road #8 (J-8), on October 21, 2024.*



*Our first Jicarilla WILD Community Outreach and Education (WILD CORE) event was held at Mundo Lake since the renovations occurred on June 25, 2025. Approximately 100 community youth attended the event.*

## Participation in Native American Fish and Wildlife Society Conference



*NAFWS 2026 Conference*

The Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (NAFWS) is the preeminent organization for tribal fish and wildlife managers. The BFWR provides the base funding for this organization and provides most fish and wildlife related funding across Indian Country. The NAFWS Great Plains Conference is a regional hub for collaborating with other agencies, states and partners regarding projects and initiatives benefiting Indian Country. Representing BFWR at this collaborative setting allows staff to spread awareness of BFWR programs, strengthen relationships, and build partnerships with other government agencies and Tribal entities.

Central Office staff member, Jordan Miteff, Natural Resources Specialist, attended the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society's (NAFWS) Great Plains Conference on March 17-19, 2026. NAFWS is the preeminent organization for Tribal fish and wildlife managers.

Co-hosted by the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, the conference featured sessions covering a range of topics including regional Tribal fisheries operations, Conservation Law Enforcement Officer training, and ESA co-management efforts with a focus on elk, bighorn sheep, and black-footed ferret recovery.

The conference concluded with two workshops aiding with federal funding opportunities and wildlife health updates. Jordan also virtually participated in the NAFWS Native Women in Agriculture and Natural Resources Symposium on March 23-25, 2026.

The BFWR provides the base funding for this organization and provides most available fish and wildlife related funding across Indian Country.

Amit Bass, Field Supervisor for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Montana Ecological Services Program, provided black-footed ferret (BFF) release numbers for 2025. Tribes contributing to the BFF recovery efforts include Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.



*Photo of black footed ferret provided by the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe Department of Wildlife, Fish and Recreation to the BFWR Endangered Species Program 2025.*

## DIVISION OF REAL ESTATE SERVICES (DRES)



### Mission

The mission of the Division of Real Estate Services (DRES) is to provide comprehensive real estate services and technical assistance that uphold the highest standards of professionalism. We are committed to fostering partnerships with Tribes and individual Indian landowners to minimize risks and protect Trust assets and resources in the management of Tribal trust and restricted fee lands under Tribal law, federal law and regulation.

### DRES User Groups

The DRES User Groups consists of subject matter experts from DRES and each Region. These groups meet regularly and focus on updating policy and guidance in processing realty conveyances and leases, additionally to discuss and develop enhancement to ensure all realty processes are streamlined for staff efficiency. BIA DRES oversees various realty User Groups including

- Surface and Business Leasing
- Acquisitions and Disposals
- Lockbox and Special Deposits
- Rights-of-Ways
- Mortgages
- Fee to Trust Acquisitions and Proclamations
- Trespass/Compliance
- Broadband and Permitting

### Acquisition & Disposal (A&D) Handbook

DRES, in coordination with the TAAMS A&D User Group, is developing the Trust and Restricted Land Conveyances Handbook under 25 CFR Part 152 to implement technical guidance to the BIA region, agency, and tribal realty staff. The handbook is in its initial draft form and is at the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Collaborative Action (RACA).

### HEARTH Act

The Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Home Ownership Act of 2012 (HEARTH Act) offers a voluntary, more efficient land-leasing process for Tribes by amending the Indian Long-Term Leasing Act of 1955, 25 U.S.C. §415. Each week a HEARTH Act report is prepared, analyzed, and distributed to senior levels on the ongoing status of each leasing regulation received by DRES. DRES created a tracking system within Smartsheet to track and monitor all HEARTH Act applications.



*Suquamish Tribe house under construction*

### Tribal Submissions (January – March 2026)

Lower Brule Sioux Tribe - January 15, 2026

- Agriculture
- Business
- Residential
- Wind Solar Resources (WSR)
- Wind Energy Evaluation Lease (WEEL)

*List of Approved Regulations*

The Indian Affairs public website for HEARTH Act was updated with four (4) approved Tribal regulations. [Click here to view.](#)

The HEARTH Act coordinator worked with the web content editor to update the Indian Affairs website. The new published content on the Division of Real Estate Services webpage added links to the current information for HEARTH Act submissions, approvals, policies and trainings.



*HEARTH Act Overview Sessions Conducted*

Date	Course
May 6, 2025	Webinar for BIA Realty field and contract/compact Tribes
May 7, 2025	HEARTH Act training with Department of Housing & Urban Development
June 25, 2025	Tribal HEARTH Act Outreach overview session

*HEARTH Act Overview Sessions Planned*

Date	Course
September 20, 2025	Review of 52 IAM 13 HEARTH Act policy and process for Tribes to submit leasing regulations for secretarial approval  9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. MST

**HEARTH Act Lease Form and Rider Webinar**

The BIA OTS Division of Real Estate Services in coordination with Indian Affairs, Office of the Solicitor hosted:

Virtual Tribal Outreach HEARTH Act Training  
*Wednesday - April 1, 2026, from 9:00 - 10:00 MST*

The outreach session covered the HUD/ HEARTH Act Lease form and rider along with the cover letter from the AS-IA. These documents were completed in collaboration with the DRES-Central Office, the IA Solicitor, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

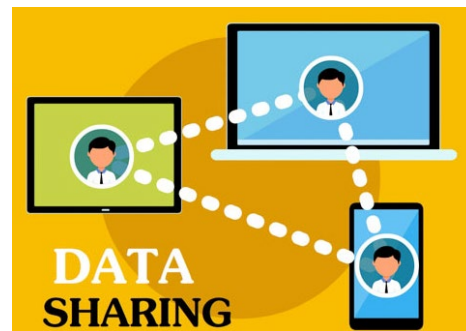
HEARTH Act Tribes with approved residential leasing can move forward with the development and expansion of housing needs to meet the demands for new development within Tribal trust and restricted land boundaries utilizing the new lease and rider.

**TAAMS Realty Trainings**

DRES hosted 9 Realty TAAMS Training this quarter and had approximately 180 participants from the region, agencies and compact/contract Tribes. Sessions were led by CGI and DRES subject matter experts.

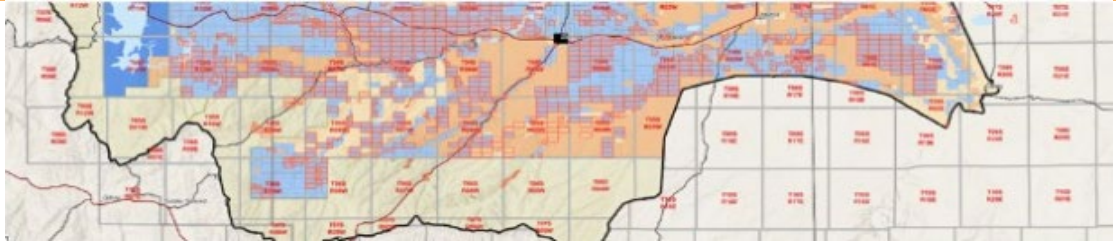
TAAMS Realty Courses Offered	Sessions
Mortgage Module: Agricultural Leasing	2
Lockbox and Invoicing, Fee-to-Trust Acquisitions	2
Rights-of-Way, Business Leasing	2

**Modernizing Information Sharing**



The Acquisition and Disposal Dashboard is a newly released internal tracking dashboard. Coming soon will be a new leasing dashboard for business and agricultural leases under development to allow national up to date information to field staff.

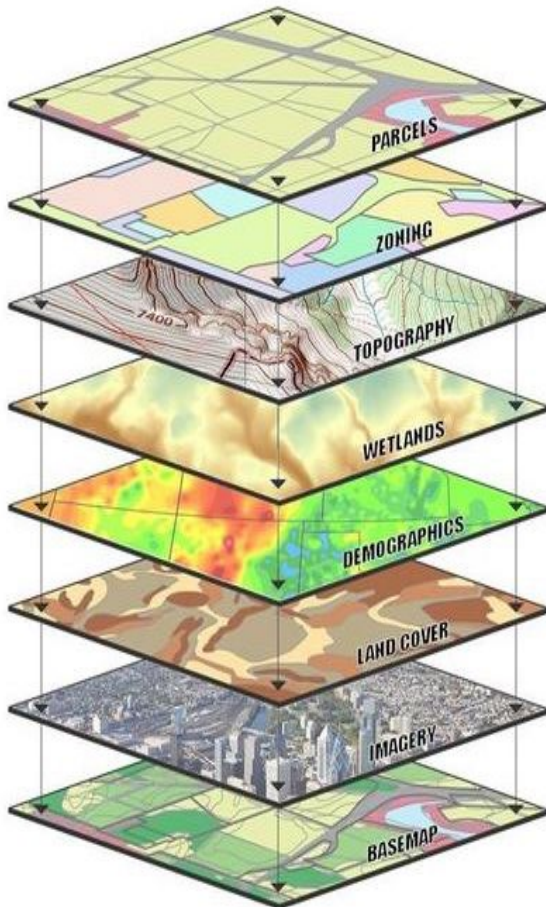
## DIVISION OF RESOURCE INTEGRATION & SERVICES (DRIS)



### Mission

The mission of the Division of Resource Integration and Services (DRIS) is to enhance the use of geospatial information and data resources throughout BIA by modernizing data resource communication, fostering prompt collaboration between programs and improving workflows.

#### Example of Layers of GIS Data



### BRANCH OF RESOURCE SOLUTIONS (BRS)

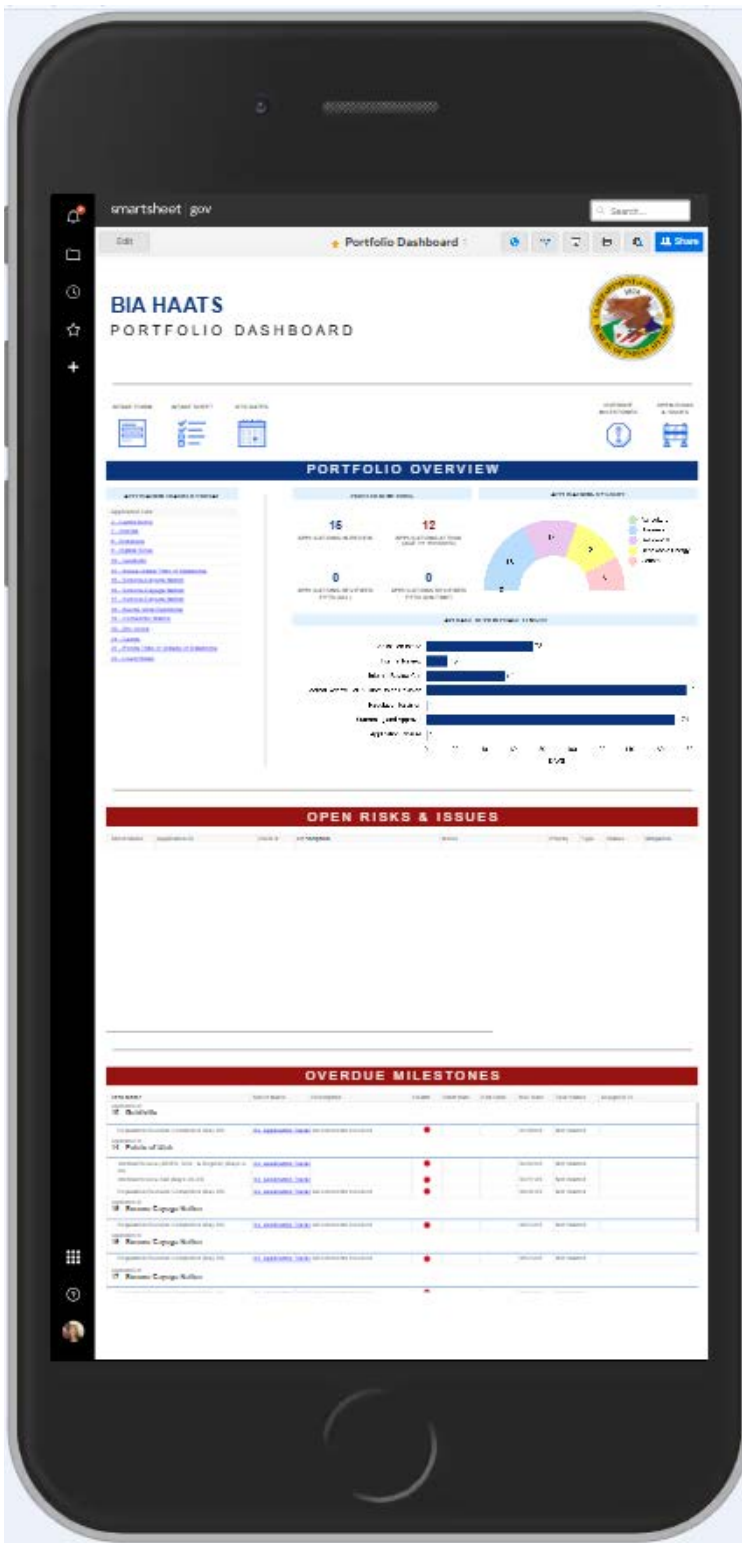
The primary objective of BRS is to coordinate, manage, and provide user support for enterprise software and geospatial data across the Office of Trust Services. The overarching goals are to integrate geospatial data and enterprise software solutions to share information more effectively, improve efficiency, and bring better service to federally recognized Tribes, stakeholders, and the public.

The Branch of Resource Solutions (BRS) continues to lead the way in assisting BIA business units with modernization efforts. BRS is primarily utilizing advanced Low-Code / No-Code (LCNC) systems spanning the BIA-STAT platform, as well as the BOGS Geospatial platforms and Bureau of Indian Education's (BIE) Box tool. BRS specialists are building and deploying tools that augment the traditional Systems of Record with useful functions the legacy systems were not originally designed or built to address.

Enhancements and extensions to BIA's major systems tend to be costly and take a significant amount of time to integrate in a secure manner, whereas utilizing a LCNC can automate operational processes rapidly. Instead of building custom systems or enhancements from scratch, teams can assemble automation workflows using pre-made blocks or templates, like Lego. Existing components can be enhanced with visual software development utilizing drag-and-drop versus a need to understand complex coding languages.

#### Benefits of Low-Code/No-Code Development

- Cost Efficient
- Increased Automation
- Improved User Experience
- Enhanced Security
- Faster Development



## Mobile for BIA STAT

OTS received approval to utilize the mobile module of Smartsheet.gov in BIA STAT. DRIS is planning to host a Kickoff Session in April. This FISMA-approved additional module for SmartsheetGov enables on-the-go, remote functionality utilizing a Government-Furnished Equipment (GFE) mobile device. Users can login to BIA STAT organizational instance of SmartsheetGov and allow access to pre-authorized workspaces, objects and data that have by the respective owners of the tools and data.

### The BIA STAT Mobile App allows users to:

- Access status of programs by viewing Dashboard objects.
- Capture information while in the field with the ability to upload when network resources are available.
- Complete update and approval requests, view and reply to comments.
- Capture information utilizing device-specific features such as barcodes, images, and location.
- Access and edit data in Sheet objects using Mobile View.

Smartsheet's now available on mobile phones

## DIVISION OF TRUST ASSET OWNERSHIP & TITLE (DTAOT)



### Mission

The mission of the Division of Trust Asset Ownership and Title (DTAOT) is to coordinate probate processing and records, maintain, and to certify land management ownership records of Indian trust assets.

### BRANCH OF LAND TITLES AND RECORDS

#### Public Email for Title Status Report Requests

BLTR and the Division of Real Estate Services (DRES) have collaborated to launch a centralized email address to streamline the process for individual landowners, Tribes and lenders to request certified Title Status Reports (TSRs). Email requests for mortgages and other real estate transactions will improve the efficiency and transparency of TSR requests from start to finish. The new email, [tsr@bia.gov](mailto:tsr@bia.gov), will be maintained and monitored by the BLTR team.

The new email removes one step in the request process, allowing BIA staff to monitor requests through to completion. The eliminated step required individuals to submit initial requests to one of 87 BIA Agencies or 12 Regions before forwarding requests to the Land Titles and Records Offices. Now requests are sent directly to the servicing Land Title and Records through email.



### PROBATE SERVICES

The trust asset probate process is complex and involves several federal agencies. The process begins once the death of an American Indian or Alaska Native, who owns trust assets, is reported to the BIA. A BIA probate staff member will create the decedent's probate package by gathering documents and information pertaining to the decedent's estate including the names of potential heirs and a will if one exists and is provided to BIA.

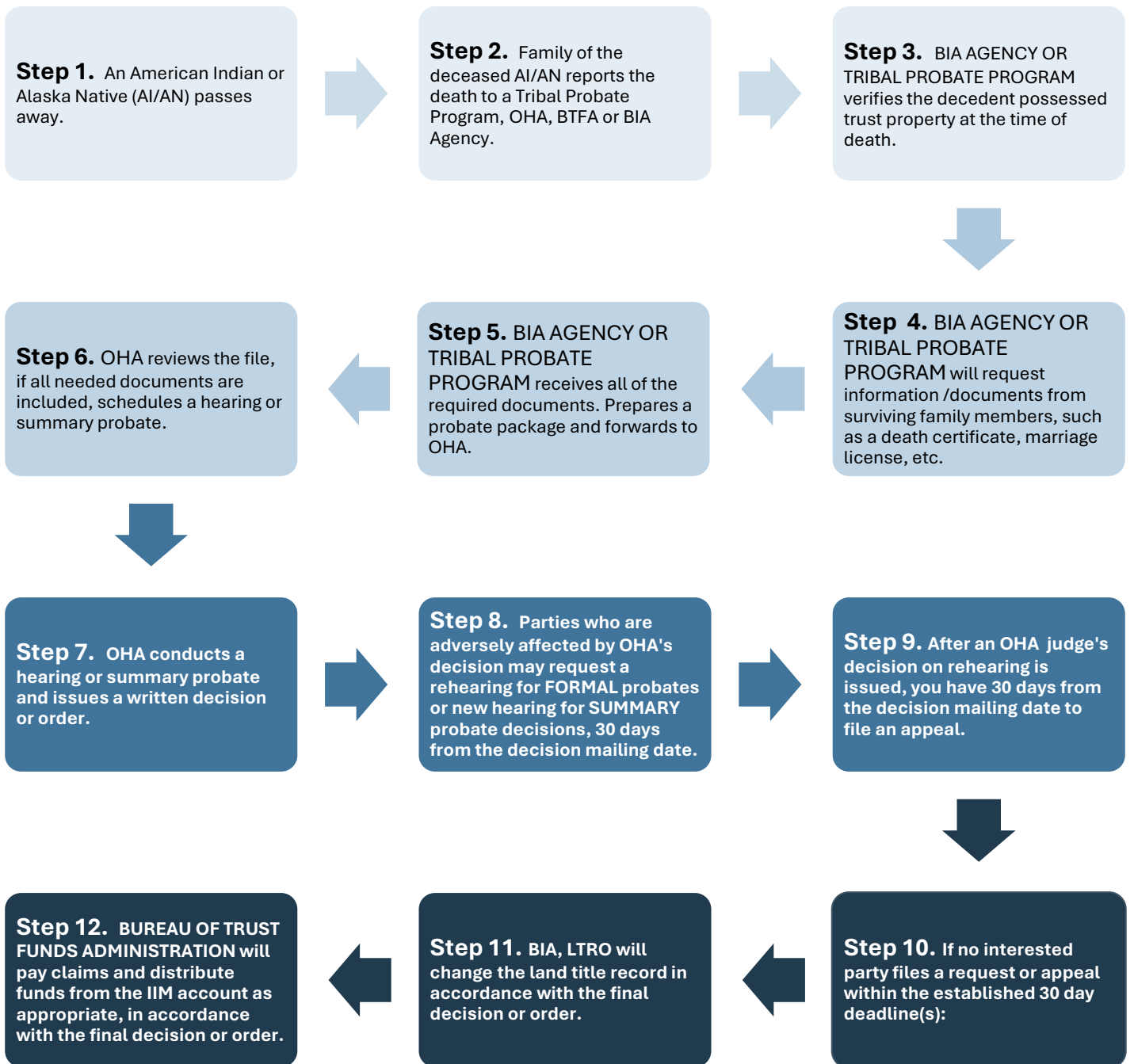
Once the probate package is complete, it is transferred to the Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) to be adjudicated and for a final probate decision to be issued. After the final probate decision is issued and the appeal period expires, the BIA Division of Land Titles and Records distributes any trust or restricted land, and the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA) distributes any funds from the estate account.

To facilitate the probate, process the death of a family member must be promptly reported to the BIA and information and documents must be provided to the probate staff.

A flow chart on the Department of the Interior's Probate Process and order of processing through multiple organizations. See next page for flow chart.

Steps	Responsible Party
1-2	Submitter of Probate Request
3-5	BIA or Tribal Probate Office
6-10	Office of Hearings and Appeals
11	BIA or Tribal Land Title and Records
12	Bureau of Trust Funds Administration

## Department of the Interior's Probate Process



## DIVISION OF TRUST LAND CONSOLIDATION (DTLC)



### Mission

The mission of the Division of Trust Land Consolidation (DTLC) is to facilitate sound land management and administration, support Tribal sovereignty and self-determination, and economic opportunity in Indian Country by reducing Indian land fractionation.



### About the Division of Trust Land Consolidation (DTLC)

The Division of Trust Land Consolidation works with individual Indian landowners who choose to voluntarily sell their fractional land interests at fair market value. By bringing these interests back under Tribal ownership, DTLC helps address the long-standing challenge of land fractionation – where reservation lands are divided into many small ownership shares held by numerous individuals.

Through these purchases from willing sellers, DTLC restores land to Tribal trust ownership, reduces fragmentation, and supports stronger, more effective land management.

Fractionation affects roughly 150 reservations across Indian Country, with more than 100,000 fractionated tracts containing nearly 2.4 million ownership interests – representing the equivalent of over 5.6 million acres.

DTLC's efforts strengthen Tribal sovereignty by increasing Tribal control over reservation lands. Consolidated land allows Tribes to plan more effectively for economic development, conservation, cultural initiatives, and other community priorities.

Headquartered within the BIA, Office of Trust Services, the DTLC operates out of the Rocky Mountain Region in Billings, Montana, and the Great Plains Region in Aberdeen, South Dakota. The program works closely with Tribal governments and landowners to support these essential land consolidation initiatives.



*National Bison Range in Montana*

### Who we Serve

The Division of Trust Land Consolidation (DTLC) provides opportunities for individual Indian landowners to voluntarily sell fractional land interests, at fair market value, for consolidation under Tribal ownership. The DTLC supports Tribes by increasing Tribal management control over reservation lands, better enabling Tribes to protect and utilize lands for purposes benefitting the Tribal Community.



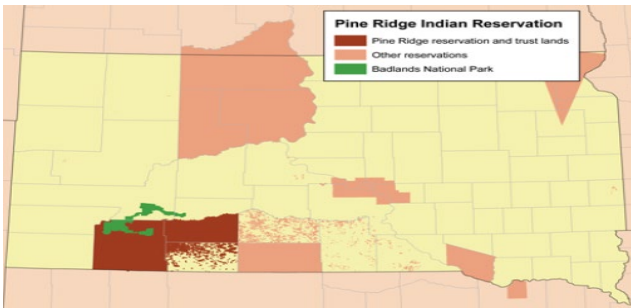
Lakota Indians and the Badlands of South Dakota

**What Offer Types are available to Tribes?**

- Trust Land Consolidation, appropriated funding to purchase fractional land interests from willing sellers.
- Tribally Funded Offers uses an automated valuation and acquisition process from tribal funds for payments from willing sellers.

**Pine Ridge Research Project**

Our DTLC Supervisory Realty Specialist is guiding the realty team as they review approved Pine Ridge applicants to verify that payments were correctly made to individuals who sold their interests under the Land Buyback Program (LBBP) between FY 2013 and 2022. This work spans an Offer Set to over 16,500 Indian Landowners. So far, a total of 8 Offer Sets has been reviewed.



**Land Acquisition Funding**

The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for land acquisition, focused on New and Land-Limited Tribes, is currently being updated to align with the revised NOFO process. Funding will be awarded through a 638 Contract. Updated supporting documents are in development.

**FY 2026 Implementation Schedule**

The Appraisal and Valuation Services Office (AVSO) have received the tentative FY 2026 implementation schedule for land consolidation mass appraisals. The schedule includes the following Tribes and land area codes:

Land Area Code	Tribe
124	Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
143	Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
201	Blackfeet Tribe of Montana
202	Crow Tribe of Montana
206	Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation
302	Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of South Dakota
340	Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe of South Dakota
342	Crow Creek Sioux Tribe of South Dakota
345	Rosebud Sioux Tribe
404	Minnesota Chippewa Tribe-Bois Forte Band

**Interested in Participating as a Willing Seller?**

Landowners are encouraged to contact their local Bureau of Trust Funds Administrator (BTFA) or the Trust Beneficiary Call Center at 1-888-678-6836, to indicate interest and ensure their contract information is up to date. More information on the Division of Trust Land Consolidation is available at <https://www.bia.gov/ots/dtcl>.

**Contact Us**

BIA, OTS Division of Trust Land Consolidation  
 2021 4<sup>th</sup> Ave North, Billings, MT 59101  
 Office: (406) 247-7913

BIA, OTS Division of Trust Land Consolidation  
 115 4<sup>th</sup> Ave, SE, Aberdeen, SD 27401  
 Office: (605) 226-7636

## DIVISION OF WATER & POWER (DWP)



### BRANCH OF WATER RESOURCES

Within DWP, the mission of the Branch of Water Resources (BWR) is to provide necessary technical research, studies, and other information for Indian Tribes and Alaska Natives to serve as knowledgeable and prudent managers of adjudicated decreed water or of water otherwise appurtenant to Tribal and or Indian trust lands, including public domain allotments. The mission includes the protection of Indian water rights, water development projects, litigation support, and attorney's fees as well as Indian land and water settlements that affect Indian trust resources.

#### **Water Resources Technician Training (WRTT) Program**

BWR partners with Conservation Legacy to sponsor water resources technicians in 26-week long, hands-on service internships to provide high quality technical skills and opportunities to Tribal youth in water sciences. Students gain experience in a wide array of water-related fields, including surface and groundwater hydrology; analysis of hydrologic data; and dam, irrigation and flood control facility operations and maintenance.



*Conservation Legacy interns*

Beyond technical studies and infrastructure, the internships integrate environmental protections such as wetland conservation and fish hatchery management to ensure a well-rounded understanding of modern water resources. Upon successful completion of the position, students receive an [AmeriCorps Education Award](#).

#### **WRTT Spotlight: Bernadette Benally — Water Resources Professional and Emerging Scholar**



Ms. Bernadette Benally began her career in water resources in 2000 and has dedicated more than two decades to advancing water resource management and policy on state and national levels. Originally from Canyon del Muerto, she spent summers helping her family irrigate crops with buckets of water from Tsaile Creek which winds through the bottom of the canyon. Coupled with her experience of growing up without access to running water, her pursuit of a career in water resources was inspired by tales she heard of del Muerto Canyon's *Tse'laa* (Fortress Rock) where, using only ingenuity, teamwork and local materials, over 300 Dine' were able to escape starvation and extreme water shortage during Kit Carson's military campaign during the 1860's. To survive, they formed a nighttime human chain down the cliff, passing buckets of water from Tsaile Creek up to the summit, enabling them to survive the siege.

Ms. Benally is a BIA Water Rights Specialist based in Montana's Rocky Mountain Regional Office and a NMSU doctoral candidate in Water Science and Management, set to complete her Ph.D. in December 2026.

Sponsored as a WRTT intern by AmeriCorps and the Reclamation's Four Corners Office, Ms. Benally served in a Conservation Legacy, Environmental Stewardship position. Through this role, she was subsequently hired as a Native American Liaison Specialist, working with Navajo allottees to secure Permission-to-Survey and Right-of-Way approvals for the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project. Her fluency in the Navajo language was vital in building trust, facilitating clear communication, and strengthening intergovernmental partnerships across federal, state, and tribal entities.

In 2009, she graduated from the University of New Mexico with a bachelor's degree in political science/Pre-Law and a minor in Natural Resources Economics, following it with a master's degree in water resources policy management. Her graduate research project, Examining the Rights-of-Way Process for Indian Allotment Lands: Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project, explored Indian water rights settlement and water infrastructure development.

#### **Santana Wells - Water Resources Professional, Rocky Boy Reservation**

Mr. Santana Wells (*not pictured*) was hired in 2025 as the Water Resources Director for the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy Reservation in Montana. He began his career as a labor hand in the water resources department, gaining foundational experience working alongside dam construction crews. In that role, he developed technical proficiencies in land surveying and field engineering, including operation of total station equipment and related field applications.

Mr. Wells remains committed to workforce development and knowledge transfer, emphasizing the importance of introducing younger tribal members to career opportunities in the water sciences - fields he notes are rarely promoted at the secondary or post-secondary level. He credits the BIA training program as a significant factor in establishing his career trajectory and views continued investment in such programs as essential to building long-term water resource capacity within tribal communities.

In 2003, Mr. Wells participated in the BIA Water Resources Technician Training Program. He performed well in the program and subsequently established a connection with faculty at New Mexico State University, which led to his enrollment in a degree program supported by his Tribe. His practical field experience proved instrumental in his continued advancement within the water resources profession. He later advanced to crew supervisor and superintendent positions, drawing on his extensive construction and surveying background.

Mr. Wells currently supports water data collection and GIS tool development efforts on the reservation, applying skills developed across his career to improve monitoring and resource management capabilities at the local level. He has identified ongoing challenges related to aquifer monitoring and drought preparedness, noting that the reservation's transition from groundwater to a regional surface water system — providing access to approximately five million gallons per day — underscores the need for improved monitoring infrastructure. A USGS stream gauge on the reservation has served as a critical data collection instrument in this regard.



*USGS-Tribal Monitoring Well, Rocky Boy Reservation*

The Water Resources Technician Training Program is administered through the BIA Branch of Water Resources and is designed to recruit, train, and develop emerging water resources professionals in tribal communities across Indian Country. For more information, visit the BIA website at [BIA Stewards Individual Placement Program](#) and [Branch of Water Resources](#).

## DIVISION OF WORKFORCE & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (DWYD)



### PATHWAYS PROGRAM

The Pathways Internship Program continues to strengthen its operations and participant experience through targeted improvements and new engagement initiatives. In addition to enhancing internal processes, the program has launched new efforts focused on increasing student engagement, strengthening connections, and supporting long-term success. These initiatives aim to improve the overall internship experience, increase retention and conversion, and build a more connected Pathways community.

As part of its operational improvements, the program has automated procedures to enhance data collection, administrative functions, and database management. The Pathways team collaborated with the Division of Resource Integration and Services to integrate these procedures into Smartsheet, improving efficiency and consistency across program operations.

These updates allow a comprehensive review of internal processes and standard operating procedures conducted by Pathways personnel.



**BUILD** work skills and experience

**EXPLORE** different Federal occupations

**LEARN** from a professional workforce

**RECEIVE** on-the-job training

Initial feedback has been positive, indicating the sessions are helping to build stronger connections and a greater sense of support among participants and staff. Feedback will continue to be collecting throughout the pilot period to inform future programming.

#### ***New Initiative!* Program Enhancement Sessions**

The Pathways Program Enhancement Sessions were introduced to foster meaningful student engagement while providing opportunities to explore career development topics and build practical skills. Key objectives include strengthening community and professional networks, enhancing the internship experience, and supporting participants' professional growth.

Pathways launched a Pathways pilot series consisting of three-monthly sessions were planned and facilitated by Pathways staff. Initial feedback was positive, indicating sessions help build stronger connections and a greater sense of support among participants and staff. Feedback will continue to be collected throughout the pilot period to inform future programming.

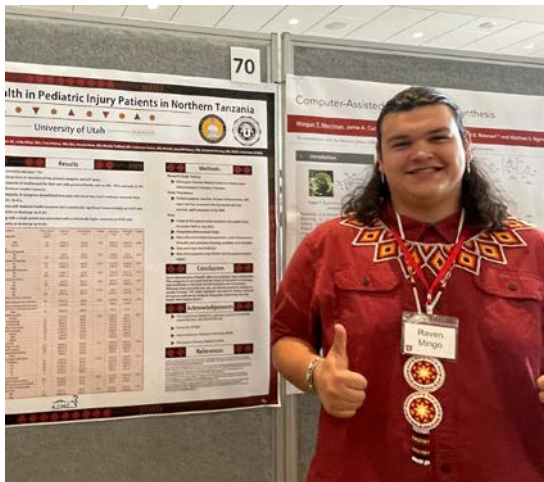
#### ***New!* Alumni Engagement**

The Pathways Program is also advancing a new alumni engagement initiative aimed at building a stronger, more connected network of former interns. This effort is intended to support current and future participants by expanding mentorship opportunities, strengthening recruitment and retention strategies, and highlighting alumni success stories.

To support this initiative, Pathways staff are updating and refining the alumni database and beginning outreach to former interns to gather insights and encourage participation. As part of this effort, the April 2026 Program Enhancement Session will feature two alumni speakers who will share their experiences with BIA' Pathways and their professional journey beyond the program.



Former Pathways Intern C. Cain



Former Pathways Intern Raven Mingo

## BRANCH OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The mission of the Division of Workforce and Youth Development is to enhance OTS's ability to carry out the federal Indian trust responsibility by designing and implementing holistic progress strategies that recruit, retain and develop OTS and Tribal workforces and fill competency and hiring gaps.

The Workforce Development branch is advancing several efforts to strengthen employee support and enhance training opportunities. Through recent engagement and planning activities, the program is identifying key priorities and developing initiatives to better serve staff across all OTS divisions.

As part of this effort, five Division Listening Sessions were conducted to gather input and assess workforce needs. The feedback highlighted strong interest in expanding internship opportunities, enhancing onboarding resources, and increasing access to both general and technical training opportunities.

### Emerging Initiatives: Training and Onboarding Support

In response to this feedback, training and onboarding support initiatives are currently in development. These will include an OTS Welcome Hub and a centralized Training Directory to improve access to learning resources. Longer-term efforts include supporting the curation of technical competency trainings. Together, these initiatives aim to promote knowledge sharing, enhance the employee experience, and support employee growth across the organization.

## BRANCH OF YOUTH SERVICES

The Indian Youth Service Corps (IYSC) program continues to make progress in strengthening program infrastructure and preparing for upcoming funding opportunities. Recent efforts have focused on improving grant oversight, advancing the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process, and exploring opportunities to enhance program governance and collaboration.

In alignment with IYSC program guidance, efforts are underway to establish an Advisory Council. The program is coordinating with relevant bureaus and offices to explore the development of a council that could serve multiple programs, fostering collaboration and shared guidance.