



TRUST LAND RESOURCES • RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP • RESULTS THAT MATTER

Message from the Deputy Director

Greetings all,

I am so proud of our GIS efforts to expand the sharing of data with Tribal and Federal partners including defining data sharing constraints respectful of Tribal interests. Our very own Chid Murphy, Division Chief for Resource Integration & Services was invited to serve as a panelist at the Smartsheet’s Forum “Smartsheet Innovations in Government” to share how is using the software to expand organizational access to data for decision making.

The Central Office hosted a national Realty Training aimed to improve the realty and trust services’ field staff’s knowledge, skills and understanding of statutes, regulations, policies, and processes to review and draft decision-making protocols on behalf of BIA DOI regarding Indian trust lands and minerals.

In this newsletter you will be introduced to new employees who have joined our ranks this quarter. Be on the watch for 11 new positions expected to be posted on USAJobs.gov soon. We are pleased to celebrate the employees among our ranks who have met significant length of service milestone in their federal service.

Johnna Blackhair, Deputy Bureau Director-Trust Services

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“A very great vision is needed, and the man who has it must follow it as the eagle seeks the deepest blue of the sky.” – Crazy Horse, Sioux Chief

OFFICE OF TRUST SERVICES STAFFING



Sisseton Wahpeton Wacipi 2024 photo by Dawn Selwyn, Trust Officer

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.

Pending Recruitment Actions

<u>Pay Rate</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Trust Services Division</u>
GS-0193-12	Archaeologist	Environmental/Cultural Resources Management
GS-0343-9/11/12	Program Analyst	Environmental/Cultural Resources Management
GS-0028-12	Environmental Protection Specialist	Environmental/Cultural Resources Management
GS-0401-11	Natural Resources Specialist	Environmental/Cultural Resources Management
GS-0343-12 (3 FTE)	Program Analyst (Marketing)	Workforce & Youth Development
GS-0343-7/9/11	Program Analyst	Workforce & Youth Development
GS-343-11/12	Program Analyst	Program Management & Coordination
GS-0343-9/11/12	Program Analyst	Directorate, Environmental & Natural Resources
GS-0343-12/13	Management Analyst	Directorate, Environmental & Natural Resources
GS-0343-13	Supervisory Program Analyst (NIIMS)	Water & Power
GS-0810-13	Civil Engineer (CSKT)	Water and Power

New Staff Members

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Trust Services Division</u>
Madison Brown	GIS Specialist	Resources Integration Services
Douglas Havlina	Ecologist (Fire Ecologist)	Wildland Fire Management
Troy Heinert	Supy Natural Resource Specialist	Natural Resources
Chester McGhee	Program Manager	Environmental/Cultural Resources Mgmt.
Iva Ollar	Realty Specialist	Real Estate Services
Danae Wilson	Program Manager	Indigenous Connectivity & Technology

Departed Staff Members

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Trust Services Division</u>	<u>Reason</u>
Mackenzie Neal	Program Manager	Pathways Internship Program	Resignation
Richard Zephier	Supy Management Analyst	Land Titles & Records Office	Deceased

NEWS YOU CAN USE

FY2024 Tribal Consultation & Listening Sessions

The BIA Office of Trust Services takes our commitment to strengthening Tribal sovereignty and self-governance seriously, and we know that robust consultations are the cornerstone of Federal Indian policy. During FY2024 Trust Services was responsible for/or expects to participate in the following consultation and listening sessions. [Click here for more information.](#)

- BIA Data Governance, BIA Open Data, and the BIA Tract Viewer, July 23-24, 2024
- National Tribal Critical Mineral Initiative, July 30, August 13, 20 and 21, 2024



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 Dawn.selwyn@bia.gov or BIATrustQuarterly@bia.gov.



Deadline for Newsletter Content

Please submit your content for the October newsletter issue by September 27, 2024. Current and past newsletters are available for viewing on the BIA Trust Services web page at <https://www.bia.gov/bia/ots>.

Prepare for FY 2024 Year End Reporting Deadline

Content for the OTS Annual Accomplishment Report is due September 15, 2024. This report will cover the activity period of October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2024.



See the FY 2023 Report posted on the OTS website as a reference for the FY 2024 report at <https://www.bia.gov/bia/ots>.

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 the Department of the Interior.



Secretary Deb Haaland visited Gun Lake Tribe, MI; Electric Vehicle charging station

\$120 Million to Help Tribes Build Climate Resilience

On July 9, 2024, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland announced the availability of \$120 million in new funding to help Tribal communities prepare for the most severe climate-related environmental threats to their homelands. The funding can be used by Tribes to plan for, adapt to, or respond to these threats by safely relocating critical community infrastructure.



Solar Array at the Gun Lake Tribe Reservation, Michigan.

The Gun Lake Tribe in Michigan received \$5 million through last year's Tribal Climate Annual Award for its Electric Infrastructure Implementation Project, to purchase electric vehicles and the necessary chargers to replace gas vehicles in the tribe's fleet, as well as the installation of a solar array to provide renewable energy to the Gun Lake Tribal Government, reducing their consumption of power generated by greenhouse gas emitting coal fired power plants.

Tribes and Tribal organizations will be able to apply for grants in the planning and implementation categories. These categories encompass a range of activities affecting every Tribe, such as a climate adaptation planning, drought measures, wildland fire mitigation, community-driven relocation, managed retreat, protect-in-place efforts, and ocean and coastal management.

How to Apply for TCR Grants

The BIA will provide technical assistance to support Tribes and Tribal organizations in applying for these funds, including an informational webinar, a grant writing webinar and virtual office hours to help answer questions. For more information, please visit [BIA's Tribal Climate Resilience Awards Program webpage](#) or email resilience.funding@bia.gov.

"This investment is a critical step toward further enabling Tribes to make thoughtful and proactive decisions about how to protect their people, their homelands and sacred sites, and critical community infrastructure, and if necessary to relocate to safer ground."

Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior



Jayvion Chee, Natural Resource Specialist/GIS Coordinator, BIA Western Region; Tribal GIS Member of the Year Trophy; Jayvion Chee at the Navajo Region Air Operation and Helitack unit, Window Rock, NM airport.

The 14th Annual National Tribal GIS Conference took place from April 29-May 2, 2024, in Albuquerque, NM. This year’s conference theme was, “GIS: The Data that Supports Tribal Sovereignty” and was organized by the National Tribal Geographic Information Support Center (NTGISC). They focused on how information and geospatial technology intersect with the challenges faced by tribes in terms of change and sustainability.

OTS Employee wins 2024 Tribal GIS Member of the Year Award

BIA Western Regional Natural Resources Specialist and GIS Coordinator, Jayvion Chee, won the 2024 Tribal GIS Member of the Year Award at the 14th Annual National Tribal GIS Conference held April 29 – May 2, 2024, in Albuquerque, NM. National Tribal GIS Center President, Garet Couch, said that NTGISC wanted to acknowledge Javion’s commitment to creating innovative GIS solutions and his willingness to teach BIA employees and Western Region Tribal members the benefits of using GIS. In Jayvion’s acceptance speech, he gave thanks to his mentors and supports of his work. Anyone who has met Jayvion knows of his passion for GIS.

Jayvion Chee Biography

Yá’át’éeé! My name is Jayvion Chee, I am a Natural Resources Specialist (GIS Coordinator) at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Western Regional Office under the Division of Forestry & Wildland Fire Management in Phoenix, AZ. One of my most recent accomplishments was receiving the 2024 Tribal GIS Member of the Year by the National Tribal Geographic Information Support Center (NTGISC). I was honored and surprised to receive this award as I always consider myself just a guy that makes GIS maps for those who need it, providing GIS tools like ArcGIS Field Maps and Survey 123 that allows users to collect, share and create data within their local areas. Overall, my goal is to always stress the importance of GIS literacy and tool accessibility.

One of my favorite hobbies is hiking, camping, horseback riding and being outdoors. But my interest in GIS began in 2010, during a summer break from high school. I participated in a tribal youth environment summer camp sponsored by the Eight Northern Indian Pueblos in Jemez Springs, NM. This youth camp had many environmental departments present which allowed students to learn different environmental issues and learn outdoor field methods used by the tribal staff. But one caught my attention, one of them involved using GIS and GPS methods. The excitement fueled my curiosity as collecting data through a Trimble device, then uploading it to a local laptop where I created my first GIS map. This created my excitement towards GIS and showed me a path to pursuing a GIS degree, then later a GIS career.



Pictured from L to R: Caleb Cain, BIA Division of Forestry, Jeff Rupert, DOI Office of Wildland Fire, Cody Desautel, Intertribal Timber Council, Shawn de France, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, and Aaron Baldwin, BIA OTS Division of Wildland Fire Management, photo BIA

Tribal Timber Symposium: Optimism and Opportunities

Indian Country forestry is improving, even with challenges ahead. The 47th Annual National Indian Timber Symposium was held in Cherokee, NC, May 13-16. The event was hosted by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and was organized by the Intertribal Timber Council (ITC)

Approximately 365 attendees came together for workshops covering topics such as carbon credits, new forestry mapping technology, and climate resilience techniques. Topics also included new economic opportunities, new potential partnerships and progress for tribal self-determination.

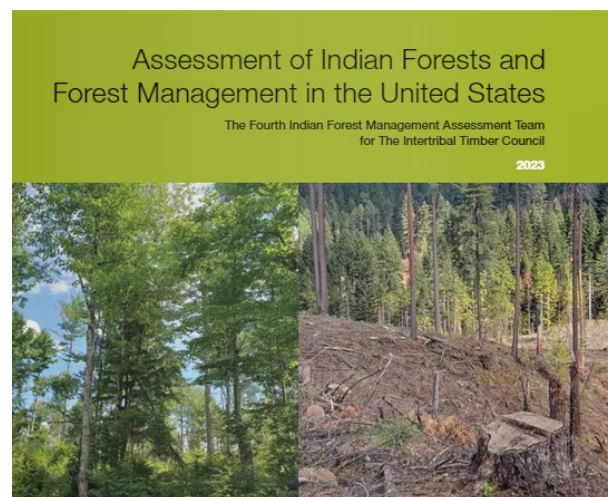
ITC Executive Director Cody Desautel pointed to carbon offsets as an emerging source of revenue for tribal forests. Carbon offsets serve as proof that carbon has been removed because of business activity. Well-maintained forests capture and reduce carbon in the atmosphere, and can create offset credits that, in turn, can be sold and create revenue for tribes. Traditional Indigenous Forest management is well-positioned to take advantage of that, Desautel said.

The BIA Divisions of Wildland Fire and Forestry shared advancements in co-management and wildfire prevention. Attendees were invited on a field tour of sites across Cherokee. The field tour included examples of safe cultural burning and habitat enhancement techniques.

Non-governmental organizations such as the Nature Conservancy and Conservation International were also on hand to discuss new partnerships and opportunities as well.

As tribes gain more authority over their lands through purchases, co-stewardship and management agreements, more partners are looking to engage with Indian Country, Desautel said. “There are new opportunities out there.”

Challenges remain and are outlined in the ITC’s latest report on Indian forests. That report, assembled by the Indian Forest Management Assessment Team (IFMAT-IV), served as a chief component of the symposium. The symposium allowed ITC to roll out the information collectively and discuss next steps.



Full access to the IFMAT-IV Report can be found at <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/719646412/>



Annual Native Youth Climate Adaptation Leadership Congress participants

BRANCH OF TRIBAL CLIMATE RESILIENCE

The mission of the Branch of Tribal Climate Resilience is to support climate preparedness and resilience for all Federally recognized Tribal Nations and Alaska native villages through technical and financial assistance, access to scientific resources and educational opportunities.

FY2024 Annual Awards Program Solicitation Announced

The BIA, Branch of Tribal Climate Resilience (TCR) announced the 2024 Annual Awards Program request for proposals (RFP) on July 17, 2024. The RFP is open to Federally recognized Tribes and Tribal organizations as defined in 25 U.S.C. § 5304(l).

This program will provide approximately \$120 million (M) in funding in FY2024 support for Tribal climate resiliency. Since 2020, TCR has funded 568 Tribal projects totaling \$194.3M – peaking in FY2023 at \$120.8M (150 awards). FY2024 marks the final year of increased available funding made possible through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act.

The solicitation, application portal link, and technical assistance opportunities are available on the TCR website via the Annual Awards Program page

<https://www.bia.gov/service/tcr-annual-awards-program>.

Visit the Tribal Climate Resilience Resource Directory for contacts in your region

<https://www.bia.gov/service/climate-resource-directory>.

2024 National Tribal & Indigenous Climate Conference

The Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals (ITEP) will convene the third Biennial National Tribal and Indigenous Climate Conference (NTICC) in Anchorage, AK, from September 9-12, 2024. The theme for this year is *Shared Responsibility for Indigenous Climate Resilience*.



This event is billed as an assembly of relatives, partners, and colleagues from across Mother Earth to share knowledge about their efforts to address the climate impacts on their communities, natural environment, and non-human relatives. This includes the sharing and honoring of Traditional and Indigenous Knowledges belong to the Indigenous communities and people from where and who they came from.



Indigenous climate resilience is ensuring the next seven generations will sing our songs, say our prayers, hold ceremonies, be in harmony with our non-human relatives, and live in beauty with our Mother Earth and Father Sky. As was done in previous years, *all* who are interested in participating or attending to listen, learn, and share the important work being done are welcome. Please visit the NTICC website for registration and more details

https://sites.google.com/view/nticc2024/home_1

First Community-Driven Relocation Cohort Convenes

The Community Driven Relocation (CDR) Cohort (Cohort) is comprised of eleven Tribes awarded funding through the Administration’s Voluntary CDR Program. On May 1st-2nd, 2024, the BIA’s Branch of Tribal Climate Resilience (TCR) proudly presented its first CDR Cohort to support demonstration project Tribes. This event took place in Anchorage, AK, and included demonstration project awardee coordinators, managers, and Tribal leadership, along with facilitator and host support of TCR.



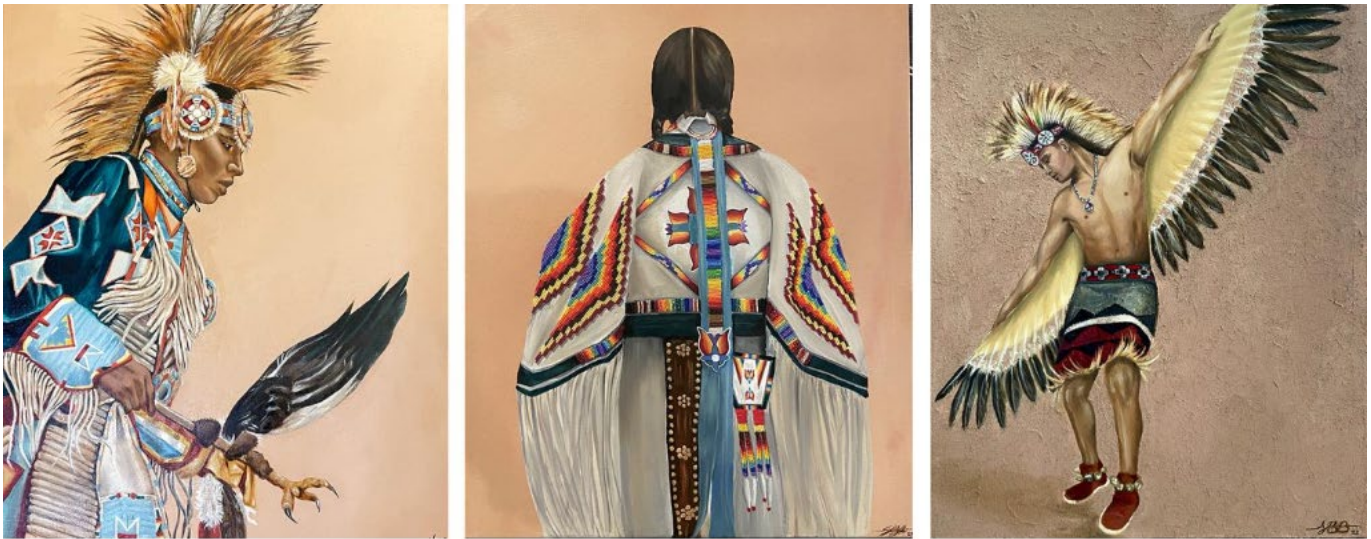
Participants attend the first Community-Drive Relocation Cohort

The goal of the meeting was to create a space where Tribes had an opportunity to lead conversations relating to climate resiliency, barriers and successes, funding opportunities and guidance, and other project status talking points. These efforts aim to bolster the success of all participating Tribes by enhancing their capacity to adapt to climate challenges and potential relocation needs, policy and regulation for reform, and collectively strengthening Tribal resilience efforts through shared knowledge and strategic partnering.

Visit the CDR website for more information at <https://www.bia.gov/service/community-driven-relocation#demonstration-projects>). An interactive map is available at <https://biamaps.geoplatform.gov/TCR-CDR/>.



Community-Driven Relocation Cohort meeting



Young Leaders Art Contest entry “Medicine in Movement” painting and beadwork series by Skylar Blackbull (Navajo Nation), age 22. From (L to R): “Grass Dancer”, “Shawl Dancer”, “Eagle Dancer”

MUSEUM PROGRAM

FY 2024 National Inventory of 3.2 million Objects

The BIA Museum Program continues to make significant strides in its national outreach efforts to all BIA Regions. We are proud to uphold our commitment to maintaining museum-standard practices and ensuring the good stewardship of our collections.

Our program manages approximately 3.2 million objects and is nearing completion of our National Inventory for FY2024. Thank you to the numerous staff who helped us along the way. We loved visiting with everyone. This is a tremendous feat, as BIA Staff Curators spent most of last year traversing Indian Country from Alaska to North Carolina. A complete inventory is a significant success post-pandemic, and we look forward to a smoother process as we continue the yearly inventories and condition reports.

Since the 1950s, the BIA Museum Collection has been utilized to curate offices for Indian Affairs leadership across the country. Our program manages 3.2 million objects.

Young Leaders Art Contest

In a unique collaboration with the Division of Environmental Services and Cultural Resource Management, the Museum Program hosted the groundbreaking Young Leaders Art Contest. This initiative, spearheaded by the dedicated BIA Museum Program, fostered an environment conducive to connecting with NDN Country and nurturing emerging artists. It was a joyous and prestigious opportunity to engage with the exceptional talent of young Native artists.



Young Leaders Art Contest entry “Tranquility” digital art by Chelysa Owens-Cyr (Fort Peck Assiniboine and Dakota Sioux), Age 24

Contestant art is displayed in the Main Interior Building in Washington, DC. Only a sample of the submissions are presented here. To view all final artists, visit our website at <https://www.bia.gov/service/art-contest/2024-gallery>.



Contestant art on display in the Main Interior Building



Young Leaders Art Contest entry “Twelve More Generations” by Stacey Williams (Ketchikan Indian Community, Tlingit, and Haida) Age 30.

Contest Winner: “Dek’ohananne” oil on canvas by Lakin Epaloose (Zuni Pueblo), Age 20

The entire body of Lakin Epaloose’s artwork encompasses the migration story of the Zuni people (*A:shiwí*) and the Puebloan communities of the southwest from a Zuni perspective. These locations extend from the Grand Canyon into what is today known as central New Mexico.

The elements of water (*k’yana*), such as in the form of cumulus clouds (*awethuya: we*) and flora, serve as critical points in this work. Many of the petroglyphs and pottery designs found throughout each respective area are also depicted in the work.



Renovation and Restoration of Collections Space

The Museum Program is happy to announce that we are moving forward with renovating and restoring our museum collections space in the Main Interior Building, Washington, DC. This renovation will responsibly house collections, incorporate museum standards, and maintain an environment best suited to protecting the objects.

Proper housing of collections demonstrates respect and accountability to the cultures that created them. Indeed, the BIA Museum Program aims to hold a high bar regarding collection management.



MIB Collections space has door replaced



Wi-Fi installation in museum collection space



Weaved baskets from Museum Collection

BIA Art in Office Program

The Museum Program is engaged with returning our Art in Office Program nationally to adorn the walls and offices of Indian Affairs staff returning to their offices. Newly purchased display cases have been installed at the Main Interior Building, in our BIA Directors' office, and the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Management (DASM).

Beyond its aesthetic appeal, the BIA Art in Office program is an educational initiative. It serves as a platform to showcase the BIA Museum collection and the vast cultural material heritage found throughout Indian Country. This program will beautify our offices and enrich our knowledge and understanding of our cultural heritage.

Future Curatorial Actions

We anticipate similar curatorial actions with offices in the Northwest, Albuquerque, and Reston US Geological Survey offices for Indian Affairs. More to come as we approach the end of the year!

The BIA Art in Office program reminds DOI and Indian Affairs staff of the government-to-government relationship and trust responsibilities we maintain throughout Indian Country.



Division of Forestry

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 consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s trust responsibilities. This article highlights recent DOF efforts that support our mission.

Ecosystem Restoration

Projects have been selected for the FY2024-FY2026 funding cycle. Five projects submitted by BIA Forestry will begin to receive funding in FY2024. Three projects are funded through Activity 7: Resilient Recreation Sites on Federal lands. Two tribal greenhouse expansion projects are funded through Activity 9: National Revegetation Effort. Tribes receiving funding for their Ecosystem Restoration Projects this fiscal year will be notified through their Regional Offices.

Trust Asset and Accounting Management System (TAAMS)

Formal TAAMS training has been completed for this Fiscal Year. Should you have employees in need of a formal TAAMS training session, please make your Regional Forester or TAAMS Forestry Point of Contact aware of your needs.

Informal TAAMS training or workshops are being planned for Western Region and Pacific Region with the goal of increasing use of TAAMS, which is our System of Record. Our goal is to account for all forest products harvested in TAAMS which is our policy and trust responsibility to beneficial owners and is the only way we can provide accurate reporting to beneficiaries.

Forest Health Protection

The United States Forest Service (USFS) collaborates with BIA Forestry to fund and treat forest health issues such as insects, diseases, and pathogens that threaten forest resources. In early October, tribes can request Forest Health Protection funding by submitting a project proposal through their Regional Forester.



Emerald ash borer impacts on a tree



Timber Team Supervisory Forester, Ryan Frandino marking a ponderosa pine as a leave tree on the Yakama Reservation.

Timber Team

The Timber Team has been very busy in 2024. The Team recently traveled to the Yakama Reservation in Washington for a three-week assignment. The Team worked with local forestry staff on timber sale prep to layout 570 acres that will be available for harvest. While the team was working at Yakama, one team member traveled to Puget Sound Agency in Washington and worked with the Agency Forester and two Regional Office Foresters to complete an allotment cruise that will be available for harvest this Fall.

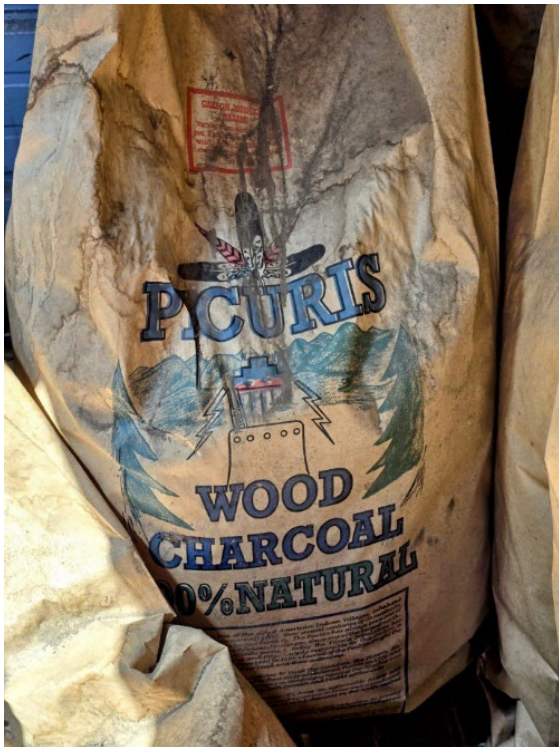
After attending the Intertribal Timber Council Symposium in North Carolina in May, the Timber Team worked another week at Eastern Band of Cherokee. Staff completed a site assessment and layout and developed a full silviculture prescription and timber cruising plan. They also identified new road construction, landing locations, harvest systems, and developed harvest unit maps for upcoming tribal harvest activities.

Here is a list of the Timber Team’s tentative schedule through the end of December 2024:

Dates	Tribes	BIA Region	Project
July 15-26, 2024	Warm Springs Reservation	Northwest	Timber Sale Preparation
August 11-23, 2024	Pueblo of Jemez	Southwest	Timber Sale Preparation
September 8-21, 2024	Pueblo of Acoma	Southwest	Woodlands Survey
September 29-October 11, 2024	Hualapai Reservation	Western	Continuous Forest Inventory
December 2-14, 2024	Various	E. Oklahoma	Timber Sale Preparation

Milling Operation at Picuris Pueblo

Central Office selected Picuris to be funded for portable milling infrastructure in 2018. The tribe is utilizing logs from state, federal and tribal projects that have wood suitable for milling, firewood, and charcoal production. These agreements have resulted in less fuel being burned in piles and provides products that can be given to tribal members or sold to the public. Some of the wood is delivered to the site to be milled and utilized for tribal construction. Other logs are cut and split with a firewood processor to be distributed to the tribal members. Lastly, some of the wood is processed to be sold as charcoal. The tribe has done a great job of utilizing wood that would have otherwise been burned in piles to create forest products that benefit the tribe. They have also provided training for community members, local schools and the Boys and Girls Club.



Picuris charcoal for sale



Rough sawn lumber for tribal construction

Summer Youth Camps

The Division of Forestry funded eight summer youth camps that are geared towards Forestry and Natural Resources. All the camps are scheduled for this summer and are hosted by tribes in eight regions. We are looking forward to hearing about the success of these camps and hope to offer similar funding opportunities in the future.



Due to the remote nature of the inventory location, foresters and their gear were transported via float plane to Second Lake, outside of Nanwalek.

Alaskan Forest Inventory with Chugachmiut

By Jesse Wooten

In late May, two Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) foresters from the Branch of Forest Inventory and Planning (FIP) traveled from their duty stations to Alaska to provide technical assistance for ongoing forest inventory efforts on Native allotments. The area designated for inventory on this trip is in the backcountry outside of the coastal village of Nanwalek on the Kenai Peninsula. Since there is no road system connecting Nanwalek with other larger Alaskan towns and villages, the crew met in Anchorage, drove to Homer, and from there traveled with all their gear via float plane, which landed directly on Second Lake. Dry cabins at the lake were used as a bear-proof sleeping quarters and a basecamp from which all inventory fieldwork trips departed.

The purpose of the trip was to assist Chugachmiut, a non-profit tribal consortium, with the installation and measurement of permanent Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) plots on Native allotments in the Kachemak subunit of the Chugach Region in Alaska. Land ownership functions differently in Alaska than other regions of the BIA.

With the notable exception of Metlakatla, there are no reservations in Alaska; instead, the only other trust lands in the state are allotments. Alaskan Native communities like Nanwalek and nearby Port Graham have a storied history and culture of gathering, hunting and otherwise utilizing the abundant wildlife and plant resources for building materials, sustenance, and traditional purposes.

According to the Subsistence Branch of the BIA, the average harvest of subsistence resources for a rural Alaskan person is 276 pounds per year. Subsistence practices aim to make the most of the abundant resources in the area while still focusing on sustainability, so that shared resources can continue to provide for generations yet to come. Forest inventory can help promote sustainable resource management by providing detailed data on forest health, composition, and volume, thereby informing potential forest management decisions.



Foresters navigated between Sitka Spruce inventory plot locations across variable terrain, including steep slopes. The field crew consisted of FIP foresters Casey Sigg and Jesse Wooten, Foresters and Clay Hoyt and Nathan Lojewski from Chugachmiut, along with Olivia Fulton, a college student interning this summer with Chugachmiut's Yukon Wildland Fire Team.

Over the course of four days, the foresters worked in two groups to successfully install 30 plots in remote Sitka spruce stands. Navigating to plots involved bushwacking for several miles each day in an area with a dense understory of thorny devil's club and alder thickets. For the most part, the only trails were those made by bears and moose.

Sitka spruce grows in coastal areas and is the state tree of Alaska and generally considered the most valuable timber tree in the state. In this area, it grows in pure stands with no other tree species present, apart from the occasional black cottonwood in riparian habitat, and thickets of small-stemmed alder.

Sitka spruce is susceptible to stand-replacing beetle outbreaks, and spruce beetle is a leading culprit for the landscape level disturbance that wiped out most of this forest around 150 years ago. While it's not 100% certain that beetles were to blame, nearly all the spruce growing in this area now established following a high mortality event in the late 1800s.

At each 1/20th acre plot, the plot measurements collected included slope, aspect, coordinates (location), while tree measurements included diameter at breast height (DBH), total height, crown ratio and classification, along with other measurements. The information gathered in the CFI will be used to inform forest management planning for the inventoried area.

The completion of the 30 plots on this trip brings the total completed plot count to 187, out of 210 total. In other words, the Chugachmiut CFI is now approximately 80% complete. An additional trip to inventory more of the remaining plots is planned for mid-June.

In addition to the CFI data collection, the foresters with Chugachmiut provided a demonstration of drone technology for Nanwalek youth, with more outreach events focused on using drones for natural resource applications and forest inventory planned.



FIP forester Casey Sigg and Chugachmiut forester Clay Hoyt measure trees on an inventory plot near the coast.

INDIAN ENERGY SERVICE CENTER



Oil rigs on Wind River Reservation and Solar Panels on Tribal Lands

New! Bureau of Trust Fund Administration on Detail to IESC



Melinda Huser, Beneficiary Contact Representative

Melinda Huser joins us with experience in local state government and prior service in the United States Army. She is a proud member of the Cherokee Nation, Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Melinda has four sons, two daughters-in-law, and two granddaughters. In her spare time, she enjoys going to church and playing hand bells, cooking, gardening, and spending time with her husband and family.

Ms. Sophia Rosette, Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA)-IESC Program Analyst is an enrolled member of the Chippewa Cree Tribe from the Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation in northcentral Montana. She has been working in the federal government for seven years and comes to the IESC from BTFA where she was a Trust Accounts Administrator in Albuquerque, NM.

She is a graduate of the University of Montana and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Management and Marketing. She also has an MBA from Gonzaga University. When she's not at work, you can usually find her spending time with her husband, Zane, and their four young children, Aidan, Claire, Beau and Evan. They are often cheering on the sidelines at their kids' sporting events or traveling back home to Rocky Boy to see family and friends.



Sophia Rosette, Program Analyst, BTFA

DIVISION OF REAL ESTATE SERVICES



2024 National Real Estate Training

The 2024 National Real Estate Training was held at the Albuquerque Convention Center, Albuquerque, NM, on June 11-13, 2024. The 2024 National Realty Training aimed to improve the realty and trust services' field staff's knowledge, skills and understanding of statutes, regulations, policies, and processes to review and draft decision-making protocols on behalf of BIA DOI regarding Indian trust lands and minerals.

Various Federal Partners, including the Appraisal and Valuation Services Office (AVSO), Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR), Solicitor's Office, etc., attended and presented at the national training. The Federal Partners and BIA Office of Trust Services' Divisions set up booths to promote coordination and collaboration with attendees.

The last National Training was held in 2017, and this will be the first National Training in seven years due to low staffing and COVID-related restrictions



Conference attendees



Rosina Carrion promotes the availability of Pathways student interns for BIA and tribal offices



Total attendance for the 2024 National Realty Training was approximately 400 federal and tribal contract/compact employees filling the venue to capacity



Gilbert Suazo, Sr. (Taos Pueblo) on the Blue Lake Acquisition

During the National Realty Training, BIA wanted to highlight the importance of the Restoration of Tribal Homelands and Fee-to-Trust. BIA invited Mr. Gilbert Suazo, Sr., a Taos Pueblo tribal member as a guest speaker to talk with us about the first “land back” petition to acquire acreage was the Taos Blue Lake property in NM in the 1970’s to Congress and President Nixon as it was a sixty-year effort, and 36 years from 1934.



Gilbert Suazo, Sr., Tribal Council Member (Taos Pueblo) addresses conference attendees

Mr. Suazo served as Governor of the Pueblo in 2007 and 2018 and is a lifetime Tribal Council member. In 1970, Gilbert, as a representative of the younger Taos Pueblo generation, gave testimony in the U.S. Senate Indian Affairs Committee Hearings for the return of Blue Lake to Taos Pueblo. In December 1970, the Blue Lake land that was taken by the federal government in 1906, was returned to Taos Pueblo under P.L. 91-550, the Blue Lake Act.

Gilbert, up to 2019, served as co-spokesman in the adjudication and settlement of the Pueblo’s Aboriginal Water Rights and testified in 2008 before the U.S. Senate Indian Affairs Committee about Taos Pueblo’s water rights settlement legislation, which was enacted in 2010.

Gilbert continues to be active in community and tribal activities and in the protection of Blue Lake and other tribal lands. Gilbert, as an elder, preserves the history of the tribe’s monumental 64-year effort for the return of Blue Lake to Taos Pueblo, and other tribal history.

Support from Top Leadership



Bryan Newland, Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs addresses conference attendees via a Teams Call

During the National Realty Training, Bryan Newland, Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs provided a thank you message to attendees for their dedication and commitment to fee-to-trust, mortgages, HEARTH and many other trust priorities and initiatives.



New Employees



Iva Ollar, Realty Specialist

Iva Ollar is a Realty Specialist with the Division of Real Estate Services. She is married with three children and graduated from Northeastern State University in 2013, with a B.S. degree in Business Administration.

Iva is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation. She started her career with the BIA in December of 2014 at Eastern Oklahoma Region. Iva started her career as an automation assistant and in 2017 became a Realty Specialist. Over the years, Iva has enjoyed her working relationship with the public, tribes, BIA, inter-agencies, and owes much of her experience to all entities mentioned.



Luree Livermont, Realty Specialist

Luree Livermont is an enrolled member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, born and raised on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation, in South Dakota. Ms. Livermont began her government career in 1990 and currently has 34 years of government service. Luree's career in trust services, began in the Great Plains Region, Land Titles and Records Office. In 1997, Luree left the BIA and worked for Indian Health Service as a Realty Specialist for five years, returning to BIA, LTRO in 2002. In 2008, Ms. Livermont accepted a position in the Division of Real Estate Services, Great Plains Region. In August 2023, Ms. Livermont left the Great Plains Region for a remote position with the Division of Trust Land Consolidation as a Tribal Relations Advisor. In July 2024, Ms. Livermont started in the Division of Real Estate Services, Central Office, as a Realty Specialist.



Tonya Almaraz, Realty Specialist

Tonya Almaraz (Navajo), Realty Specialist, not pictured re-joined the Division of Real Estate Services (DRES). Previously, she was a Tribal Relation Advisor for the Division of Trust Land Consolidation. She is married with four children, and a grandma to two grandchildren, and lives in Potomac Falls, VA. Ms. Almaraz graduated from Arizona State University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Justice Studies and a minor in Political Science. She also holds a Master of Legal Studies in Indigenous Peoples Law from the University of Oklahoma, College of Law. Her federal career began in 2008, at Western Region, as an Office Automation Clerk in the Regional Director's office. She worked in the Branch of Probate and Estate Services before working for Central Office-DRES and Land Titles & Records Office. In 2019, she transferred to the Indian Health Service's Realty program in Rockville, MD, and returned to Interior in May 2023. Throughout her federal career, Ms. Almaraz has had the pleasure of working with Tribes, BIA regions/agencies, IHS area/service units, and developing federal partnerships. She enjoys reading, travel, and engaging in community activities within the DMV.



Chid Murphy participated on Smartsheet.gov Forum in Arlington, VA.

BIA featured as Smartsheet.gov Innovator

Chid Murphy, Division Chief of Resource Integration and Services (DRIS) spoke for a panel presentation entitled ‘Driving change: Real-World Success Stories from Smartsheet Gov Innovators’ at the Smartsheet.gov Forum in Arlington, VA on May 20, 2024. Although BIA is a relatively new government user, our experiences and wide swatch of application coverage have made for interesting discussions and insightful hints and tips.

BRANCH OF GEODATA EXAMINATION AND VALIDATION (GDEV)

Fee to Trust Team attends ESRI User Conference

FTT attended ESRI User Conference July 15-19, 2024, in San Diego, CA to participate in the parcel record management and parcel fabric sessions, as well as taking part in the first ever full day of Native Nations Summit.

Coming Soon: Rewrite of Land Description and Validation Handbook

The team was able to provide input and expertise in the re-write of the Land Description Examination and Validation portion of the handbook update which should be finalized soon.

Fee to Trust Team Updates at National Realty Training

The Fee to Trust team has been busy as Tribes rush to submit cases before November. We expect the influx of cases to continue through the summer.

We presented the LDEV coversheet and basic process at the National Realty Training held in Albuquerque June. Our team received awards for our efforts in the national push to rebuild tribal homelands.

The Team began coordinating hands-on training for BIA agency and Tribal staff based upon numerous requests from training attendees. Future plans include attending a few regional conferences to provide updates directly to Tribes and to continue to strengthen the relationships our team has developed over the last couple years.



Picture of FTT team and Regional and Agency BIA staff at the ESRI UC Party at Balboa event.

New Employee Madison Brown



GDEV welcomes Madison Brown, GIS Specialist to the team! Madison began her federal career this year with the GDEV team. Prior to the BIA, she worked for the Muscogee (Creek) Nation Geospatial Department and the Chickasaw Nation's Department of Culture and Humanities. Madison obtained her bachelor's degree in physics and math from Baker University in Baldwin City, Kansas, and her master's in English from the University of Maine.

Madison was born and raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She is a proud member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. She lives in Oklahoma with her partner, Matt, and their dog, Luna. In her free time, Madison enjoys reading, live music, gardening, birdwatching, and baking sweet treats.



Madison Brown after a day of hiking at Winding Stair National Recreation Area in Muse, OK

BRANCH OF RESOURCE SOLUTIONS (BRS)

Rights of Way Parceling

The Branch of Resource Solutions is on track to receive an Authority to Operate (ATO) designation for the BIA Solution Trust Accountability Tracker (STAT) solution.

STAT is a cloud-based Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) package that works with the BIA's data spanning legacy systems through desktop spreadsheets. They allow BIA to better utilize trust land data, enable improved accountability and project management monitoring/tracking, and accelerate collaboration between business units.



Right of Way graphic for a pipeline. The depth of cover and right-of-way width may vary.

HEARTH Accountability Tracker (HAATS)

The Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Home (HEARTH) Ownership Act of 2012 now has a HEARTH Act Accountability Tracker (HAATS) that was built in the Statistical Training needs Assessment Tool (STAT).

HAATS was debuted at the National Realty Training session in Albuquerque, NM held on June 11-13, 2024. It is one of the eight tools that are being approved for promotion into production with the Authorization to Operate (ATO).



Team pictured (L to R): Jason Lamm, SANS Instructor; Elizabeth ‘Betty’ Pierce, BIA Acting Branch Chief of Resource Solutions; Khoa Pham, Cyber Security Architect; Dr. Rudra Murphy, Enterprise Cyber Security Strategist and Architect; Joseph Tegg, Director, Technical Security Governance and Compliance

SANS Security Cloud Leaders Class awards BIA Team Challenge Coins

Elizabeth ‘Betty’ Pierce, Acting Branch Chief of Resource Solutions was on a team that won the coveted ‘Challenge Coin’ during the SANS Security Cloud Security for Leaders training class in Orlando, FL on March 28, 2024. Many BIA OTS systems are targeting cloud platforms, and the BIA BRS team is updating our skills to meet the requirements.

Rights of Way and NEPA Permitting IT System Study

BRS has continued to build the framework to conduct the ROW and NEPA Permitting IT System Feasibility Study. The scope and project charter are being authored, and resource commitments are being obtained. The milestone schedule and initial performance measurements for the Feasibility Study are being investigated. Preliminary system and application requirements have started to be documented and analyzed, as well as the current state. Matrixes for risks/success criteria are being built. Example systems are starting to be explored and scenarios as to how each might most closely align to BIA’s myriads of needs and analysis of alternatives are played out and analyzed.

Shanna O’Reilly - Behind the Scenes Success

Shanna O’Reilly, BRS Program Analyst, achieved the Smartsheet.gov Core App Solutions Certification after passing an exam on July 18, 2024. She has learned the technology very quickly and put it to good use with her skills in building sheets, dashboards, reports, forms, and automations for various BIA STAT tools. She developed the OTS Request Tracker which has been used by OTS Staff to process over 1500 requests since beginning of FY 2024. The Tracker allows transparency on the status of requests, administrative staff progress on requests, and a management tool for managers on workload assessments.



Shanna O’Reilly, Program Analyst



Mission

The mission of the Division of Water and Power is to promote self-determination, economic opportunities, and public safety through the sound management of irrigation, dam and power facilities owned by Bureau of Indian Affairs and includes water development projects.

Preserving Heritage and Managing Water Resources with the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe

The State of Oklahoma is home to thirty-eight (38) Tribes served by two separate and distinct BIA Regional Offices: Eastern Oklahoma Region Office (EORO) and Southern Plains Region Office (SPRO). While EORO serves only Oklahoma tribes, SPRO serves tribes located in Oklahoma as well as tribes in Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, and Texas.

The BIA SPRO for Trust Services is headquartered in Anadarko, Oklahoma and provides support and technical services to 24 Tribes in 5 states through the Region, 4 Agencies and one Field Office. The total tribal enrollment is estimated at 116,907 members that are located on an estimated area of 170,015 acres.

The Water Resources Program in the Southern Plains Region is located within the Division of Environmental and Cultural Resource Management (DECRM) and is authorized to administer the Water Management, Planning, and Pre-development and the Water Rights Negotiation and Litigation Programs. The Water Resources Program is small in scope and is authorized to support one (1) full time employee (FTE) to oversee the administration of the Water Resources Program.

On March 13, 2024, Central Office Branch of Water Resources Staff participated in a teleconference presentation with staff from the Alabama Coushatta Tribe along with representatives from the US Department of Agriculture – Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). During this presentation, discussion topics focused on a Water Management funded project based on the tribe’s cultural practice of rainwater harvesting.



Pictured (R to L): Kelli Scroggins, Diabetes Education Coordinator Alabama-Coushatta; Jacob Schaffer, Texas NRCS (detail) with the Southern Plains Climate Hub; Sheena Schemm, BIA Tribal Climate Resilience; Ryan Morrison, BIA Forester, provide rain barrels to participants after the first Rainwater Harvesting/Pollinator Workshop for Tribal members of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas in Livingston, TX.

Migration from Alabama

The Alabama Coushatta Tribe has the oldest reservation in the state encompassing approximately 10,200 acres located in Polk County, Texas. They are one of eight federally recognized tribes whose 1,300 members are descended from the Muscogee Confederacy of the Southeast. Under pressure from European American settlement, the ancestors of this tribe were Alabama and Coushatta peoples who migrated from Alabama and the Southeast into Louisiana and finally East Texas when it was under Spanish rule in the late 18th century headquartered in Livingston, Texas. This area is known as Big Thicket where they adapted their culture to the environment of forests and waters.

Rainwater Harvesting

In the Southern Plains, increased variability in rainfall patterns and more frequent extreme heat events are posing new challenges for farmers and ranchers. Renewed interest in the ancient Alabama-Coushatta technique of rainwater harvesting prompted the Southern Plains Climate Hub (SPCH) to partner with BIA's SPRO Water Resources Program, BIA's SPRO Tribal Climate Resilience Program and the Texas USDA/NRCS to provide demonstrations and information on rainwater harvesting systems.

Workshop and Consultation

Members of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma, Caddo Nation, Wichita Affiliated Tribes, Otoe-Missouria Tribe, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, and Quapaw Nation, as well as the Kaw Nation, Chickasaw Nation, Muskogee Creek Nation, Kiowa Nation, Comanche Nation, and Santa Ana Pueblo in New Mexico participated in workshops and one-on-one consultations.

Design of Water Harvesting System

The Climate Hub and SPCH NRCS assisted with the design of the water harvesting systems that were tailored to the needs of Tribal partners who anticipated using rainwater harvest and storage to boost water reserves for wildfire control, livestock watering needs, and small-scale horticulture, among other uses. Approximately 150 members of historically underserved rural communities received information or direct support through this program.

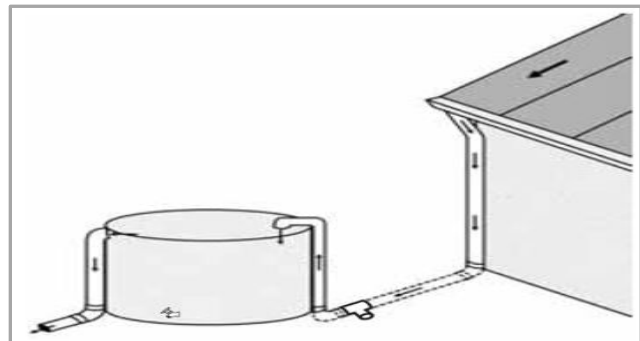


Figure 1. A typical rainwater harvesting system uses a roof, gutters, downspout and pipes underground, and backup into the top of the collection tank. This prevents livestock from damaging the pipes and allows the tank to be much further away from the shed. Unless there is a drain along the lower pipe, the standing pipes will contain water that is susceptible to freezing.



65,000-gallon storage tank



Installation of wet system that conveys harvested rainwater to the storage tank

Through a collaboratively funded Water Management project, a water harvesting system was installed by the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas which allowed them to harvest and store 65,000 gallons of rainwater.

The captured water is used for wildfire mitigation, irrigation of a community garden, and dust abatement in an arena adjacent to the Tribe's Veterans Pavilion. This building, used for community events, serves as the rainwater collection structure.

The cost of materials for this project were funded through a grant awarded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs Southern Plains Region (BIA) Water Resources Office and the labor was furnished by Alabama-Coushatta Wildland Fire Fighting Crew Tribal members.

Currently, the water storage facility has collected 50% capacity (32,500 gallons) from recent rainfall events. Education and demonstration of assembly and installation of smaller-scale systems for household rainfall harvest were provided as part of this program. Tribal members attending the outreach event received a free rainwater barrel furnished by the BIA.

For more information about the BIA's Water Management Planning and Pre-Development Program and its impact, please visit (<https://www.bia.gov/service/water-management-planning-and-pre-development-program>).



(R to L) Gesse Bullock-Tribal Fire Management Specialist; Elliott Abbey-Deputy Tribal Administrator for Community Development; Selena Battise-Tribal Administrative Assistant who oversaw the installation of the 65,000-gallon storage tank seen in the foreground. Rainwater is harvested from the adjacent Veteran's Pavilion in the background.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Projects

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) makes more than \$13 billion of investments in Tribal communities through different federal agencies and programs, including approximately \$40 million in new funding for irrigation, power, and dam projects for FY2022 through FY2026.

UPDATE: Oglala Dam Rehabilitation Construction, Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota

2019 flooding damaged the Oglala Dam. Today, construction is in progress with approximately 13% placement as of July 2024. Demolition of the failed spillway is complete, and the foundation excavation for the Roller Compacted Concrete (RCC) spillway is in progress. Placement of the RCC is scheduled to begin in August.



Dam Safety staff sandbagging the Oglala Dam spillway during 2019 flooding

“This project will reduce flooding risk to communities, while enabling the Oglala Sioux Tribe to continue to manage precious natural resources,” said Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Bryan Newland. “The Oglala Dam provides drinking water, irrigation water, and recreation opportunities, supporting the local economy. This investment from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is an example of how we’re working to uphold our trust and treaty responsibilities and revitalize Tribal communities.”



Oglala Dam intake and upstream spillway excavation



Oglala Dam stilling basin looking upstream to the spillway evacuation



Oglala Dam from the top of the dam looking into the spillway excavation

DIVISION OF WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT



Secretary Haaland speaks to Yakama Nation fire, fuels and forestry staff regarding the importance of wildland fire management and her commitment to environmental restoration.

Department of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland Visits with Fire Staff on the Yakama Indian Reservation

July 25, 2024, U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Deb Haaland visited the Yakama Nation Fire Management Office on the Yakama Indian Reservation in Toppenish, WA. Secretary Haaland met with wildland firefighters and staff regarding wildland fire management in the BIA Forestry & Wildland Fire Management - Northwest Region area, which has been experiencing a high number of wildfires.



Secretary. Haaland spoke with Yakama Nation fire, fuels and forestry staff regarding the importance of wildland fire management and her commitment to environmental restoration

Firefighters had the opportunity to share their experiences as wildland firefighters and present Secretary Haaland with local handmade beadwork, jarred salmon and a Yakama Nation Fire Management shirt.



Pictured (L to R) BIA Northwest Region Assistant Fire Management Officer Darron Williams, DOI Secretary Deb Haaland and BIA Wildland Urban Interface Prevention Specialist Jeffrey Moyer.



Yakama Nation fire staff take a photo with DOI Secretary Deb Haaland on July 24, 2024.



Follow BIA Fire Forestry on Facebook and Twitter!

BIA Division of Wildland Fire Management provides updates on what’s going on in Indian Country relating to wildland fire management and the Division of Forestry’s Timber Team. Follow the Divisions on [Facebook](#) or [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#) with the handle @BIAFireForestry.



Firefighter beginning work on a prescribed burn

National Interagency Fire Center News Posts Regular Updates on Fires Across the Country

NIFC provides Facebook updates on Wildland Fires across the country. #NationalFireNews alert from July 19, 2024, reported 61 large active wildfires are currently being managed nationwide, and have burned 1,047,674 acres. Fire managers are using full suppression strategies on 54 of these wildfires. Photos of the incidents are available.



Outdoor fire briefing

National Wildland Firefighter Day

July 2, the Division celebrated National Wildland Firefighter Day, recognizing all the men and women who continue to put in the hard work to protect lives, natural resources and values from wildfire.



The Seattle Mariners showed their support by hosting a Wildland Firefighter Appreciation Day on June 30. \$5 of every ticket sold for the game benefitted the Wildland Firefighter Foundation and its mission to help families of firefighters killed in the line of duty and to assist injured firefighters and their families.



Interagency public affairs staff at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) organized the first annual Fireline 5K in Boise, ID, that had over 500 participants in-person, on June 2, and virtually through July 2.

Eastern Oklahoma Region wins the 2024 Pulaski Award

Congratulations to the BIA Forestry & Wildland Fire Management, Eastern Oklahoma Region. The Pulaski Award is a national award from the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior, given annually by the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) and recognizes outstanding contributions to wildland fire fighting and America's wildland firefighters.



The award is presented on the recommendation of the fire directors at NIFC. The Pulaski is a half-axe/half-hoe tool uniquely designed for wildland firefighting.

The Pulaski award was named after a forest ranger who led a crew through thick smoke, heat, and flames to the safety of a railroad tunnel during the Montana/Idaho inferno of 1910.



Forest fire

We commend them for the proactive measures that have been integrated into fire management practices and resource conservation priorities. We recognize the team's contributions in creating a stable environment of fire engagement as well as the needs of the community and landscape health. The BIA Eastern Oklahoma Region is a model of integrated efforts within the U.S. Department of the Interior. Your innovative efforts serve as a tremendous model for the entire fire community.

The Pulaski Award is an annual, national award for outstanding contributions to wildland firefighting from America's wildland firefighters. The award is presented on the recommendation of fire directors located at the National Interagency Fire Center.

Photos of the Pulaski Team Award Winners



Eastern Oklahoma Wildland Fire Management Fuels staff and Fire Leadership with Chickasaw Nation representatives, Oka' Institute Staff (Oka' means water), and the Eastern Oklahoma Regional Director and Chickasaw Agency Superintendent.



Eastern Oklahoma Region Fuels Crews and Fire Leadership. Photos by Morgan Thompson-Barney, Fire Program Liaison, BIA Division of Wildland Fire Management.

BIA Acquires Uncrewed Aircraft Systems and Hosts Training for Federal and Tribal Staff



A trainee conducts a UAS pre-flight checklist, and systems checks per agency standard operation procedure. Photo taken by BIA Aviation Manager Dave Underwood, November 14, 2023.

In October 2023, the BIA Division of Wildland Fire Management (BIA DWFM) finalized the acquisition of several DOI approved uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS): (6) Parrot Anafi USA Edition, (8) Skydio X10, and (4) Alta X with the amplified enhanced package for aerial ignition. Delivery of the Anafi aircraft to BIA took place in mid-December after the Office of Aviation Services entered them in the national fleet system. The Skydios and Alta X UAS soon followed. The aircraft were immediately entered into service in various regions for training, projects, and pilot currency.



UAS piloting students take part in a four-person training module near Placitas, NM on the Sandia Ranger District of the Cibola Forest. Three trainees and one instructor conduct flight maneuvers required for completion of the remote pilot approval. Photo taken by BIA Aviation Manager Dave Underwood, November 14, 2023.

BIA Employees Graduate Specialist Training

In November 2023, 12 interagency and Tribal students graduate from the BIA-hosted A450 DOI Remote Pilot training course held at the Southwest Indian Polytechnical School in Albuquerque, NM. Two additional BIA students attended another A450 Remote Pilot and a S373 Uncrewed Remote Pilot Incident Operations course in Mesa, AZ, in early December. According to the interagency agreement on UAS training, for everyone to two agency sponsored students, one to two agency provided instructors or coaches are required to guide the students. This requirement is to ensure trainers and coaches are developed along with UAS pilots. The division's UAS acquisitions and pilot training courses were provided through \$1.3 million in FY2023 preparedness funding.

The A450 Remote Pilot course is the fundamental small UAS course for individuals wanting to become qualified to operate small UAS for the DOI and USDA Forest Service. The A450 course utilizes small UAS aircraft (less than 55 lbs.) to provide the basic academic and flight training necessary to conduct mission as a remote-pilot-in-command.

The S373 Incident Operations course is designed to meet the training needs of the uncrewed aerial systems pilot/manager and leader, and the uncrewed aerial systems data specialist to manage the aerial information needs of incidents managed within the wildland fire incident command system. The course combines lectures, facilitated discussions, and individual and a group exercise and simulations. These UAS positions are used to collect, process, and distribute tactical and strategic information to meet the needs of wildland fire incident operations and planning personnel.

FY 2024 Courses Held

Since the program started, there have been several courses held including: A450 (Basic Remote Pilot) course and a combined A450 (Basic Remote Pilot) and S373 (UAS Incident Operations) training session for a total of 17 student participants. In preparation for an increase in interest and need, the BIA has committed multiple seats to future interagency courses into FY 2024.

RECOGNITION OF LENGTH OF SERVICE



Celebrated Employees

Trust Team Members, congratulations on achieving your 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35 and 40-year anniversary with us! We know you have worked diligently throughout your career, and we truly appreciate your dedication. You are an important member of our team, and your abilities and on-going contributions are vital to the success of our mission and a benefit to the Indian tribes, Indian people and the Alaska Natives we serve. Thank you for all that you do and please accept our good wishes on your accomplishment.

5 Years

Benjamin Bagdon, *Forester*
Forestry Resources & Plans
Lakewood, CO

Tyler Baha, *Student Trainee*
Pathways Program
Washington, DC

Kylie R. Dust, *Realty Clerk*
Trust Land Consolidation
Billings, MT

Tyereecia R. Henio, *Civil Engineer*
Pathways Program
Gallup, NM

Vinnett Jefferson-Flores, *Administrative Assistant*
Trust Land Consolidation
Billings, MT

Brandon M. Larrabee, *GIS Specialist*
Resource Integration & Services
Albany, NY

Jordan P. Matula, *Natural Resource Specialist*
Natural Resources
Great Falls, MT

Casey Reid Sigg, *Forester*
Forestry Resources & Plans
Lakewood, CO

Justine A. Vaivai, *Environmental Protection Specialist*
Environmental Services & Cultural Resources
Remote worker in Albuquerque, NM

Tiara T. Walks, *Student Trainee Pathways*
Pathways Program
Missoula, MT

10 Years

Keenalie F. Figueroa, *Administrative Officer*
Trust Land Consolidation
Billings, MT

Jennifer Hebbeler, *Program Analyst*
Wildland Fire Management
Boise, ID

April C. Johnston, *Helpdesk Administrator*
Resource Integration & Services
Lakewood, CO

Harold S. Peterson, *Hydropower Compliance Program Manager*
Water and Power
Nashville, TN

15 Years

Payton C. Batliner, *Acting Director*
Indian Energy Service Center
Lakewood, CO

Christopher J. Benson, *Geologist*
Energy & Minerals Development
Lakewood, CO

Clement L. Cummins, *Management/Program Analyst*
Real Estate Services
Lodge Grass, MT

Matthew B. Laramie, *Regional Resilience Coordinator*
Tribal Climate Resilience
Oklahoma City, OK



Bradley J. Russell, *Program Coordinator*
Pathways Program
Oklahoma City, OK

Sheena J. Schemm, *Regional Resilience Coordinator*
Environmental Services & Cultural Resources
Milsap, TX

20 Years

Robert C. Dodgen, *Aviation Operations Specialist*
Wildland Fire Management
Boise, ID

Heather J. Eckmann, *Supervisory Realty Specialist*
Trust Land Consolidation
Aberdeen, SD

Eric G. Ellison, *Training Specialist*
Wildland Fire Management
Boulder City, ID

Evaline P. Old Elk, *Realty Clerk*
Trust Land Consolidation
Billings, MT

James M. Jackson, *Director, Fuels Management*
Wildland Fire Management
Boise, ID

Ryan S. Montanez, *Geographer (GIS)*
Energy & Mineral Development
Lakewood, CO

Staci L. Shelton, *Management Analyst*
Trust Land Consolidation
Billings, MT

Susan J. Smart, *Administrative Assistant*
Wildland Fire Management
Eagle Butte, SD

Basil (Baz) Tanner, *Forestry Technician*
Model 52 Wildland Engine Program
Missoula, MT

25 Years

Pauline R. Decrane, *Realty Clerk*
Trust Land Consolidation
Billings, MT

Zoila O. Forrest-Davis, *Assistant Branch Chief*
Wildland Fire Management
Boise, ID

Duane O. Matt, *Solid Minerals Manager*
Energy & Minerals Development
Lakewood, CO

Shirley A. Pease, *Realty Specialist*
Trust Land Consolidation
Billings, MT

Joshua L. Simmons, *Director Fire Operations*
Wildland Fire Management
Boise, ID

Travis P. Teegarden, *Agricultural Engineer*
Water and Power
Billings, MT

30 Years

Reeve P. Armstrong, *Fire Management Specialist*
Wildland Fire Management
Lakewood, CO

Karen Herrera, *Program Specialist*
Pathways Program
Albuquerque, NM

35 Years

John W. Baskette, Jr., *Deputy Timber Sales Forester*
Forestry
Sacramento, CA

40 Years

Ewing D. Underwood, *Regional Aviation Manager*
Wildland Fire Management
Boise, ID

Recognition of Length of Service

5 Years of Federal Service



Ben Bagdon, *Forest Inventory Planning & Management Forester*
Division of Forestry, Branch of Forest Inventory & Planning
Working remotely from Lyons, Colorado

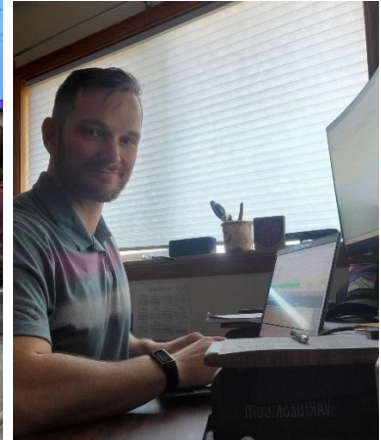
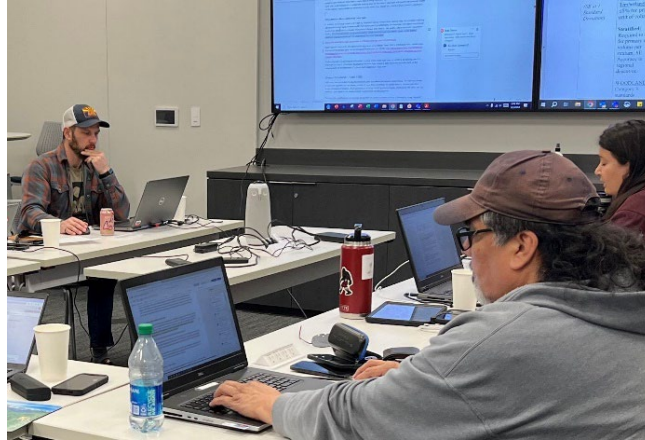


Photo on recent trip to the Pacific Region to attend the 2024 Annual Natural Resource Meeting; 53 IAM chapter 8 policy group hard at work in San Diego; and Ben working remote work from Lyons, Colorado.

Before joining the Branch of Forest Resources and Planning in 2019, I was a Research Scientist at Colorado State University where I applied forest simulation and optimization models to evaluate ecological and economic trade-offs. I received my Ph.D. at Northern Arizona University in 2015 and my master's degree from the University of Minnesota in 2011. I also have experience working for private industry and have published research in multiple scientific journals.

My work supports regional and tribal foresters with planning, implementing, and analyzing their forest inventories. These inventories are an essential part of ensuring the continued sustainable management of tribal forests.

I have a passion for forest management planning and inventory analysis, and the BIA has provided an amazing opportunity for me to apply my interests to benefit tribal forests. Each project is unique and challenging, and I find fulfillment in the variety and the diversity of projects I get to work on. Every day I get to apply my analytical training to complex, yet practical, problems that require a surprising amount of detective work- all for the betterment of tribal forests. I often tell my friends and family that I could not have dreamt up a more perfect job for my interests and skill set. My coworkers, and everyone I work with, keep me engaged and learning, and I am proud to contribute to our mission.

The Branch of Forest Inventory and Planning is an amazing place to work. We have a great team of excellent foresters who provide the highest quality service to tribes all over the country. This career field is both rewarding and challenging. The foresters I admire and try to emulate all have a deep passion for tribal forestry and a curiosity that drives them to work hard at finding lasting, impactful solutions. In my free time I enjoy travel, hiking, skiing, camping, and seeing live music.

Recognition of Length of Service

5 Years of Federal Service



Jordan P. Matula, *Natural Resource Specialist*
Division of Natural Resources
Working remotely from Great Falls, Montana



Jordan attended the Chugach State Park tour at the 40th Annual Native American Fish & Wildlife Society Conference in Anchorage, AK; hiking with her dogs in Montana; Assisted as guest presenter and chaperone at the Native American Fish & Wildlife Society's 2023 Summer Youth Practicum in Colorado.

My employment with the BIA began with a Pathways Program Internship while I attended the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Upon graduation, I was hired full-time and continue to work remotely from Great Falls, MT for the BIA's Branch of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Recreation's (BFWR) Central Office as a Natural Resource Specialist. As a member of the Central Office team, I manage a Tribal reporting portal database for our core programs, edit and update the Department of Natural Resource's webpages, travel as a BFWR representative, assist with annual proposal rankings, and coordinate with BIA Regional offices throughout Indian Country.

I am an enrolled citizen of the Oglala Lakota Sioux Tribe and am proud to have followed in my grandfather's footsteps as an employee of the BIA. My grandfather instilled in me the importance of serving Indian Country in spaces where Natives Americans have historically been excluded and to be the change we wish to see in the world.

Working for the BFWR as an intern and Natural Resource Specialist has blessed me with the ability to combine my love for my Native culture and passion to protect our natural and Tribal resources. I have always taken pride in being a voice for our animal and plant relatives. Whether I'm working from my home office, gardening, or out hiking, my two dogs and cat can be found at my side. I also enjoy cooking, beading, and crafting in my free time.

Recognition of Length of Service

5 Years of Federal Service



Justine A. Vaivai, *Environmental Protection Specialist/NEPA Coordinator*
Division of Environmental Services & Cultural Resources Management
Remote worker in Albuquerque, NM



Justine Vaivai on a trip to Washington, DC in September 2023

I graduated from Northern Arizona University in 2012 in Environmental Engineering. In 2014, I started my career as an Environmental Scientist with a private consulting firm in Albuquerque, NM. In 2016, I landed a position with the BIA Navajo Regional Office in Gallup, NM as an Environmental Protection Specialist (EPS). I worked mostly on processing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requests and projects. In 2019, I transferred from the Navajo Regional Office to the Pacific Regional Office in Sacramento, CA as an EPS. In 2020, I took a job with the Public Service Company of New Mexico Albuquerque, NM as an Air Quality Specialist. In 2024, I joined DESCRCM as an Environmental Protection Specialist/NEPA Coordinator.

I am an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation, and I am Todich'ii'nii (Bitter Water Clan), born for Ts'ah Yisk'idnii (Sage Brush Hill), my maternal grandfather is Tsi'naajinii (Black Streaked Wood People), and my paternal grandfather is Kinyaa'aanii (Towering House People).

In my current role, I work on NEPA policies/guidance that help the BIA Regional Offices with their environmental review work. This helps with implementing water, electric and broadband projects on tribal trust lands. This benefits our customers in so many ways.

I always wanted to use my degree and experience to help native communities. I am also vested in protecting the environment. My job gives me a great opportunity to help Native communities while protecting the environment, so I feel very proud of the work I do every day.

The advice I can offer people interested in this career field is to pursue a degree in an environmental field and try to get an internship within the environmental field during school. It can be tough to find a job in this field, but persistence is key.

I enjoy watching Korean dramas and anime, reading, traveling, going to concerts, and spending time with my husband and my family in my free time.

Recognition of Length of Service

10 Years of Federal Service



Harold S. Peterson, *National Hydropower Compliance Program Manager*
Division of Water and Power
Working remotely from Nashville, Tennessee



Harold Peterson at the office and with his daughter at Rock Island State Park, TN

I was born a citizen of the Delaware Tribe and grew up in Caroline, Wisconsin. I attended college at the Universities of Oklahoma and Nevada, earning degrees in meteorology. While in Nevada I volunteered for the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony.

After college I worked as a NASA contractor in Huntsville for six years before being hired by BIA in 2014. I worked as a Natural Resources Officer in Eastern Region from 2014-2023 and began work for Central Office Division of Water and Power in 2023 as the National Hydropower Compliance Program Manager. I also detailed for Seminole Agency in 2021 and the BIA Midwest Region in 2022.

Our work protects Tribal trust and treaty resources around active hydroelectric dams by making sure their operating licenses contain conditions mandating the dams are not only making electricity but doing so with minimal impacts to natural and cultural resources. While volunteering for the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony I found the experience rewarding to use my knowledge and skills to advocate for Native Americans and the environment. This is when I began looking for opportunities to make a career out of this volunteer work.

For scientists wanting to enter this field, get to know the Native American communities in your area. Find out what they want and need. I spend time with several outdoor activities such as hiking, jogging, and gardening. I also play the piano.

Recognition of Length of Service

20 Years of Federal Service



Evaline P. Old Elk, Realty Clerk
Division of Trust Land Consolidation
Billings, MT



Sho'dah, I am an enrolled member of the Crow Tribe and currently work at the Rocky Mountain Region with the Division of Trust Land Consolidation. I relocated to Billings for a Realty Clerk position with the Land Buy Back Program, now known as the Division of Trust Land Consolidation for the last 10 years, 2014 through 2024. My career has led into various positions within the Federal Government, including the Indian Health Service, and being as adventurous as a wildland firefighter, which was extreme!

As a young adult in high school, I choose my career path as an Intern with the Federal Government! I started my government career 1990 with the BIA Rocky Mountain Regional Office in Billings, Montana with the Information Management Center, as an IT intern for one year while attending Montana State University.

Outside the BIA I previously worked for the Indian Health Service, Human Resource Department as at temporary Staff Assistant for one year in Billings, Montana before transferring to BIA Finance as an Accounting Technician for one year. After having my youngest son, I returned to IHS as an Accounting Technician under contract for 8 years (1994-2002).

I then had the adventure of working for BIA Wildland Fire Management and Forestry as a Fire Fighter, Timekeeper, Dispatcher, Procurement and lastly, Fire Staff Assistant under Administratively Determined (AD) pay in Crow Agency for 5 years. I moved on to the Department of Interior, Office of Trust Services as an Accounting Technician at the Crow Agency, Montana from 2009 to 2014.

As a federal employee with 33 years of combined Federal and private sector service, I recommend others interested in this career field is to every opportunity you can to help make a difference and improve the lives of the people we serve. Most of my present and past coworkers became my close friends, just like family. I have enjoyed the opportunity to travel for training with BIA.

My civil servant career has allowed me to serve my country and maintain my most important roles as mother and grandmother. I love my family! I am active in my church life, and love going to different places and exploring. In my free time I enjoy camping in the mountains with my family. I have 4 adult children, 7 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. I have had the great honor of serving Indian Country!

Recognition of Length of Service

25 Years of Federal Service



Zoila O. Forrest-Davis, *Assistant Branch Chief, Budget*
Division of Wildland Fire Management
Boise, Idaho



Zoila Forrest-Davis, Zoila with her love Eddie and children Marcus and Olivia, her pup Ophelia on gondola lift ride in Sun Valley, ID, pool time with her nieces and nephews

I am enrolled in the Pit River (Hewisedawi) Tribe and Modoc and Wintun (Winnemem). Before starting my career with the BIA I worked for Inter-Tribal Council of California, Inc. (ITCC) as a program assistant for the Family and Domestic Violence Prevention Programs in California.

I began my BIA Federal career at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in November 1999 as editorial assistant to the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG). My work with subject matter experts to develop a national training course allowed me to learn about the complexity of wildland fire. I gained experience in budget, administration, incident business and contracting as a BIA-NIFC procurement technician. I was able to travel and work with people in the wildland fire community and create friendships.

After about 16 years with BIA, I left BIA for the BLM and served as administrative assistant/editor for the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC). After a year with BLM, I went back to BIA-NIFC as a writer/editor with NWCG, then budget analyst with BIA-NIFC.

I am currently the Assistant Branch Chief for Budget at BIA-NIFC and am very proud of my team for sending out over 56 million dollars of wildland fire funding in FY2024 to BIA Regions and Self-Governance Tribes. This funding protects Tribal communities and the land, provides job opportunities, and helps Tribes manage and preserve their homelands for future generations.

I would advise others interested in this career field to look for details. Detailing into a position is a great way to get experience and learn the responsibilities of a job. It is also a great way to figure out if you like the position. My budget career began with a detail.

In my spare time I enjoy traveling with my love Eddie, his children Marcus and Olivia, and our pup Ophelia. We enjoy listening to Olivia's band perform. I'm the oldest of five children and blessed to be the aunt to three nephews and two nieces. I love activities with my family, and it is fun to watch my nieces and nephews play sports. I also like going to music concerts, watching sports, and crafting.

Recognition of Length of Service

25 Years of Federal Service



Duane O. Matt, *Solid Minerals Branch Chief/Geologist*
Division of Energy & Minerals Development
Lakewood, Colorado



Duane O. Matt is an enrolled member of the confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes; Duane representing DEMD via promotional booth; Competing in a 5K road race in City Park Denver, CO.

Duane Matt is a member of the Confederated Salish Kootenai (CSKT) and Pend D 'Oreille Tribes located on the Flathead Indian reservation in western Montana. Duane is currently serving as the Solid Minerals Branch Manager for the BIA Office of Trust Services, Division of Energy and Mineral Development.

Our office is unique, so, I do something TOTALLY different than most Federal Government offices – I *promote* development of renewable and non-renewable energy. Being a Native American manager in a STEM field is critical. My work is solely with Native American tribes and me being here is a "win-win" situation. Tribes see Native Americans in Federal Government as non-adversarial, and this helps with negotiations on all fronts. I contribute to the diversity of the office by recruiting a diverse workforce, mentoring that work force, and retain them as they enjoy a fulfilling career of public service within the Federal Government.

He holds a master's degree in Geology and bachelor's degree in both Geology and English/Secondary Education. Duane is a founding board member of the Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE.) Duane is also a member of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), and the Society of Mining, Metallurgy and Exploration (SME.)

Duane's public service included serving as [OSMRE](#) Reclamation Specialist & Technology Coordinator, BLM Initial Attack Fire Dispatcher, BOR Geological Intern, USDA Smokejumper, and NPS Helitack /Firefighter. Duane worked for his tribe as a geologist trainee. Prior to that, he also worked as a schoolteacher on the Laguna-Acoma reservation in New Mexico.

He's always enjoyed running/biking/hiking and funneled that passion into coaching both boys' and girls' middle school/high school cross-country/track-and-field. He ran as a member of the 1986-1990 University of Montana cross-country and track-and-field teams.

He likes to spend time his wife, dogs/cats, grill, relax on the patio and brew beer (these days either low to non-alcoholic or root beer!) Going out for live trivia, movies, and going out to eat are also high on his list.

He offered the following advice to anyone wanting to work for the federal government. Start **early**. If you want to work for a technical division like DEMD, getting experience in the private sector will provide valuable experience.

Recognition of Length of Service

25 Years of Federal Service



Travis P. Teegarden, P.E., *Supervisory Agricultural Engineer*
Division of Water and Power
Billings, Montana



Travis Teegarden photos with his wife hunting and a family photo.

I attended the University of Wyoming where I earned a bachelor and master's degrees in Agricultural Engineering. In 1992, I began my professional career in the private sector working on projects involving irrigation and federally reserved water rights for Tribes and the United States. That experience provided a great background for my career transition to BIA in 1999.

I served as the Regional Irrigation Engineer in BIA's Rocky Mountain Region in Billings, Montana from 1999 through 2003. Since then, I've worked as an Agricultural Engineer at Central Office helping provide policy, oversight and technical assistance to BIA's irrigation and power programs.

I encourage anyone interested in water rights, water resources, irrigation, dam safety or power to consider pursuing a technical career in BIA's Water and Power programs. Water is a limited resource in extremely high demand. Expertise to resolve critical water resources issues will be essential for future generations.

My favorite part of this job is the people. From my colleagues (past and present) to the external stakeholders we serve, I am blessed to work with (and for) wonderful people. I have made many lifelong friends in the BIA, irrigator and Tribal communities. One of the best compliments I've received during my career came from a former Tribal leader thanking me for the assistance I provided their Tribe and irrigation project. As challenging as it can be at times, the work we do is very important to our customers.

As a lifelong Montana resident, I enjoy spending time with my family and friends in the great outdoors. I love to camp, hunt (especially elk), fish, golf, attend concerts and host backyard barbeques. Fun fact: I played collegiate baseball in Florida and for the University of Wyoming and played professionally in the Cincinnati Reds organization.

Recognition of Length of Service

30 Years of Federal Service



Reeve P. Armstrong, *Fire Management Specialist*
Division of Wildland Fire Management
Lakewood, Colorado



Secretary of Interior and Zuni Hotshot Crew carrier vehicle, Reeve scuba diving in Cozumel, Mexico, El Dora ski area.

I am an enrolled member of The Delaware Tribe of Indians. Prior to working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), I worked for the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Southern Ute Tribe. In 1998, I started my career with the BIA's National Interagency Fire Center (BIA-NIFC) working as an aircraft dispatcher at the Fire and Aviation Coordination Center out of Broomfield, Colorado.

I later transferred to the BIA's Fire Planning Group as a fire management specialist, focusing on protecting tribal landscapes, managing wildland fire for landscape resiliency, and strengthening tribal communities' knowledge of how to suppress and prevent wildland fires on tribal lands. Additionally, I have been helping tribes and the public in firefighter safety and wildfire response.

Throughout my career, I have made many life-long friends having worked with various BIA and tribal fire managers to help protect lives, property, and resources, and assuring that we restore and maintain healthy ecosystems.

The work that I have done with the BIA has provided me with a profound sense of accomplishment thus far and I am eager to continue the work in a better manner of the agency.

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my family, downhill skiing, and scuba diving with my wife.

Recognition of Length of Service

35 Years of Federal Service



John W. Baskette, Jr., Deputy Timber Sales Forester
Division of Forestry
Sacramento, California



John Baskette with his family, A123 site visit to Alaska Region on an allotment near Soldotna, Alaska with his teammates Ken Borchert, Acting Projects Forester, Josh Holte, Forester, Alaska Regional Office, John Baskette, and Caleb Cain, Acting Chief Forester, Office of Trust Services.

Prior to BIA, I started my career working with the Forest Service in Washington and Oregon. I was blessed to be offered and accept a job with the BIA in Sacramento in 1994. My duty station has remained Sacramento my entire BIA career, but at several different offices. I have worked at the Central California Agency, the Pacific Regional Office, and have been a Central Office, OTS-Division of Forestry employee for the last 8 years. Positions I have held over those years include Forester at the Agency, Regional Fire Management Officer, Regional Timber Sales Forester, and my current Forester position with OTS.

In general Foresters have some of the highest job satisfaction of any career, and I have loved being a BIA Forester the last 30 years.

Forestry and fire management jobs are vocations, not for everyone, but if forestry or fire is your calling it is extremely rewarding. BIA and tribal forestry are special because of all the dedicated people that work in Indian Country, and BIA and tribal foresters are very dedicated many working on their own Reservations and have a special relationship with the land. My current job at OTS allows me to work with BIA and tribal foresters across Indian country providing technical assistance with TAAMS Forestry, policies related to the harvest of forest products, and reporting.

On the personal side, I have been married to my wife Rocio for 25 years and we have one son Daniel who will be a High School senior this year. My son loves sports, so one of my hobbies is enjoying sports together watching him play football, rugby, swim, or bowl, or watching college football or rugby together. My family and I enjoy travelling when we can, my wife is from Mexico, and our happy place is our favorite beach in Puerto Vallarta. I'm also active in our Church and like to garden.

Recognition of Length of Service

40 Years of Federal Service



Ewing (David) Underwood, *National Aviation Safety Inspector/Acting National Aviation Manager*
Division of Wildland Fire Management, Branch of Aviation
Albuquerque, New Mexico



Fort Washakie Helitack crew 1995 in Colorado. Photos back row (L to R): Dave Underwood, Neal Ferris, Travis Shakespeare, Driver Ferris, Lyndon Blackwolf, Don Mitchell, Will Brown, N-123HP. Front row (L to R): Nic Strohmeyer, Van Smith. David Underwood next to helicopter.

I am a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, born, raised and graduated high school in Gallup, NM. Attended Fort Lewis College and University of New Mexico. I'm married to Lorie and have four children, three grandchildren and one great grandchild. Began working for the BIA in 1980 as a Forestry Aid/Firefighter on the Navajo reservation. Moved to the Wind River Reservation in 2001 and then to the National Interagency Fire Center Office staff in 2001. This year is my 45th fire season, 6 years as a seasonal, 7 years as a furlough-able permanent and the rest as a permanent full-time employee.

The Branch of Aviation has oversight for the management and administration of the bureau's aviation activities. This includes Fixed wing, Helicopter and Uncrewed Aviation Systems. This office also interacts with other tribal, agency, bureau and government offices for shared aviation activities.

BIA had "seasonal" firefighting jobs available which worked well with the school schedule. Once bitten by the wildland fire experience I continued to pursue advancement within the bureau. During my sixth season I applied for a position with an appointment, which then put me on the career path I'm still on today.

Wildland Fire fighting is a highly rewarding career, it's very demanding in many ways physically and mentally. Requires traveling the country, time away from home and family. It's a career which is primarily taught and learned on the job, the bureau creates its wildland firefighters. Getting dirty, tired and sleeping on the ground are normal parts of the job. Higher education helps prepare for a career in all facets of the organization.

I enjoy spending time with family especially doing outdoor activities. I enjoy hiking and animal watching. Have been a hunter in the past with love of upland bird hunting. I also enjoy handy person work around the house and have been a backyard mechanic since my teenage years.