



**TRUST LAND RESOURCES • RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP • RESULTS THAT MATTER**

**Message from the Deputy Director**

This issue introduces many of our newly hired OTS team members by Division. We consolidated a list of training, funding opportunities, Tribal consultations, new or revised policy guidance as a regular part of the Trust Services Overview section.



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OTS provides Tribal self-determination and self-governance support to Tribes. The “Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Homeownership” (HEARTH) Act is a federal law that allows tribes to take more control over leasing their tribal trust lands by creating their own leasing regulations. Once the leasing regulations are approved by BIA, Tribes are permitted to enter leases without further BIA approval, promoting tribal self-governance in land management. Bay Mills Indian Community and the Kickapoo Tribe are the latest to be approved.

Trust Land Consolidation processed 50 fractional land interests sales to the Oglala Sioux Tribe (912 equivalent acres returned to Tribal ownership) and 977 fractional land interest sales to the Arapahoe Tribe and Eastern Shoshone Tribe of the Wind River Reservation (1,337 equivalent acres returned to Tribal ownership). This program directly impacts native homelands available for conservation or economic development.

Our goal is to provide high-quality, timely services and results that matter to those we serve. Ideas for future newsletters may be sent to [BIATrustQuarterly@bia.gov](mailto:BIATrustQuarterly@bia.gov).

Johnna Blackhair  
 Deputy Bureau Director-Trust Services

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*“If we wonder often, the gift of knowledge will come.”*

**- Cheyenne and Arapaho**

See historical photo of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribal council in 1900 on the bottom of the next page.

## OFFICE OF TRUST SERVICES OVERVIEW



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.

## STAFFING CHANGES

### New Staff Members

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Trust Services Division</u>
Joy Bercier	Fiduciary Trust Advisor	Indian Energy Service Center
Riley Berry	Engineer	Water & Power
Keenen Blackbird	Natural Resources Specialist	Environmental Services
John Connors	Engineer	Water & Power
Mona "Lisa" Carlson	NIIMS Financial Specialist	Water & Power
Jami Farris	NIIMS Accountant	Water & Power
James "Jim" Gappa	Engineer	Water & Power
Cassandra Gould	Realty Specialist	Indian Energy Service Center
Randi Madison	Regional Climate Coordinator	Environmental Services
Mark McNearny	Mechanical Engineer	Water & Power
Alyssa Morris	Environmental Protection Spec.	Environmental Services
Johnna Spriggs	Division Chief/Director	Indian Energy Service Center
John Trebesch	Engineer	Water & Power
Debra Williams	Realty Specialist	Indian Energy Service Center
Jordan Wofford	Realty Specialist	Indian Energy Service Center

### Departed Staff Members

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Trust Services Division</u>	
Payton Batliner	Acting Division Chief	Indian Energy Service Center	Left BIA/OTS
Christopher Benson	Geologist	Energy & Mineral Development	Retired
Pauline DeCrane	Realty Clerk	Trust Land Consolidation	Retired
Hayes Haas	Natural Resources Specialist	Indian Energy Service Center	Left BIA/OTS
Shirley Pease	Realty Specialist	Trust Land Consolidation	Retired



*Cheyenne and Arapaho Council, Seger Colony, OK with an agent, 1900. Source: National Archives 519188*

## TRAINING EVENTS

<u>FY 2025</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Target Audience</u>
NEPA, NHPA, ESA	3 days	TBD	BIA & Tribes
STAT User Update Session	October 3, 2024	Virtual	OTS Employees
Dam Tender Training	December 3-5, 2024	Mescalero, NM	Water & Power employee
TAAMS Forestry for Beginners	February 3-7, 2025	Portland, OR	BIA Forestry
Safety of Dams Workshop	March 11-13, 2025	Fallon, NV	Water & Power Employees
TAAMS Forestry for Beginners	March 10-14, 2025	Ashland, WI	BIA Forestry
TAAMS Forestry Advanced	April 7-11, 2025	Portland, OR	BIA Forestry
TAAMS Forestry Advanced	April 28-May 2, 2025	Ashland, WI	BIA Forestry
Advanced ARPA Training	February 3-7, 2025	Laveen, AZ	BIA Archaeologists & THPOs
Sacred Sites Webinar	December 2, 2024	Virtual	OTS Employees

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

<u>FY 2025 Funding</u>	<u>Application Deadline</u>
Tribal Community Resilience Annual Awards Program	October 18, 2024
Tribal Forestry Summer Youth Camp Proposals	October 18, 2024
Forestry Project Proposals	November 8, 2024
Tribal Energy Development Capacity Grants	January 16, 2025
Native Youth Adaptation Leadership Congress	February 28, 2025
Timber Team Project Proposals	Open Continuous

## TRIBAL CONSULTATION

<u>FY 2025</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Target Audience</u>
Indigenous Knowledge Handbook	December 11 & 13, 2024	Virtual	Listening Session

## POLICY

<u>FY 2025 Policy Category</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date Issued</u>
52 IAM 12	Handbook	Fee to Trust
52 IAM 12	Indian Affairs Manual	Processing Fee to Trust Applications
52 IAM 16	Handbook	Excess Real Property Transfers
52 IAM 16	Indian Affairs Manual	Processing Excess Real Property Land Transfers
59 IAM 5	Indian Affairs Manual	Pre-Acquisition Environmental Site Assessments
90 IAM 5	Handbook	Wildfire Prevention Program
90 IAM 5	Indian Affairs Manual	Wildfire Prevention

**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 the 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.

**NEW YOU CAN USE**



*BIA Central Office West, Albuquerque, NM*

**New! Detail to Special Assistant -Trust Services**



*Peter Wakeland, Acting Special Assistant*

Peter Wakeland, Division Chief for Forestry has been detailed into the vacant Chief of Staff position for a period of 120 days beginning Monday, January 27, 2025. He will be providing director supervision to the Divisions of Program Management & Coordination, Resource Integration & Services and Workforce & Youth Development. Previously, Pete served on a detail to Special Assistant to the Director, BIA for 120 days.

**Content for the April newsletter is due March 18, 2025.**

March 2025						
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**\$10.6 Million to Clean Up Legacy Pollution**

On January 10, 2025, the Department of the Interior announced a \$10.6 million investment to assist three Tribal nations clean up orphaned oil and gas wells.

- \$5.94M Comanche Nation
- \$2.33M Fort Belknap Indian Community
- \$2.33M Muscogee (Creek) Nation



**OTS 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](mailto:Dawn.selwyn@bia.gov) or [BIATrustQuarterly@bia.gov](mailto:BIATrustQuarterly@bia.gov).

Current and past newsletters are available for viewing on the BIA Trust Services web page at <https://www.bia.gov/bia/ots>.



*Abandoned oil well on hillside*

The investment supports economic opportunities to address legacy pollution, reduce harmful methane leaks, and tackle environmental hazards that threaten communities.

## Permitting



### About FAST-41

Established by Title 41 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST-41) and made permanent in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. FAST-41 covered projects are entitled to comprehensive permitting timetables and transparent collaborative management of those timetables.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs serves as the lead agency for environmental review and authorizations for broadband projects. See [permittings.gov](https://www.permittings.gov) for more information.

### Covered Projects

Projects may be in the renewable or conventional energy production, electricity transmission, energy storage, water resources, broadband, pipelines, mining, or artificial intelligence.

### Winnebago Tribe Broadband Connectivity Project (estimated \$35 million)

The Winnebago Tribe received permitting assistance through the FAST-41 program. The project will construct a multi-conduit, underground Fiber to the Premises (FTTP) system, more than 235 total miles, which will connect every household and business within the Winnebago Reservation. This project aims to bring critically needed broadband infrastructure to over 800 households, 46 businesses and 16 Tribal institutions including medical facilities and schools in Winnebago, Nebraska.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) Tribal Broadband Connective Program is providing funding for this project, which proposes to install 235 miles of underground fiber, connecting every household and business within the Winnebago Reservation. The Winnebago Tribe's funding was one of 23 grants provided in the last awards by NTIA.

The fiber-optic installation alignment is generally located on the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska Reservation, which spans approximately 120,000 acres and is situated primarily in a rural area in the northern half of Thurston County in northeast Nebraska.

### Alaska Fiber Optic Project (estimated \$51 million)



The Alaska Fiber Optic Project Segment 1 proposes to deploy a reliable, affordable, scalable and future-proofed broadband network bridging the digital divide for the foreseeable future in one of the most remote, isolated, high-cost, and difficult to serve areas of the United States.

The AFO project segment 1 is one of 3 phases that includes constructing a middle mile fiber optic network (under water and on land) directly supporting last mile high-speed Internet connections to 23 Alaskan Native Villages along the Yukon River. Segment 1 begins by connecting to existing fiber in Fairbanks, Alaska and use existing utility line easements to bury cable. The route would travel along the Steese Highway, Elliot and Dalton highways to the E.L. Patton Yukon River Bridge.

A banner image showing a field of solar panels in the foreground, with mountains and a clear sky in the background. Overlaid on the left side of the banner are three large, stylized green arrows pointing to the right.

# Federal Permitting Council Offers New Permitting Assistance Programs for Tribes

The **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act** passed in November 2021 granted the Permitting Council new authorities related to Tribes and ushered in significant changes:

- ▶ Congress eliminated the investment threshold requirement for Tribal projects to enter into FAST-41, creating a special track for Tribal projects to access the program.
- ▶ Congress granted the Permitting Council authority to transfer funds to Tribal governments to make the FAST-41 project review more timely and efficient.

## Support to Tribes

The Permitting Council is leveraging these new authorities to build Tribal capacity and advance infrastructure project review through two programs:

### **FAST-41** | Title 41 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act

#### **Advancing Tribal Infrastructure Projects in the Federal Permitting Process**

Tribes can access the [FAST-41](#) program to obtain special permitting assistance benefits for their infrastructure projects.

#### **The benefits of FAST-41 for Tribes include:**

- ▶ Comprehensive federal permitting timeline within 60 days of the project entering the FAST-41 program.
- ▶ Regular communication with federal agencies regarding the status of their permits.
- ▶ Access to the Permitting Council's ability to convene agencies, with quick issue elevation and resolution.
- ▶ Dedicated Permitting Council Tribal Director and support staff for direct contact with Tribal communities and project sponsors.

As a result of having dedicated Tribal staff focused on outreach, FAST-41 has its first Tribal and broadband projects covered under FAST-41—the [Santa Fe Indian School Pueblo Education Network](#) and the [Alaska Fiber Optic Network](#).

#### **Tribal projects subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and in the following sectors qualify for FAST-41 coverage:**

- Renewable energy production
- Conventional energy production
- Electricity transmission
- Energy storage
- Surface transportation
- Aviation
- Ports and waterways
- Water resource
- Broadband
- Pipelines
- Manufacturing
- Mining
- Carbon capture utilization and sequestration
- Semiconductors
- Artificial intelligence and machine learning
- High-performance computing and advanced computer hardware and software
- Quantum information science and technology
- Data storage and data management
- Cybersecurity

## OTS Visual and Communications Team

The Office of Trust Services (OTS) is excited to partner with Heartland Consulting on a new task order to support OTS projects by capturing visual content of the difference OTS projects are making in tribal communities across Indian Country. Heartland's Visual and Communications team will travel to tribal Nations, interview community members, leaders, and stakeholders, and capture video and photographs to produce content that tell the story of the communities and the undeniable impact that essential OTS programming is having on them.

Heartland has successfully supported the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) on eleven (11) project task orders and the team has a longstanding track record of working alongside Indigenous communities and tribal initiatives.

The Heartland Visual and Communications Team kicked off the initiative with a meeting at the BIA headquarters in Albuquerque in early January. There, they met their BIA contacts and learned about upcoming and tentative projects through webinars hosted by department leads, each providing an overview of their projects and priorities.

The team is already making an impact, with Brian Makanoa capturing the groundbreaking ceremony for the Menagers Dam at the Tohono O'odham Nation in Arizona on Tuesday, January 14, 2025.



*Tyler English-Rush, Cedar Wolf, BIA audio/video guru, Dawn Selwyn, Trust Officer/COR, Natalie Schwarz, Brian Makanoa, and Rudy Pina January 7, 2025 kickoff meeting*

Their role is to create impactful visual content and reports for the BIA, DOI, Congress, and the White House, as well as for platforms like social media, websites, and marketing materials. The team will highlight the stories and successes of tribes and Alaskan Native Villages through creative storytelling. By producing videos, animations, and written content, the team will bring attention to funded programs which support important efforts like climate adaptation, ecosystem restoration, and Tribal community resilience.

*Heartland Consulting is a Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB), Native American Owned Small Business, and Indian Small Business Economic Enterprise (ISBEE)*

## Heartland Contractors Visual and Communications Team



*Heartland Consulting Visual Communication Team (L to R) Tyler English-Rush (Muscogee (Creek)), Project Manager, Brian Makanoa, (Native Hawaiian) Videographer/Photographer/Content Manager, Rudy Pina, (Choctaw) Videographer/Photographer/Production Specialist, Dakota Wahkinney, (Comanche) Videographer/Photographer/Editing Specialist, Natalie Schwarz, Technical Writer, Cressandra Thibodeau, (Sault St. Marie Tribe) Videographer/Photographer (not pictured).*



*Broadband tower on Flathead Reservation, buffalo with calf on Tribal Lands*

### **Division of Indigenous Connectivity and Technology**

The Indigenous Connectivity and Technology Division (ICTD) is the news of the OTS Divisions. The mission builds upon the Bureau's unique role and fiduciary duty to manage Tribal assets, including natural resources and energy. The Division is responsible to consolidate, coordinate, develop, manage, and advance Tribal interest on Tribal lands for each of the following areas:

- Wireless communications encompassing broadband
- Electromagnetic spectrum
- Technology

### **Roles as DOI Liaison and Policy Development**

The Division serves as the primary interagency and interdepartmental liaison tasked with effectively communicating Secretarial Tribal priorities, contributing to the development of new national policies, and fostering consistent intergovernmental and Tribal communications on these vital topics in line with federal trust responsibilities.

ITCD will work on a national policy strategy on Tribal broadband and electromagnetic spectrum initiatives for the benefit of Tribal Nations, including participation with the White House Office of Science Technology and Policy (OSTP) National Strategy and the American Broadband Initiative (ABI), which has historically excluded Tribal priorities.

### **Electromagnetic Spectrum Resources**

ICTD will have a special focus on advancing the Department's role in promoting the management and agency coordination of Tribal Nations' electromagnetic spectrum resources on Tribal lands for new economic development opportunities with a focus on Tribes' "opportunistic use" of spectrum through new spectrum audit pilot programs, including funding coordination (potentially through existing OIED broadband infrastructure funds). Tribal broadband and radio services improvement will include resolving DOI's existing download/upload speeds to meet industry standards. Some of OTS initiatives are as follows:

- Assistance with OCIO's non-federal government radio frequency use agreements
- Wireless networks, especially resolving existing BIA/BIE connectivity issues
- Drone operations and programs at BIE post-secondary schools
- LiDAR contracting under new 638 agreements
- National policy planning related to Tribes' digital and technological resources
- Technical assistance including digital infrastructure appraisals and federal grants



## DIVISION OF ENERGY & MINERAL DEVELOPMENT (DEMD)



*Gravel business on Tribal land, solar panels*

### **National Indian Oil & Gas, Energy and Minerals System (NIOGEMS)**

The National Indian Oil & Gas, Energy and Minerals System (NIOGEMS) is an ESRI-based application with modifications and data additions that serves to support efforts by Tribes and federal offices to manage Indian energy and mineral resources. It contains data profiles for Tribal databases, including monthly collection, analysis, and processing of data for well production, land ownership, leases, agreements, high-resolution imagery, soil surveys and other geospatial administrative, energy and resource datasets. NIOGEMS, a key element of the DEMD's technical assistance toolkit, currently resides on the Department's server and is directly accessible to internal Department employees.

### **NIOGEMS Cloud Based Replacement**

ESRI ArcMap 10.8x, which serves as NIOGEMS 4.x base application, sunsets on March 1, 2026, and the NIOGEMS team is developing the new NIOGEMS 5.x cloud-based replacement. The DEMD has engaged federal users for feedback and enhancement requests and will engage Tribal users at the end of January for their requests. While the redevelopment is in the planning stages, the development team plans to have a working NIOGEMS 5.x version published by Q4 2025.

### **DEMD Continues ongoing support National Tribal Critical Mineral Initiative**

Increasing the critical minerals supply chain reliability has been the subject of executive orders in 2017 and 2021 which resulted in multiple ongoing federal government actions. In response to Tribal inquiries about the U.S. Government's actions on critical minerals, particularly related to increased domestic mining, the White House Council on Native American Affairs ([WHCNAA](#)) created a Critical Minerals Working Group.

In the summer of 2024, The WHCNAA Critical Minerals Working Group held Tribal consultations to collect input on recommendations to improve mining on public lands and Tribal consultation and engagement in domestic critical minerals supply chain. The DEMD created content and lead the logistical effort to complete Tribal consultation, prepare and circulate consultation scoping materials, and compile the final report of Tribal input received.

The final report is expected to be released early 2025. This report will summarize comments received from Tribal Leaders and Alaska Native Corporations during government-to-government consultations. The information provided in this report will be available for government and industry stakeholders seeking to improve Tribal consultation, engagement, and outcomes in the mining sector.

Follow our website for updates: [Tribal Critical Minerals Initiative | Indian Affairs](#)

## DEMD Attends the DOE Office of Indian Energy Program Review

### *BIA-DOE Cooperative Framework for Tribal Energy Project Advancement*

DEMD leadership and staff attended the Department of Energy Office of Indian Energy (DOE-IE) 2024 Tribal Energy Program Review. This event showcases successes and lessons learned from tribal energy projects funded by DOE-IE grants.

The Program Review is open to all Indian Country interested in energy development, serving as a platform for learning and celebrating project progress. The Program Review is open to all Indian Country interested in energy development, serving as a platform for learning and celebrating project progress. It holds particular significance for DEMD, as many projects showcased at the review have leveraged our grant and technical assistance programs to plan energy initiatives that enhance sovereignty, improve self-reliance, and create economic opportunities.

Through this BIA-DOE cooperative framework, the synergy between two agencies supports federally recognized Tribes in developing beneficial energy projects for their communities. DEMD provides grant awardees with feasibility studies and organizational capacity building, while the DOE-IE offers grants to help realize these projects. For instance, the Meskwaki Nation and the Pala Band successfully utilized DEMD's Energy and Mineral Development Program (EMDP) to assess the feasibility of solar development, including optimal system sizes, placements, and cost savings. Both Tribes subsequently received DOE-IE grants to advance their solar initiatives identified through EMDP. Other Tribes benefiting from one or both of DEMD's grants at this year's event include Quinault Indian Nation, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians, and Metlakatla Indian Community. The Program Review provides an opportunity for staff and leadership to witness the successes of both BIA and DOE programs as Tribes advance their renewable energy projects.



Wayne Yazza, Jr., Picuris Pueblo Indian Tribe, NM, presents on "Pueblo of Picuris Community Solar System Phase II" at the 2024 Program Review



*Photo: Aerial view of the Cold Climate Housing Research Center (CCHRC) in Fairbanks, AK. CCHRC is a non-profit organization that promotes energy-resilient housing solutions for cold climates.*

### **DEMD Engaging with Alaskan Native Stakeholders to Address Energy Challenges.**

Representatives from the DEMD recently attended two key Alaska energy events: the Alaska Rural Energy Conference and the 2024 BIA Provider's Conference. The Alaska Rural Energy Conference took place in Fairbanks, AK, in October 2024. Staff hosted an information booth, engaged with Alaska Tribal energy stakeholders, and attended key sessions covering bulk fuel systems, renewable energy integration, Alaska energy development case studies. Activities also included a tour of the Cold Climate Housing Research Center. The 2024 BIA Provider's Conference took place in Anchorage, AK in December 2024, where DEMD managed an information booth, engaged with Alaska Native leaders, and hosted three panel discussions.

The three DEMD panel presentations and discussions included: 1) Empowering Tribes: Harnessing Energy and Minerals for Economic Growth. 2) Mineral Resources: Navigating Federal Assistance for Alaska's Mineral Wealth. 3) Energizing Alaska: Unlocking Integrated Energy Solutions for Indigenous Communities.

Alaska faces significant energy challenges, including a heavy reliance on costly diesel fuel for electricity in remote communities and limited access to reliable renewable resources. Logistical barriers and high installation costs impede the adoption of sustainable solutions, affecting energy independence and economic resilience for Indigenous populations. To address these issues, the DEMD is collaborating with several Native Villages, providing technical assistance and funding through the Tribal Energy Development Capacity (TEDC) and Energy and Mineral Development Program (EMDP) grant programs. Initiatives include collecting wind resource data, conducting feasibility studies for solar and battery storage, exploring biomass combined heat and power systems, and evaluating hydrogen production to enhance microgrid operations, all aimed at promoting renewable energy and economic growth.

## BRANCH OF FLUID MINERALS



*Oil rig in operation*

The Osage Mineral Council (OMC) has requested assistance from the DEMD to create promotional print materials to use during the 2025 NAPE (North American Prospect Expo) event in Houston, TX on February 5-7. The NAPE event is a long running annual convention which brings players in the energy industry, including prospect developers, investors and operators, together to network and do business. The OMC has reserved a booth space at the event and several OMC representatives plan to attend to network and promote development of the Osage Mineral Estate.

Print materials requested by the OMC include a brochure, a poster and a summary card displaying the location of all digital seismic data available (housed by the DEMD) within Osage County. The brochure will contain sections focused on Osage culture and government, geology, and mineral resources. In addition, the brochure and poster will include high quality images and geologic maps to enhance visual impact. DEMD technical staff have worked closely with OMC staff to develop the text and images. Currently, the marketing group at DEMD is developing a final professional-quality draft of the brochure, which after Tribal approval, will go out to print in mid-January. The DEMD is honored to have the opportunity to assist the Osage Mineral Council in the development and printing of these promotional materials and hope to continue this effort in future years.

## BRANCH OF SOLID MINERALS

The Division of Energy and Minerals Development (DEMD) solid minerals group provides technical assistance to Tribes and Allottees with respect to identification and responsible development of their solid minerals' resources. This includes base and precious minerals such as: gold, copper, rare earth minerals, aggregate resources (crushed rock and sand and gravel construction projects), Coal, gypsum and limestone resources for a variety of industrial uses particularly the cement industry and wallboard manufacturing.

The solids branch has been assisting several tribes initiating their 2023 EMDP grant field work. Tribes are currently planning to kick off their field season as soon as the winter weather lets up. New grants include:

- Igiugig Village Council, Alaska
- Kawerak, Alaska
- Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Montana
- Pueblo of Isleta, New Mexico

Other new projects include The Alabama Coushatta Tribe of Texas and Round Valley Indian Tribes in California. These tribes have already made progress and are almost complete.

DEMD has also been working with the Fort Independence Tribe who have opened the Grinding Rocks aggregate quarry. The scope of work for this grant is nearly complete. Per The Tribes website, Grinding Rock Aggregates (<https://grindingrocks.com/>) is working to become the number one choice for construction companies involved in building-out the Owens Valley. Project needs are likely to include general highway, dam, aqueduct, and environmental remediation in Inyo County along the eastern side of the Sierra-Nevada Mountain range.

The minerals group continues to assist with ongoing projects and provide technical assistance to tribes and allottees that request it.

## Farewell to Chris Benson



*Chris Benson, Mineral Geologist*

This week the minerals group had to say farewell to a member of our team. Chris Benson Mineral Geologist has retired after almost seven years with DEMD.

Chris joined DEMD as a Solid Minerals Geologist to assist Tribes with the assessment and development of sustainable tribal minerals projects throughout the U.S. Chris holds a bachelor's degree in Geology from the University of Arizona and a master's degree in Geology from Arizona State University.

He is a Registered Professional Geologist (#895 State of GA) with 40 years of experience. He has worked previously with a variety of mineral exploration and development companies throughout the United States. Chris also worked with the Bureau of Land Management and the Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation and Enforcement. Chris served as a DEMD technical team member, with special skills in evaluation and assessment of solid mineral resources and GIS. We wish Chris the best of luck with his future endeavors.



*Historical photo of Blackfoot tipis, National Archives Administration*

**BRANCH OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE**

**BIA Branch of Tribal Community Resilience Awards Over \$121 Million to Tribal Community Projects**

On January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Branch of Tribal Community Resilience announced that it has awarded over \$121 million to 97 tribes and 10 tribal organizations, funding a total of 124 projects across three categories.

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**CATEGORY 1: PLANNING**

**72 Planning Awards                      \$17,075,097**

A total of 72 Planning Awards were funded, amounting to \$17,075,097. These awards provide flexibility for tribes to address diverse climate concerns and may involve integrating climate considerations into planning documents, conducting data collection, and developing feasibility studies for implementation projects. Planning efforts may encompass a range of initiatives, including climate adaptation planning, natural resource management, hazard response plans, and youth engagement activities.

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**CATEGORY 2: IMPLEMENTATION**

**32 Implementation Awards        \$101,100,869**

Thirty-two Implementation Awards have been granted, with a total funding of \$101,100,869. These awards support the execution of projects that are backed by official planning documents, facilitating project design and construction in alignment with established tribal climate adaptation and natural resource management plans.

**Welcoming Our Second Alaska Regional Coordinator!**



*Randi Madison, Alaska Regional Climate Coordinator*

Randi Madison's Inupiaq name is Nanuqtchiaq, meaning "new polar bear". Randi grew up in Spokane, Washington and moved to Alaska after graduating from Eastern Washington University with a BA in Recreation Management and Outdoor Recreation in 1996.

Prior to coming to BIA, she was the Executive Director for the Region 10 (Environmental Protection Agency) Tribal Operations Committee Consortium, a 501(c)3 Non-Profit serving 271 tribes in Alaska, Washington, Idaho, and Oregon.

She is married and has two lovely teenagers, Oscar, and Scarlett. One of her favorite accomplishments was a "road school" adventure with her children. She pulled her kids from public school for an experiential learning adventure across WA, OR, CA, AZ, UT, ID and MT for 4 months immediately prior to the Covid pandemic.



Youth holding their planted pots during a service project. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Youth making music with Supaman (also known as Christian Parrish Takes the Gun, an Apsáalooke rapper and fancy dancer from Montana). Photo courtesy of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

### Applications Open - NYCALC 2025!

The USFWS National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia will host the annual Native Youth Community Adaptation Leadership Congress (NYCALC) from Saturday, June 21 to Thursday, June 26, 2025. The mission of NYCALC is to develop future Indigenous conservation leaders with the skills, knowledge, and tools to address environmental change to better serve their schools and home communities. Students will explore culture, tradition, and science to answer a “big question” posed at the beginning of the week and will have the opportunity to apply for a mini grant to make their project ideas a reality following the congress.

Applications for NYCALC 2025 are NOW OPEN! Mentors and student groups of 3-5 rising high school seniors enrolled in federally recognized Tribes may apply between December 1, 2024, and February 28, 2025 at [www.nycalc.org](http://www.nycalc.org). This program is free for all selected applicants; expenses for participation, travel, lodging, and meals are covered. Federal agencies and Tribal Organizations may nominate and sponsor college-age interns to participate as Junior Faculty. View a summary of past congresses and learn more on the BTCR Youth Programs page.

On January 15, 2025 at 3pm ET, tune in to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [National Conservation Training Center Studio](#) to listen to the webinar, "[Native Youth Community Adaptation Leadership Congress: Engaging Indigenous Leaders](#)," to learn more about NYCALC, how it operates, and how to apply.

NYCALC is organized by the USFWS in partnership with BTCR and in collaboration with multiple federal, Tribal, and non-governmental organizations.



Youth engaging with the TCR team during the networking session. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

NYCALC flyer can be found at <http://nycalc.org/>

SERVE THE EARTH AND YOUR COMMUNITY.  
BECOME A CONSERVATION LEADER.



JUNE 21-JUNE 26, 2025



### WHAT IS NYCALC?

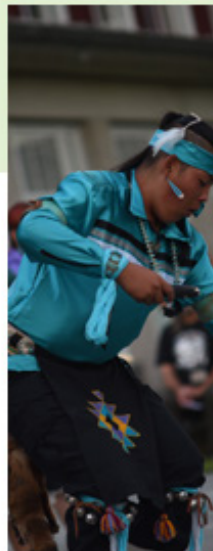
NYCALC works to build student confidence in their cultural identity as they learn about Indigenous traditions and climate concerns across the United States and territories. This week-long Congress engages students as they develop conservation leadership skills and build on their knowledge and abilities to build climate resiliency in their communities.



### WHO CAN APPLY?

Groups of 3 to 5 Indigenous rising high-school seniors\*, accompanied by one mentor, from federally recognized tribes in the United States and territories.

*\*Sophomores and Juniors will be considered on a case-by-case basis*



### APPLICATIONS OPEN

DECEMBER 1, 2024-  
FEBRUARY 28, 2025

### WHERE IS NYCALC?

National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, West Virginia

Travel, lodging, and meals provided.





**Young Tribal Leaders Art Contest Winners  
Attend the 2024 National**

In October 2023, the Division of Environmental Services and Cultural Resource Management (DESCRM) launched the Young Tribal Leaders Art Contest, which garnered over 100 submissions from Tribal citizens aged 14-30. Artists expressed their perspectives on themes related to culture, environment, and climate. In Spring 2024, three exceptional winners were selected and received travel sponsorships to showcase their artworks at the 2024 National Tribal and Indigenous Climate Conference (NTICC) held in Anchorage, Alaska, in September.

The three winners are:

- Kassidy Linaberry (Rosebud Sioux Tribe, age 28)
- Kimey Begay (Navajo Nation, age 23)
- Lakin Epaloose (Zuni Pueblo, age 20)

This contest was made possible through the collaborative efforts of staff from all three DESCRM branches: BTCR, BCRM, and BES. For any inquiries regarding the contest, please reach out to [youth.art.contest@bia.gov](mailto:youth.art.contest@bia.gov).

You can view the finalists' artworks at the following link: [2024 Young Tribal Leaders Art Contest Gallery](#)



*(Left to right) The three winners were Kassidy Linaberry (Rosebud Sioux Tribe, age 28), Kimey Begay (Navajo Nation, age 23), and Lakin Epaloose (Zuni Pueblo, age 20) at the 2024 NTICC in Anchorage, AK.*

## Understanding Our Relative Namāēw



*(Left to right) Embke, Scott, and Smith assist in capturing Namāēw for monitoring efforts led by Bay Mills Biological Services*

Namāēw, also known as lake sturgeon, have significant cultural and spiritual importance for many Tribal Nations and were once abundant in the Great Lakes. However, changing environmental conditions have impacted these fish over their long lifespans, necessitating further study. Since 2021, a collaborative research effort involving federal agencies, Tribal Nations, and inter-Tribal organizations has sought to better understand these impacts. This partnership, initiated by concerns from Tribal leadership, emphasizes culturally sensitive approaches and flexible timelines in research, setting a precedent for future collaborative projects.

For more detailed information, please visit the full article [here](#). The article was written in collaboration with the Midwest Climate Adaptation Science Center.



*Frank Zomer (front), biologist with Bay Mills Biological Services, guides (back to front) Embke, Scott, and Smith to view wild rice restoration areas.*



*(Left to right) Embke, Scott, and Smith learn about the impacts of changing environmental conditions to waters near the Bay Mills Indian Community.*



*2024 Community Resilience Workshop attendees*



*Workshop attendees tour the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' white bark pine restoration greenhouse. Photo courtesy of the North Central Climate Adaptation Science Center*



*USET Tribal Climate Resilience Camp attendees*

## **BRANCH OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

### **Welcoming Our New Environmental Protection Specialist**

The Branch of Environmental Services would like to share and welcome Alyssa Morris as our new Environmental Protection Specialist who will be focused on compliance, sustainability and environmental justice initiatives!



*Alyssa Morris, Environmental Protection Specialist*

Alyssa Morris is an enrolled Chippewa Cree tribal member and joins the BIA Branch of Environmental Services from the Branch of Tribal Community Resilience (TCR), where she has spent the past, several years providing national programmatic support for the building of tribal adaptation and resilience capacity.

Alyssa Morris is an enrolled Chippewa Cree tribal member and joins the BIA Branch of Environmental Services from the Branch of Tribal Community Resilience (TCR), where she has spent the past, several years providing national programmatic support for the building of tribal adaptation and resilience capacity. She is a Pathways graduate, beginning her federal career journey in January of 2017, and receiving a Bachelor of Sciences in Rangeland Ecology with a concentration in Restoration from Colorado State University in 2019. She spent her college years interning for the Division of Forest Resources Planning in Lakewood, CO; the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in Pablo, MT; the Alaska Regional Office in Anchorage, AK; and with TCR with the Central Office and Southwest Region teams in Albuquerque, NM. Alyssa currently resides in Ooltewah, TN with her husband and fur babies, and enjoys ballet class and summer rafting or floating when she can.

## Welcome our New Natural Resources Specialist

The Branch of Environmental Services would also like to share and welcome Keenen Blackbird as our new Natural Resources Specialist who will support the Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) program for BIA.



*Keenen Blackbird, Natural Resource Specialist*

Keenen Lee Blackbird is an enrolled member of the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Tribe of the Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana. He graduated from Montana State University with a bachelor's degree in Biological Science with a concentration in Fish & Wildlife Ecology and Management.

Keenen began his career in 2016 as a Fisheries Research Technician on a fish movement study for the Montana Cooperative Fisheries Research Unit (MTCFRC) on the Smith River, Montana. The following 2017 field season, MTCFRC promoted Keenen to Fisheries Research Crew Lead Technician. Once the fish movement study concluded in 2018, Keenen became a fisheries Technician with the private commercial fishing company Hickey Brothers Research LLC, where he worked 3 seasons on Lake Trout Suppression at Yellowstone National Park and Lake Pend Oreille, Idaho. In 2020, he worked on the BIA Flathead Indian Irrigation Project as a GS-7 Biological Science Technician (Fisheries). In 2021, as Fisheries Biologist for the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribe, Montana he worked on Lake Trout Suppression, research and monitoring on the Flathead Reservation's rivers and streams. This year, Keenen is excited to be joining the BIA working as a Natural Resource Specialist.

Keenen currently lives in Helena, Montana with his wife, Lisa Blackbird. Outside of work, he enjoys fishing, hunting, and staying fit.



*A panoramic view of the forest from a high point on the Hualapai Reservation.*

### **A Trip to Hualapai for the 2024 CFI Kickoff**

In late September, two foresters from Branch of Forest Inventory and Planning (FIP) traveled to the Hualapai Reservation in northern Arizona.



*Google map of Hualapai Indian Reservation*

There, they met with local Hualapai Tribal Forestry crew members, BIA Western Regional Forester Melvin Hunter Jr., the BIA Timber Team from Billings, MT, and two foresters from Uintah & Ouray Agency.

### **Continuous Forest Inventory**

The purpose of this gathering of foresters was to begin the data collection for the 4<sup>th</sup> measurement of the Hualapai CFI (Continuous Forest Inventory). While some types of forest inventory rely on data collected on temporary plots, offering a snapshot of forest conditions at the time of sampling, a CFI involves permanent plots. Within these permanent plots, individual trees are tagged and remeasured at regular intervals.

The CFI, therefore, provides a powerful tool for identifying trends in forest growth, mortality, regeneration and health over time. Most of the plots in Hualapai CFI were initially installed and measured in 1984, with remeasurements occurring in 1994-95, then again in 2009-11 and now in 2024. This dataset includes growth and health data on specific trees collected over four decades.

### **Project Planning and On-Site Training**

Project coordination began months earlier between Raven Honga, the Director of Hualapai Tribal Forestry and Wildfire Management, and the FIP Forest Analyst Jesse Wooten. With all parties now gathered at the Hualapai Tribal Forestry headquarters in Peach Springs, AZ, the first task was to provide training for the assembled foresters on how to conduct the CFI. While everyone involved had some forestry experience, it is crucial to the inventory that everyone is on the same page with regards to the inventory plot design and what measurements are required for collection, so that all measurements are taken consistently throughout the CFI.

The initial training was accomplished in a hybrid session where the CFI manual, describing inventory procedures, was reviewed in a classroom setting, followed by a field visit to a sample CFI plot where all foresters received hands on training with the forestry instruments.



*A stand of ponderosa pine showing evidence of Hualapai Forestry's active fuels management program, which includes thinning and prescribed fire.*

A highlight of tools was the tablet used for recording field measurements and pre-loaded with FIP's new CFI inventory data collection software, CFI Collector. This inventory marks the first time that Hualapai is measuring the CFI with the aid of this tool. The software guides the inventory personnel through the data collection process, displaying required measurements for each plot and the corresponding trees, seedlings and saplings. It was designed with built-in validation rules that reduce data entry errors by flagging potential discrepancies and comparing the current measurements with past records. This real-time error checking eliminates the need for manual data entry from paper tally sheets and reduces the likelihood of errors that would otherwise necessitate return visits for measurement verification.

The Hualapai Reservation encompasses over 500,000 acres of forest, including timberland and woodland areas, and the Grand Canyon lies on the northern border of the reservation. Ponderosa pine is the primary timber species, while the woodland components include juniper, pinyon pine, and Gambel oak.

Hualapai Tribal Forestry and Wildfire Management oversees forest management for timber products and fuelwood and has an active fuels management program that conducts thinning treatments and prescribed fire. Over 300 CFI plots are scattered across the forest area. Over the course of two weeks, the Hualapai, FIP, Timber Team and U&O foresters remeasured over 80 CFI plots (about 25% of the total), focusing primarily on timberland areas. With the elk hunting season underway, the teams frequently saw wildlife, and sightings during this trip included many elk, wild horses, mule tail deer, javelinas, turkeys, and one bobcat and even a mountain lion. Despite a few hot afternoons, the foresters enjoyed good weather and mostly clear skies throughout the fieldwork.

At the end of the two weeks, the project was officially handed over to Hualapai Tribal Forestry and Wildland Fire Management for continued remeasurement over the months to come. The FIP foresters, Timber Team, and U&O foresters all returned to their duty stations. Empowered by recent training, the data collection tablet, and ongoing technical assistance from FIP, the Hualapai foresters aim to complete the CFI data collection by early 2025.

## Forest Health

The United States Forest Service collaborates with BIA Forestry to treat forest health issues that are a cross-boundary problem. The insects, disease and pathogens can be a problem, but with limited funding, the issues are ranked, and funding is distributed accordingly. In early October, the Tribes are required to submit project requests which are ranked by Central Office staff.

Project requests are entered by the end of October to the Forest Service database (Forhealth). Central office staff sets a deadline for the first Friday of October each year. Each region sets their own deadlines utilizing their protocol to get projects submitted to Central Office.

These projects are then entered into ForHealth (FS database) and ranked by FS staff. When determinations are made for funding, they notify Central Office staff and complete an interagency agreement. OTS staff then work with Finance to set up accounts to transfer the funds to the Regions or Office of Self-Governance as appropriate.



*Emerald Ash Borer impacts*

Each year is unique because the funding isn't a set amount, and the ranking of projects can vary according to trends occurring naturally in the forests. In 2024 three tribes were selected for funding and they received \$271,350 in total. If you have any questions regarding forest health, contact Orvie Danzuka at [orvie.danzuka@bia.gov](mailto:orvie.danzuka@bia.gov).

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is a small metallic green beetle that is about the size of a cooked grain of rice. Pictured below on a penny for size comparison



*Emerald Ash Borer on a penny for size comparison*

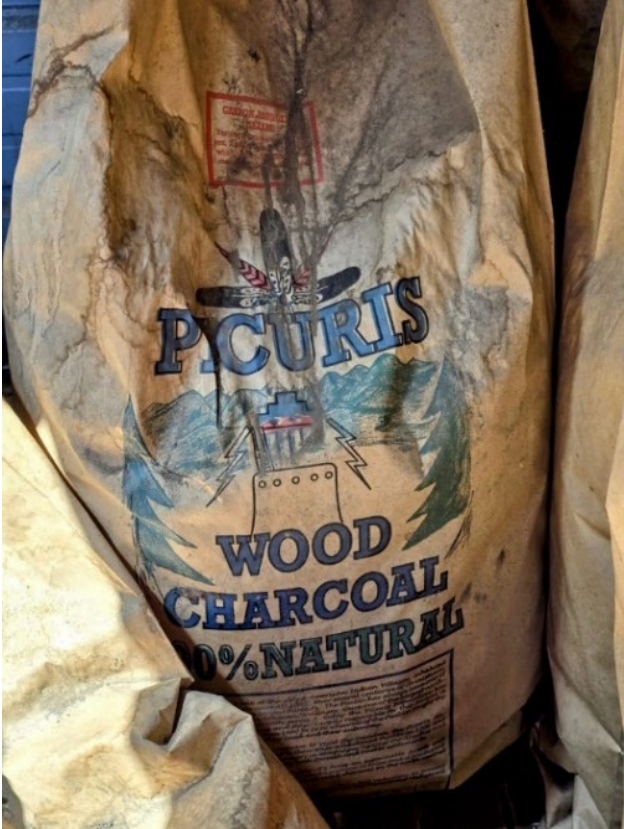
## Portable Milling Infrastructure

Central Office visited the Southwest Region to conduct Office of Management and Budget (OMB) A-123 Internal Control site visits and jumped on the opportunity to visit the operation at Picuris Pueblo, which was selected for funding 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. The Tribe has been networking to secure these agreements and this has resulted in less fuel being burned in piles, but also 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 construction within the Tribe. 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 and creating products that can be utilized or sold. They have also provided training for community members, local schools and the Boys and Girls Clubs.





*Picuris charcoal for sale*



*Rough sawn lumber for Tribal construction*



*Workers at Picuris Pueblo sawmill*

## INDIAN ENERGY SERVICE CENTER (IESC)



*Fort Berthold Oil Wells and Solar Panels on Tribal Land*

### Mission

The mission of the Indian Energy Service Center (IESC) is to fulfill DOI's 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 (renewable and conventional) and mineral development on Indian lands.

### Who We Serve

The IESC serves the Indian trust mission of DOI in the arena of energy and mineral management. IESC does this through providing technical assistance, guidance, and training to bureaus and offices within the department and to other federal agencies that develop energy and mineral resources on Indian trust lands, including BIA, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR) and others.

IESC facilitates nationwide cooperation between government offices to expedite Indian oil and gas development, standardize processes, and improve the efficiency of Indian energy, renewable energy, and mineral development management to better serve Indian beneficiaries and Tribes.

### Preparation for Fort Berthold Federal Partners Meeting with the MHA Nation, October 23, 2024



*Pictured left to right Jeffrey Jay, Attorney-Adviser SOL - DOI, Shayna Hoercher, Program Manager - DISC, Tonisha Seader, Supervisory Minerals Revenue Specialist, Michelle Morrison, IESC BTFA Branch Chief and Fiduciary Trust Officer, Justin Gallegos, Supervisory Minerals Revenue Specialist*

The Indian Energy Service Center routinely holds partnership meetings between Tribes with high levels of oil and gas activity and other Federal Partners to address common concerns.



*Fort Berthold Tribal Meeting*

## WELCOME NEW IESC EMPLOYEES

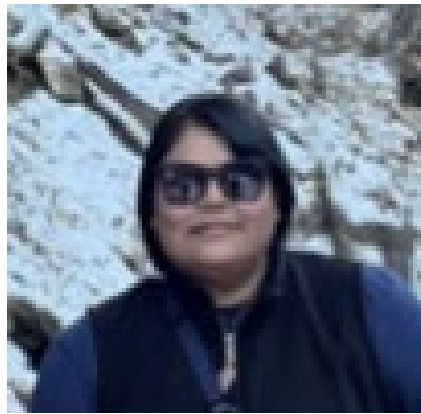


*Debra Williams, Realty Specialist*

### **Welcome, Debra!**

Debra Williams has dedicated an impressive 24 years to BIA. Her career included 17 years at the Anadarko Agency, where she worked in the Oil and Gas Section, along with a brief stint in the Acquisition and Disposal Section. Debra also spent 7 years at the Southern Plains Regional Office, 6 years in Real Estate Services, and one year in Land Titles and Records Office in 2002.

Originating from Anadarko, Oklahoma, Debra is a proud member of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma. She is married and has five children—three of whom have graduated, while two are still in school. Additionally, Debra has a grandbaby whom she enjoys spoiling.



*Cassandra Gould, Realty Specialist*

### **Welcome, Cassandra!**

Yá'át'ééh! My name is Cassandra Gould, and I am from Kirtland, New Mexico. I am a proud member of the Navajo Tribe. I earned my Bachelor of Agriculture in Rangeland Management from NM State University.

After college, I worked as an Environmental Scientist at a consulting company, and gained experience with NEPA, oil and gas permitting, reclamation, and collaborated with the oil and gas industries, government agencies, landowners, and Tribal offices. I then worked with the Federal Indian Minerals Office and BLM, working primarily with the Eastern Navajo Agency, community members, on/off reservation grazing permits, and oil and gas.

My husband and I have been together for over 20 years, and we have an 18-year-old son who just graduated from high school. I enjoy family time, road tribes, hiking, watching my son compete in NCAA Division II wrestling, sewing, making jewelry, and have Navajo weaving.



*Jordan Wofford, Realty Specialist*

### **Welcome, Jordan!**

My name is Jordan Wofford, and I am originally from Muskogee, Oklahoma, but now live in Castle Rock, Colorado. I attended the University of Central Oklahoma where I earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and then went on to pursue my MBA from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. I have worked for the government now for almost 12 years, starting with the BIA Osage Agency, then transferring to ONRR, and now back to the BIA. My favorite thing to do on my days off is to get outside and try to stay active. I really enjoy hunting, fishing, and hiking. In July of 2021 I got married to my wonderful wife, Rhea, and we have a dog named Yona.



Joy Bercier, Fiduciary Trust Advisor

**Welcome Joy!**

Hello, my name is Joy Bercier. I am an enrolled member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, North Dakota. I have been employed in government since 1999, starting my career in BIA's Probate Department and the Office of Special Trustee. I have navigated multiple system conversions, including the BIA MADD system, TAAMs, OST TFAS to Innovest, and various applications that have come and gone.

I routinely collaborated with several BIA agencies, Probate, Realty, during the Land Buy-Back period, Acquisitions and Disposals. I have a passion for learning, and this job continually provides new opportunities. I assist many Trust Account Administrators, Accounting Technicians, and FTOs, as well as BIA departments, by providing guidance on the documentation required to manage estates, land sales, gift deeds and probate processes. I worked with Tribal councils to obtain their annual investment letters and facilitate drawdowns and land purchases.

In my free time, I enjoy outdoor activities such as camping and fishing. I also raise horses, goats, chickens, and sheep.



Payton Batliner, Former Acting Director IESC

**Farewell and Good Luck**

The IESC bid farewell to Payton Batliner, our Acting Director. He will be taking on the role of Senior Vice President and Chief Lending Officer at the Native American Bank. Here are some highlights of his 15 years, 6 months of his impressive career:

Acting Director, IESC  
January 2023 - November 2024.

Facilitated nationwide cooperation between government offices to expedite Indian oil and gas development, standardize processes, and improve the efficiency of Indian energy, renewable energy, and mineral development management to better serve Indian beneficiaries and Tribes.

Branch Chief, Business Services, Division of Energy and Mineral Development (DEMD)  
June 2009 - February 2023

Contributed to economic development projects in Indian Country, focusing on governance, utility development, and finance for energy and mineral development projects



Hayes Haas, Natural Resources Specialist

**Farewell and Good Luck**

Hayes Haas joined IESC February 2017. On his first day, he recalls his supervisor saying, "I know we hired you to do this GIS stuff, but you're not doing that; you're going to learn Communitization Agreement (CA) adjudication."

Throughout his time at IESC he worked on CA adjudication, lease sales, lease expirations, right-of-way processing backlogs, and environmental assessment reviews. His notable accomplishments include:

- **North Dakota:** CA adjudication, communicating with mineral owners CA approval status estimates, and the dates when royalties would be disbursed.
- **Lease Records:** Retrieved lease records from a Utah BIA agency and transported them to IESC, Lakewood, CO, navigating over the continental divide during a spring snowstorm.

Hayes made invaluable contributions with the IESC, and we are saddened to see him leave. He started his new role as the Deputy Superintendent–Trust Services at the BIA Yankton Agency, overseeing Realty, Natural Resources, and Fire Departments, on November 4, 2024. We wish Hayes the best of luck in all his future endeavors.



Leslie Nelson, Petroleum Engineer

**Detail to IESC Ends**

My time with IESC was such an informative learning experience. Before I began my detail, the extent of my TAAMS experience was pulling Title Status Reports (TSRs). I have learned to encode TAAMS Mineral Agreements, pull Land Index Reports, Title Status Reports, assignments, and base contracts for Communitization Agreements for the Fort Berthold Area. Also, I aided in orphan wells research for the southern Colorado discrepancy wells.

Every day was filled with multiple projects that were all occurring at the same time. I really had to sharpen my time management skills. Our daily check-in meetings were a great idea to stay on track with daily projects. I was able to attend the Fort Berthold Federal partners meeting virtually and multiple operators’ meetings, experiencing the direct impact IESC work.

Ms. Katherine and her team of experts were so kind and helpful, always willing to help and answer all my inquisitive questions. I am so grateful for this opportunity, and I hope to return to IESC in the future, on a more permanent basis.



Michelle Morrison, IESC BTFA Branch Chief & Fiduciary Trust Officer

**Congratulations on Your Promotions!**

Michelle Morrison, the IESC BTFA Branch Chief and Fiduciary Trust Officer (FTO) for the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute field offices has accepted a 90-day detail, temporary promotion as the Acting Deputy Director for the Office of Strategic Oversight and Planning within the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration.



Katrina Brown, Acting IESC BTFA Branch Chief and Fiduciary Trust Officer

We are excited to announce that Katrina Brown, Trust Funds Advisor, has accepted a temporary promotion to serve as the Acting FTO for S. Ute/Ute Mt. Ute and IESC Branch Chief. Since joining the IESC in 2022, Katrina has played an integral role in numerous IESC initiatives. Please join us in recognizing and congratulating Katrina on this well-deserved accomplishment!



LaWanda Gibson, Realty Specialist

**Congratulations on Your Accomplishment**

LaWanda Gibson successfully completed the Indian Affairs Mid-Level Training Program. The program features a cohort-based learning model with no more than 30 participants nationwide held from July to December 2024.

This program is exclusively open to Indian Affairs managers, supervisors, team leaders, and high-performing employees who demonstrate leadership abilities. It is designed for to enhance participant leadership capacity, communication skills, and expand networking by learning from others.

When asked about the best part of the program, Ms. Gibson shared, *“The networking and connections made. They had us assigned to teams from the beginning and we worked together and throughout, getting out of your comfort zone and learning how to deal with such a diverse group of leaders and their opinions”*

Thank you for your dedication to growing as a leader within our organization.

## DIVISION OF REAL ESTATE SERVICES (DRES)



*Boundary line between Salt River Indian Reservation and Scottsdale, AZ*

### **Our 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 to protect trust assets and resources in the management of Tribal Trust, and Restricted Fee lands under Tribal law, federal law and regulations.

### **Who We Serve**

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) DRES provides realty services to Tribes and individual Indian landowners such as surface leasing, mortgaging, and granting rights of way crossing their trust and restricted fee lands. DRES also administers the processes for Tribes to acquire trust land and make Reservation proclamation requests.

DRES provides policy direction, technical assistance, training, and administrative review and monitoring of real property operations to Tribes, individual Indian landowners, and BIA office and agency staff.

### **Outreach**

DRES in coordination with the Office of Trust Services attended and presented on Agricultural leases, processes and an overview of DRES/BIA at the Indian Agricultural Conference in December 2024. The IAC annual conference unites Native producers, leaders, advocates, and the federal government annually to explore and advance developments in the agricultural field.

## **ACQUISITION & DISPOSALS**

### **TAAMS A&D User Group**

This User Group consists of Subject Matter Experts from each Region. The group meets regularly to identify user needs for TAAMS, draft system change requests (enhancements), handbook development, as well as business rule development/modifications. The group is currently drafting the A&D Handbook for guidance/processing transactions.

### **Fee-to-Trust**

Land Acquisitions, Fee-to-Trust (FTT), and the Restoration of Tribal Homelands remains the highest priority within Indian Affairs by the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs (AS-IA). The BIA is coordinating internally through the DBIA, DBD-Trust Services, DBD Field Operation, Regional Directors (RDs), Solicitors Office, Office of Trust Services, Division of Real Estate Services to ensure the priority and efficiency in processing fee-to-trust acquisitions.

With a focus on data integrity the Team continues to review information in TAAMS and provide technical assistance to the Regional Offices to create efficiency.

### **TAAMS FTT User Group**

This User Group consists of Subject Matter Experts from each Region. The group meets regularly to identify user needs for TAAMS, draft system change requests (enhancements), and business rule development/modifications.

## HEARTH ACT

The BIA HEARTH Act, stands for “Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Homeownership Act”, is a federal law that allows tribes to take more control over leasing their tribal trust lands by creating their own leasing regulations. Once the leasing regulations are approved by BIA, Tribes are permitted to enter leases without further BIA approval, promoting tribal self-governance in land management.

Each week a HEARTH Act report is prepared, analyzed, and distributed to Senior levels on the ongoing status of each leasing regulations.

### HEARTH Act Applications (Oct-Dec 2024)

Tribe	Leasing Regulations
Oglala Sioux Tribe	Agriculture, Business, Residential, Wind Solar, Wind Energy Evaluation
Guidiville Rancheria	Agriculture, Business, Residential, Wind Solar, Wind Energy Evaluation
Mohegan Indian Tribe of CT	Residential

### HEARTH Act Approvals (Oct-Dec 2024)

Tribe	Leasing Regulations
Bay Mills Indian Community Nov 12, 2024	Business, Residential
Kickapoo Tribe of OK Dec 16, 2024	Agriculture, Business, Residential, Wind Solar, Wind Energy Exploration



### Webinar Training for BIA Field Staff & Tribes

The National HEARTH Act team conducted National HEARTH Act training for the BIA field and an overview session for Tribes. Contact [Carla.cook@bia.gov](mailto:Carla.cook@bia.gov) for a list of upcoming training sessions.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Audience</u>
November 6, 2024	Field Training
December 11, 2024	Tribal Outreach

### HEARTH Act Training on YouTube

Visit <https://www.bia.gov/service/real-estate-training> for links to the following YouTube Training Sessions:

- HEARTH Act for Tribes (45 minutes)
- HEARTH Act for Lenders (60 minutes)

### TAAMS Realty System Trainings

Five TAAMS Realty System Trainings were held this quarter and Subject Matter Experts (SME) from DRES attended each training session. The training sessions held were:

TAAMS Module	Dates
Business Leasing	October 15-17, 2024
Fee to Trust	October 22-24, 2024
Surface Leasing	October 29-31, 2024
Rights of Way	December 10-12, 2024
Acquisitions & Disposal	December 17-19, 2024

### HEARTH Act Web Page

The HEARTH Act Coordinator works with the Web Content editor to update the Indian Affairs website for HEARTH Act. The new published content for DRES has added links and up to date information for HEARTH Act submissions, approvals, policies, and trainings.

Please visit our website for updated information at <https://www.bia.gov/service/HEARTH-Act>

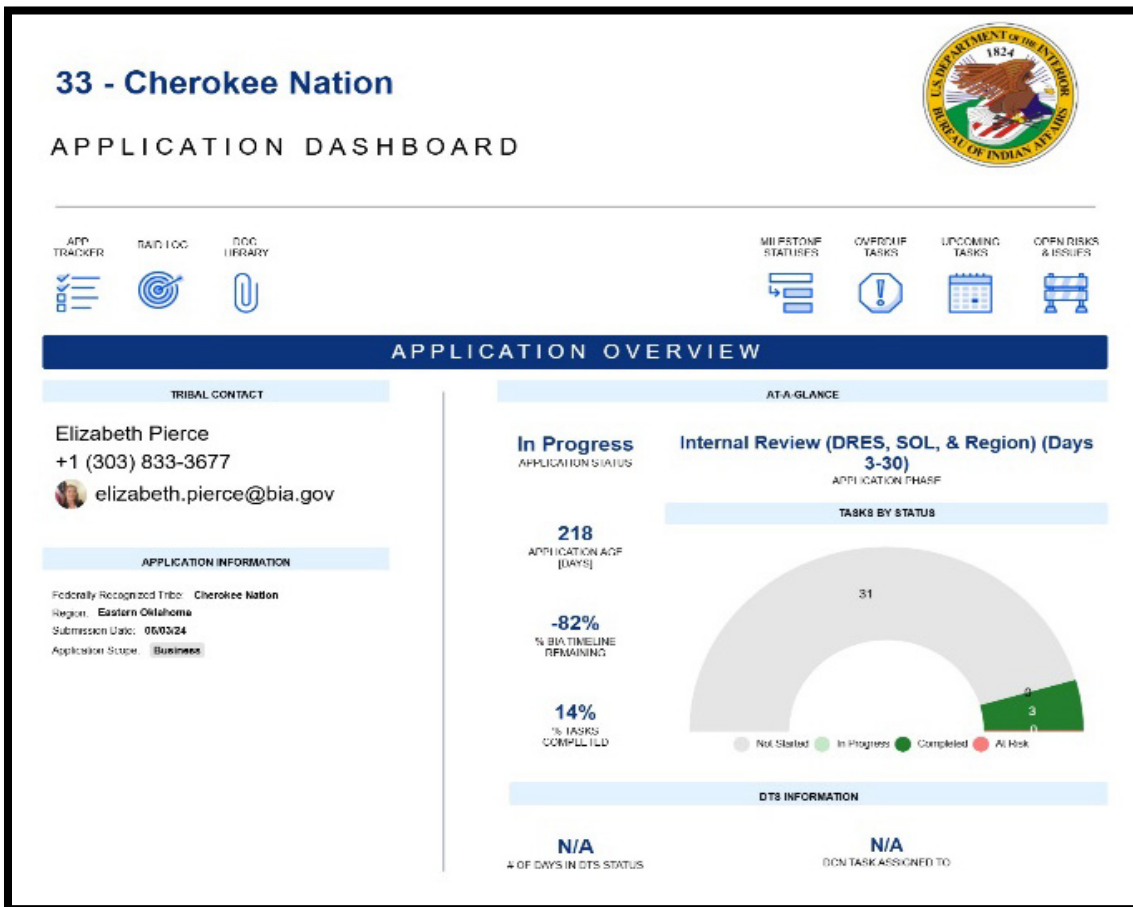
### HEARTH Act Application Tracking System (HAATS)

HAATS version 1.0 Lays the Foundation for Collaboration, Routing and Tracking of HEARTH Act Tribal Application Packages

Since the passage of the Helping Expedite and Advance Responsible Tribal Home Ownership Act of 2012 (HEARTH Act), the BIA DRES Central Office reached a new milestone by approving the 100th Tribal regulation in 2023.

Under the HEARTH Act, once Tribes' governing Tribal leasing regulations are submitted to and approved by the Secretary of the Interior, they are authorized to negotiate and enter into surface leases under their approved HEARTH Act regulations without further approval from the Department of the Interior. Tribes may assume the responsibility for Agricultural, Business, General, Renewable Energy, and Residential Leases or all five types. Interest in Tribal HEARTH Act leasing regulations has been accelerating, considering the economic benefit that Tribes have attained.

The newly deployed HAATS system in the BIA STAT environment integrates with the Departmental Tracking System (DTS) system for the Secretarial surnaming and approval process. Automated reports in DTS are run daily and any new status on the applicable HEARTH Act cases are uploaded into STAT.





# BIA HAATS

## PORTFOLIO DASHBOARD



INTAKE FORM



INTAKE SHEET



DTS DATES



OVERDUE MILESTONES




OPEN RISKS & ISSUES



### PORTFOLIO OVERVIEW

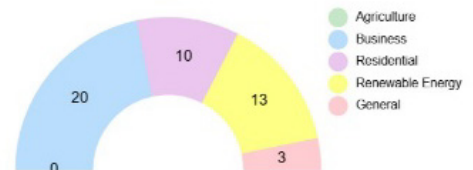
#### APPLICATION TRACKER PORTAL

 This widget was created by Michelle Cheng, who is no longer an admin on this dashboard or the source report. To show the report, either add Michelle Cheng as an admin, or edit the widget to show the report using your permissions.

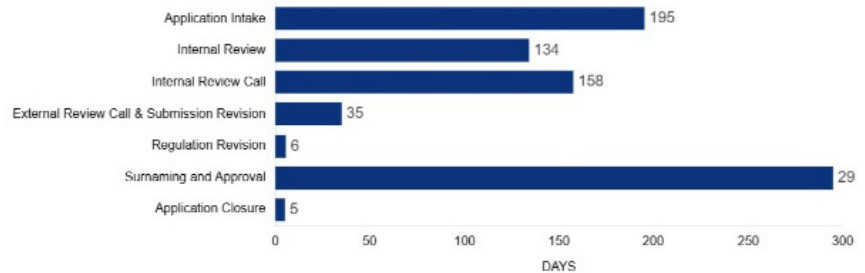
#### PORTFOLIO METRICS



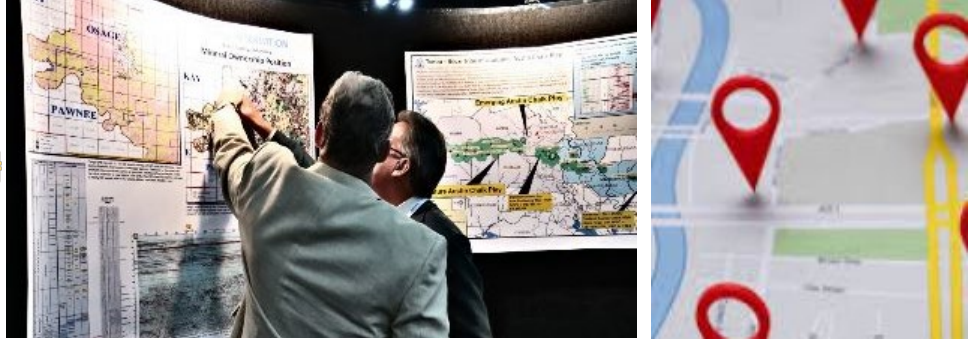
#### APPLICATIONS BY SCOPE



#### AVERAGE REVIEW PHASE LENGTH



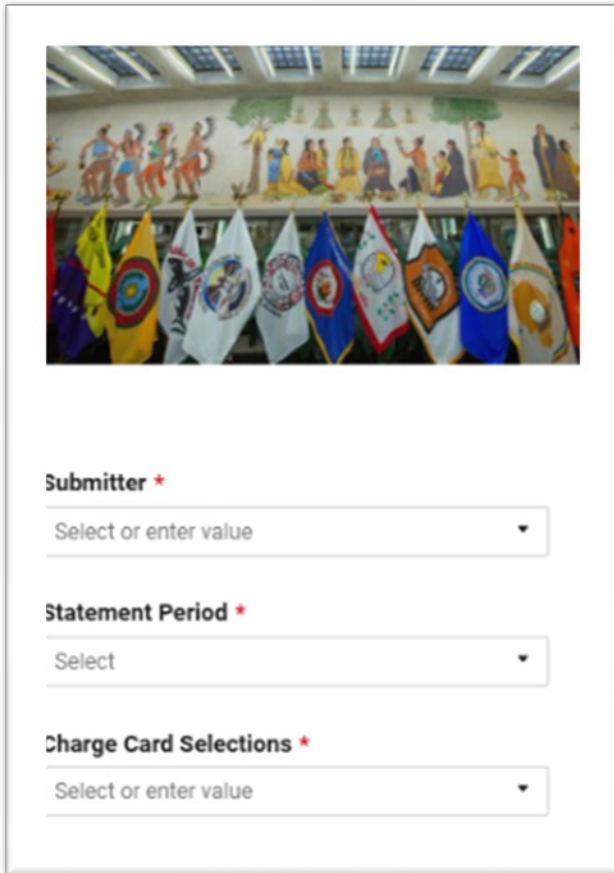
The status of each case as well as the entire set of current HEARTH Act packages are displayed on informative dashboards, enabling at-a-glance viewing of current progress and highlighting of when intervention might be needed. See sample screen shots below.



GIS map of Tribal lands. Data improves our understanding of Tribal lands and resources.

### STAT User Training

A BIA STAT User Update training meeting system was conducted on October 3, 2024. The new OTS Staff Dashboard was showcased, which greatly improves our ability to enter, track, and report on regular recurring as well as ad-hoc administrative activities.



Users can narrow a search by Submitter, Statement Period and Charge Card Selections.

### OTS Staff Dashboard

The newly available Dynamic View function was presented and demonstrated which allows an owner of a sheet to selectively limit access to the entire sheet or report. Also, during the most recent quarter, the authentication mechanism was upgraded to Azure AD, aka Entra ID, which enables improved cybersecurity and positions BIA for future identity enhancements.

The Dashboard allows employees and managers access to real time data on Travel Charge Cards, Mission Critical Travel Requests from initiation to approval, and Remote/Telework Agreements submitted and approved.

Submit STAT related questions or issues:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> User Help Portal	
<b>FY2025 Q1</b>	<b>Completed October</b> 33
<b>Completed November</b> 31	<b>Completed December</b> 20

**TRAVEL CHARGE CARDS**

Employee Charge Card Statement or No Statement Certification **due by the 5th of each month** (i.e. October statement due November 5th).

AO Certifications are **due by the 10th of the month** (i.e. October AO Certification due November 10th).

If Johnna Blackhair or Trina Locke are your Approving Officials, please select Rene Joseph.

More information can be found on the DPM&C SharePoint site, use link below:

[DPM&C Sharepoint](#)

☆ **OTS Travel Charge Cards- Submitter** ⓘ

Filter | [Refresh] | [List View]

Identifier	Submitter Contact	Approving Official	Month and Year of Statement	Selection
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**NEW! Screen Capture of OTS Dashboard first page in STAT**

OTS is launching a new survey capability that will enable external stakeholders and the public to share their opinions, and it complies with the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). The GSA Touchpoints cloud-hosted service for outreach and collection of survey responses posted on BIA.gov webpages is going through the final stages of approval. OTS plans to launch the first surveys in support of the [BIA Open Data Page](#), and publish the resulting feedback and associated analytics.

Was this page helpful ?

Yes

No

Please tell us about your experience here:

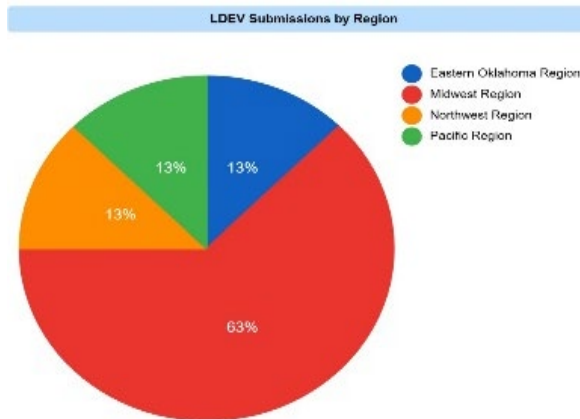
*Optional survey for BIA Open Data Page*

**2025 Fee to Trust – Land Description Examination and Validation (LDEV) Tracker**

Created	Land Area Code (LAC)	TAAMS Case	Regions	Tribe/Applicant Name
01/07/25 8:09 AM	440	81695	Midwest Region	Menominee
01/07/25 8:09 AM	400	81696	Midwest Region	Menominee
01/07/25 8:09 AM	440	81701	Midwest Region	Menominee

**LDEV Submissions by Region**

Pie chart information: 13% Eastern Oklahoma Region, 63% Midwest Region, 13% Northwest Region, and 13% Pacific Region



**Right of Way Project**

DRIS continues to make progress in the Right-of-Way (ROW) IT System Study project. The MOA and associated G-invoicing has been finalized, and the team is interviewing prospective detailee candidates for a part-time leadership role. The integrated project team is also exploring potential 'Quick Wins' and the prospective usage of new and existing tools for near-term process improvements.

**GDEV- Geodata Examination & Validation (Fee to Trust)**

The Fee to Trust GIS Strike Team completed 197 Legal Description Examination and Validation (LDEV) reviews within 2024. A Dashboard portal was created to provide Regions with a LDEV submission platform to submit, monitor and track LDEVs. see below

## DIVISION OF TRUST LAND CONSOLIDATION (DTLC)



### Mission

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

### 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.

### SUMMARY OF LAND ACQUISITION RESERVATIONS

The Trust Land Consolidation implemented land acquisition efforts at the following reservations in FY 2024 and continued in the first quarter of FY 2025 are: Oglala Sioux Tribe and Arapahoe Tribe of the Wind River Reservation, Wyoming & Eastern Shoshone Tribe of the Wind River Reservation, Wyoming.

### OG LALA SIOUX TRIBE'S

Accomplishments (Oct-Dec 2024). The Division can receive offers from willing sellers that are signed and notarized by the date the appraisal expires of December 31, 2024. Land sales totaled \$764,861.

Quantity	Transactions
142	Post-offer postcards mailed to willing sellers
198	Purchasable Offers: Includes whereabouts unknown
38	Approved Offers
50	Fractionated Interests Acquired
912	Equivalent Acres Restored to Tribal Ownership
43	Tracts with Interests Acquired

### ARAPAHOE TRIBE OF THE WIND RIVER RESERVATION, WY & EASTERN SHOSHONE TRIBE OF THE WIND RIVER RESERVATION, WY

Accomplishments (April-Nov 4, 2024). Land sales totaled \$1,501,202.

Quantity	Transactions
2,166	Purchasable Offers: Includes whereabouts unknown
109	Approved Offers
977	Fractionated Interests Acquired
1.337	Equivalent Acres Restored to Tribal Ownership
255	Tracts with Interests Acquired

## IMPLEMENTATION AT STANDING ROCK INDIAN RESERVATION

On December 23, 2024, offer packets were generated and then mailed to 26 willing sellers at the Standing Rock Indian reservation to initiate tribally funded offers using the Tribe's Indian Land Consolidation (ILC) Recoup funds. The Standing Rock's Tribal Resolution was provided to the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA) who established an LP Account.

The Division drafted post-cards for outreach to inform willing sellers about the implementation at Standing Rock. (See sample below). As of January 8, 2025, the Division has received three offers which are under review for approval in the TLC Module.

## Program Success

Jan 2023 – Jan 1, 2025

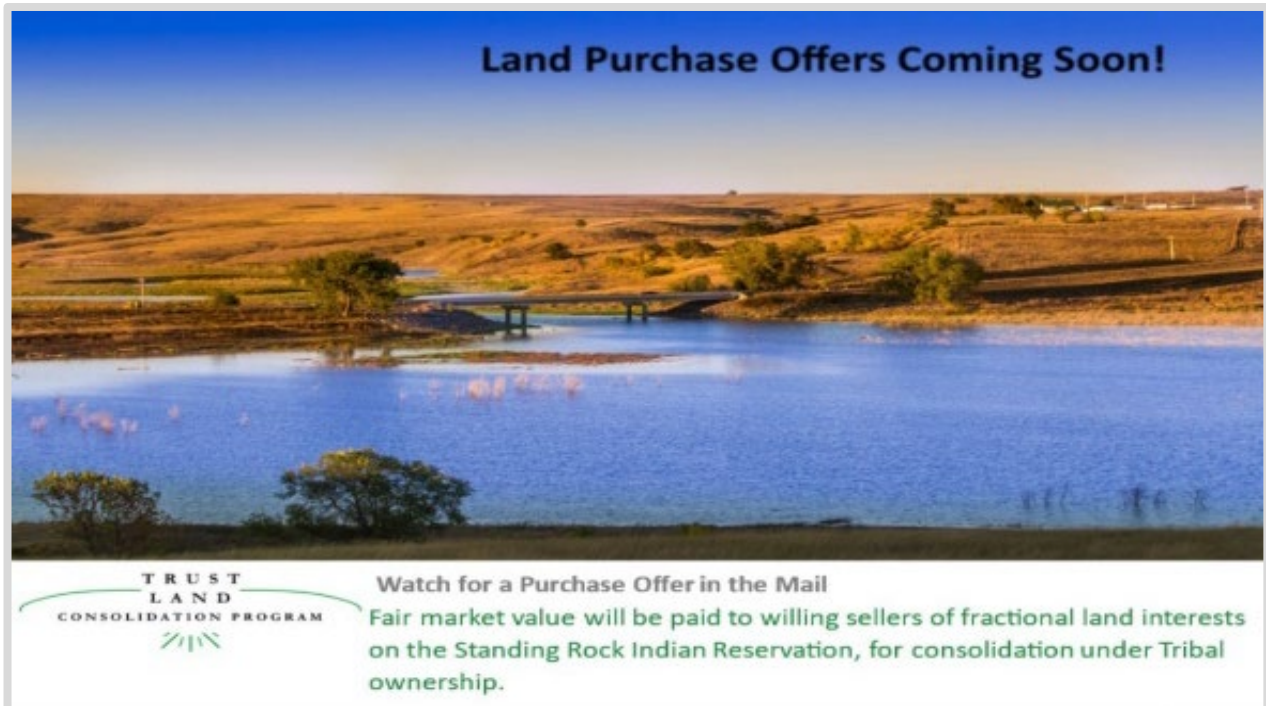
The D-TLC has initiated four implementations, an overall total number of fractional interests acquired is **1,222** for a total of **423** tracts and equivalent acres purchased is **5,777**, with approved dollar amount of Trust Land Consolidation sales of **\$5,009,282.47**.

## Farewell and Best Wishes

DTLC bids Farewell and Best Wishes to two staff on their retirement of over 50 years of combined experience. Both individuals retired by the end of December 31, 2024:

- Shirley Pease, Realty Specialist, had 25 years of dedicated service
- Pauline DeCrane, Realty Clerk, had 26 years of dedicated service.

## Flyer mailed to potential Sellers



**FY 2025 Tentative Schedule for Implementation**

Reservation	State(s)	Land Area Code (LAC)	Offer Mailout	Offer Type (TLC) or (TFO)*
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe	ND, SD	302	December 2024/ January 2025	Tribally Funded Offers – ILC Recoup Funds
Standing Rock Sioux Tribe	ND, SD	302	January/ February 2025	TLC
Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe	SD	340	March 2025	Tribally Funded Offers-ILC Recoup Funds
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation	OR	143	March 2025	TLC
Confederated Tribes & Bands of the Yakama Nation	WA	124	June 2025	TLC
Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation	MT	206	August 2025	TLC
Blackfeet Tribe	MT	201	October 2025	TLC
Crow Tribe	MT	202	December 2025	TLC

\*TLC = Trust Land Consolidation; TFO = Tribally Funded Offers

## DIVISION OF WATER & POWER (DWP)



The Branch of Irrigation and Power (BIP) principally supports two multi-project programs: 1) the BIA Irrigation Program and 2) the BIA Power Program. BIP provides administration, policy, oversight, and technical assistance to BIA Regional offices and local agencies.

BIA-owned irrigation and power projects are operated and maintained under the direction of the BIA, Office of Field Operations by:

- Tribes under P.L. 93-638 contracts
- Tribes under self-governance compacts
- Water user groups under specific contracts or agreements

### BRANCH OF IRRIGATION AND POWER

#### **BIA Irrigation Program**

BIA owns or has an interest in irrigation projects throughout the United States located on or associated with various Indian Reservations.

*BIA owns and operates irrigation projects that supply water to 25,000 users and irrigate over 780,000 acres of land.*

The [BIA Irrigation Program](#) delivers irrigation water to Tribes and non-Indian water customers. The Irrigation Program strives to improve the management of land and natural resource assets through the delivery of water consistent with applicable state and federal law, in an environmentally responsible and cost-efficient manner.

#### **National Irrigation Information Management System (NIIMS)**

As part of the BIA Irrigation Program, DWP also operates the National Irrigation Information Management System (NIIMS). NIIMS is a billing, collection, debt management and rate-setting system supporting BIA's irrigation operation and maintenance (O&M) assessments across 16 irrigation projects in Indian Country. NIIMS processes approximately \$35 million in annual receivables, which is the primary revenue source for the O&M of each irrigation project.

*BIA power projects provide electrical service to over 38,000 customers and generate \$73 million in annual revenue.*



## BIA Power Program

The BIA Power Program reliably and efficiently delivers electrical power to Tribes and non-Indian power customers.

The Power Program operates, maintains, and rehabilitates power system infrastructure on each project including:

- *Power-generating facilities* – facilities designed to produce electric energy from another form of energy.
- *Power substations* – part of an electrical generation, transmission, and distribution system transforming voltage from high to low, or the reverse.
- *Electrical switching stations* – substations without transformers and operating at a single voltage level.
- *Transmission lines* – specialized cables or other structures designed to conduct electromagnetic waves in a contained manner.
- *Distribution lines* and related infrastructure – lines or systems for distributing power from a transmission system to a consumer that operates at less than 69,000 volts.



*Transmission breaker at Coolidge Substation, AZ*



*Kerr Substation, MT*



*Power Generation Facility at Headgate Rock Dam, AZ/CA border*

## Introducing New BIP Staff

BIP is grateful for the dedicated efforts of BIA leadership and Human Resources to fill critical vacant and challenging-to-fill positions. We are excited to welcome these exceptional new team members, and we are confident that their knowledge and experience will be of great service to BIP, our irrigation and power projects, and Indian Country.



*Mona "Lisa" Carlson  
NIIMS Financial Specialist*

Lisa, an enrolled member of the Blackfeet Tribe, has 35 years of federal government service working at Blackfeet Agency. She worked for the Blackfeet Indian Irrigation Project; assisted the Blackfeet Agency Fire Management program doing payroll for wildland fire employees from 1994 to 2006; worked in Facilities Management and Road Construction; and returned to Irrigation in 2005.

**Area of Responsibility:** Lisa will assist with management of the NIIMS Program, overseeing billing, collection, debt management and rate-setting activities, ensuring compliance with policies and performing quality control activities to uphold agency regulations. As a subject matter expert, Lisa will be the primary point of contact in providing technical assistance and oversight to irrigation program staff or NIIMS processes and functions.

Lisa enjoys spending time with her family and friends camping during the North American Indian Days celebration, a family tradition passed down from generation to generation. This is when her family participates in rodeo events, Indian relay, stick games, dancing and just enjoying a campfire. She also enjoys outdoor activities like camping, fishing and going to Flathead Lake, where her family spends the day riding on a pontoon and swimming.



*John Trebesch, P.E.*

**Background:** John is a member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Tribe and a professional civil engineer. He has approximately 20 years of federal service. Most recently, he worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service. He previously worked as a BIA Transportation Engineer, and General Engineer in Facilities Management. He was the Indian Health Service, Division of Sanitation Facilities Construction for approximately 16 years.

He worked as a consultant engineer for approximately 10 years with firms located in Kansas and South Dakota. Most of his professional experience is in water resources (municipal) and water treatment.

He attended South Dakota State University earning a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. Retired from the Army National Guard in 2000 with 21 years of military service in Field Artillery. He has been married for 35 years and has 3 grown children. In his free time, he enjoys being outdoors (camping, fishing, hunting) and spending time with his family.

**Area of Responsibility:** John is a Civil Engineer and COR II supporting the BIP team remotely, assisting with A/E and construction contracting and providing support to the Regional Engineers and irrigation project staff. He is currently involved with the Bannock and Owl lateral rehab (FHIP).

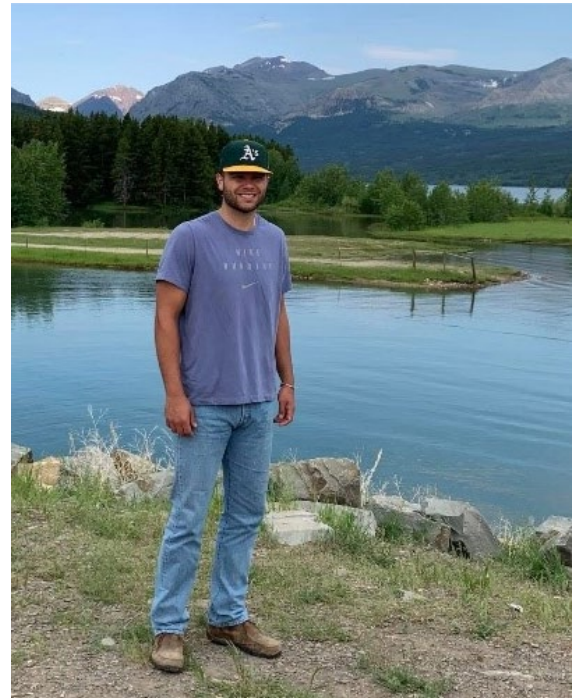


*John Connors, P.E.*

Background: John has built his engineering career on a foundation of practical experience, beginning with carpentry and working his way up through heavy civil construction. He spent several years as an engineering consultant working on a wide variety of construction material and geotechnical engineering projects.

For more than a decade, John has worked for Montana's Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. During this time, he worked with the State Water Project Bureau, Montana's Dam Safety Program, floodplain management programs, and Water Rights Bureau. His many positions included Regional Engineer, Project Manager, Rehabilitation Section Supervisor, and Bureau Chief of the Water Operations Bureau. John and his family have tucked themselves into the mountains outside of Helena, MT where long hikes along elk trails are a way of life.

Area of Responsibility: John is a Civil Engineer and works remotely with the BIP team and Regional Engineers on the implementation of A/E and construction contracts. Currently, he is working on and providing support for the Wapato Headworks Project, the Colorado River Irrigation Project, and the Fort Hall Reservation Main Canal. He looks forward to integrating into projects across the bureau's portfolio.



*Riley Berry, Civil Engineer*

Background: Riley, a citizen of Mvskoke Nation, started his career through the BIA Pathways Program. During his internship he was able to shadow many different federal agencies including Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Energy and Mineral Development, Branch of Irrigation and Power, and BIA's Safety of Dams' Early Warning Systems. He then joined BIA as a contractor three years ago and worked with Wapato Irrigation Project, Flathead Irrigation Project, and Central Office. He brings his knowledge of GIS, AutoCAD, engineering, and Tribal relations to BIA.

Area of Responsibility: Working remotely from Oklahoma, Riley serves the Central Office team as a Civil Engineer. He is currently working with project data in GIS and AutoCAD to help with design efforts across BIP's irrigation projects.



James "Jim" Gappa, P.E.

Background: Jim is a professional civil engineer with over 29 years of experience. Upon graduation, Jim got a job with the Montana Department of Transportation in Helena, MT. After seven years in the Right-of-Way Department, Design section, and the Geotechnical section, Jim was hired on with BIA–Transportation in the Rocky Mountain Region (RMR) in Billings, MT and worked there for seven years. Next, he took a job with a local A/E firm for three years. Jim returned to federal service with BIA–Water Resource Department in the RMR as the Regional Water Rights Engineer and later took over as the Regional Irrigation Engineer. In September 2024, Jim joined BIA–Central Office, Division of Water and Power. The kids have grown and now Jim and his wife are “empty nesters” residing in Billings, and they love what Montana has to offer with numerous outdoor activities.

Area of Responsibility: Jim is a Civil Engineer and serves as a COR, assisting BIP with A/E and construction contracting and providing support to the Regional Engineers and Irrigation Projects. He is currently involved with helping draft new and revised PL93-638 contracts and cooperative assistance agreements to better define the roles and responsibilities of all the parties involved. Jim is also helping with various irrigation construction projects.



Mark McNearney, P.E.  
Mechanical Engineer

Background: Mark is a professional civil engineer with over 25 years of experience. He has worked in private consulting and the public sector, with much of his career representing owners of public infrastructure. Most recently, he served as Montana DNRC’s State Water Projects Bureau Chief, administering 18 water projects including storage reservoirs and canal systems. Mark and his family have made Helena, MT their home base and enjoy everything that Big Sky country has to offer.

Area of Responsibility: Mark is a Civil Engineer and serves remotely as a COR supporting the BIP team, assisting with A/E and construction contracting and providing support to the Regional Engineers and Irrigation Project staff. He is currently involved with the Bannock Pumping Plant rehab (FHIP), Wapato Drop 1 construction (WIP), and the Milk River Diversion design (FBIP).



Jami Farris  
NIIMS Accountant

Jami, an enrolled member of the Shoshone Bannock Tribes located in Southeast Idaho, began her career with BIA’s Fort Hall Indian Irrigation Project (FHIP) in 1998 and has worked there for 27 years. During that time, she worked her way into a management position, and she takes tremendous pride in providing quality service to Indian Tribes, individual Indians and other agencies to manage and protect trust resources while leading irrigation employees.

Area of Responsibility: Jami will assist with management of the NIIMS program, overseeing billing, collection, debt management and rate-setting activities, ensuring compliance with policies and performing quality control activities to uphold agency regulations. Jami will also assess process flows and system integration to recommend improvements in internal controls and reporting.

Jami enjoys time with her family while hiking, mountain biking, skiing, camping, and traveling domestically and abroad.

**BRANCH OF IRRIGATION & POWER**

**Critical Projects**

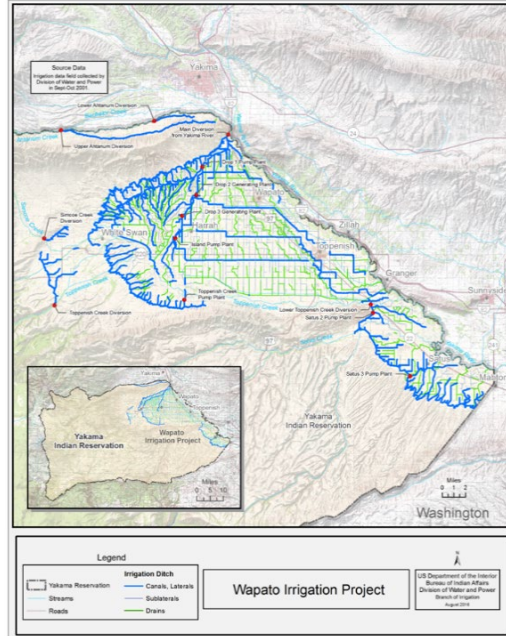
Project	State
Colorado River Indian Irrigation Project (Power Utility)	AZ
Wapato Irrigation Project	WA
Fort Peck Irrigation Project	MT
San Carlos Irrigation Project (Power Division)	AZ
Mission Valley Power	MT
Fort Belknap Irrigation Project	MT
Fort Hall Indian Irrigation Project	ID

**Wapato Headworks Project, Wapato Irrigation Project, Washington**

The Wapato Diversion Dam and Headworks is the main irrigation diversion for the Wapato Irrigation Project (WIP). WIP serves approximately 132,000 acres on the Yakama Nation, located in central Washington, and crops grown under WIP produce over \$550 million in crop value annually.



The Wapato Diversion Dam and Headworks was constructed in 1918 and needs significant rehabilitation and modernization to address infrastructure, safety and natural resources concerns, including protection for threatened and endangered species.



The scale and importance of this project necessitates that intricate details be identified and tested so the final product will be a success long into the future. To this end, the project staff will be building and testing scale models of the proposed facilities this spring. Physical modeling of the system will provide invaluable information on how fish and infrastructure will interact with the proposed designs. This helps ensure that the Wapato Headworks Project will find the delicate balance between agriculture and aquatics before the first shovelfuls of earth are moved, saving cost and effort over time.

The biggest challenges are best faced with a great team and BIP has assembled a great team to work toward a solution. This team—composed of the Yakama Nation, the BIA Northwest Region, BIP and a cadre of consultants and other federal partners—has developed, refined, analyzed and evaluated numerous alternatives in pursuit of finding a sustainable balance between irrigation and fishery. Read more at <https://wapatodiversion.com/home>

**Wapato Diversion at Wapato Irrigation Project, Yakima, Washington**



Wapato Diversion at Wapato Irrigation Project, Yakima, Washington



**Jocko K Diversion Dam, Flathead Indian Irrigation Project, Montana**



*Diversion Dam before replacement—Jocko K Diversion at Flathead Indian Irrigation Project, Montana*



*Upstream view*



In 2023 the replacement of the Jocko K Diversion Dam was completed at the Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP) by the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). The new structure improves worker safety, allows screening and volitional passage of culturally significant (ESA-listed) bull trout, incorporates modernization study recommendations, increases efficiencies, and decreases annual operations and maintenance (O&M) for FIIP.

The original Jocko K Diversion Dam was constructed in the late 1800s and didn't meet modern safety, environmental, or efficiency standards. This is a critical diversion for the project and the protected bull trout fisheries.

CSKT delivered the project through a Construction Manager/General Contractor utilizing A1128 and A1163 funding via compact (pre-settlement). The new Jocko K Diversion Dam structure includes:

- 180-cfs diversion capacity
- Improved sediment sluicing with two undershot slide gates
- Denil fish ladder on right abutment
- 600-ft. 4x8-ft. pre-cast tunnel
- Coanda Screen inlet and downstream fish passage
- Chadbourne weir spillway
- Pin-n-plank collapsible emergency spillway
- Modern gate actuators and controls



*New Jocko Conversion Dam at Flathead Indian Irrigation Project, Montana*



*New Jocko K Diversion at Flathead Indian Irrigation Project, Montana*

## NATIONAL IRRIGATION INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (NIIMS)

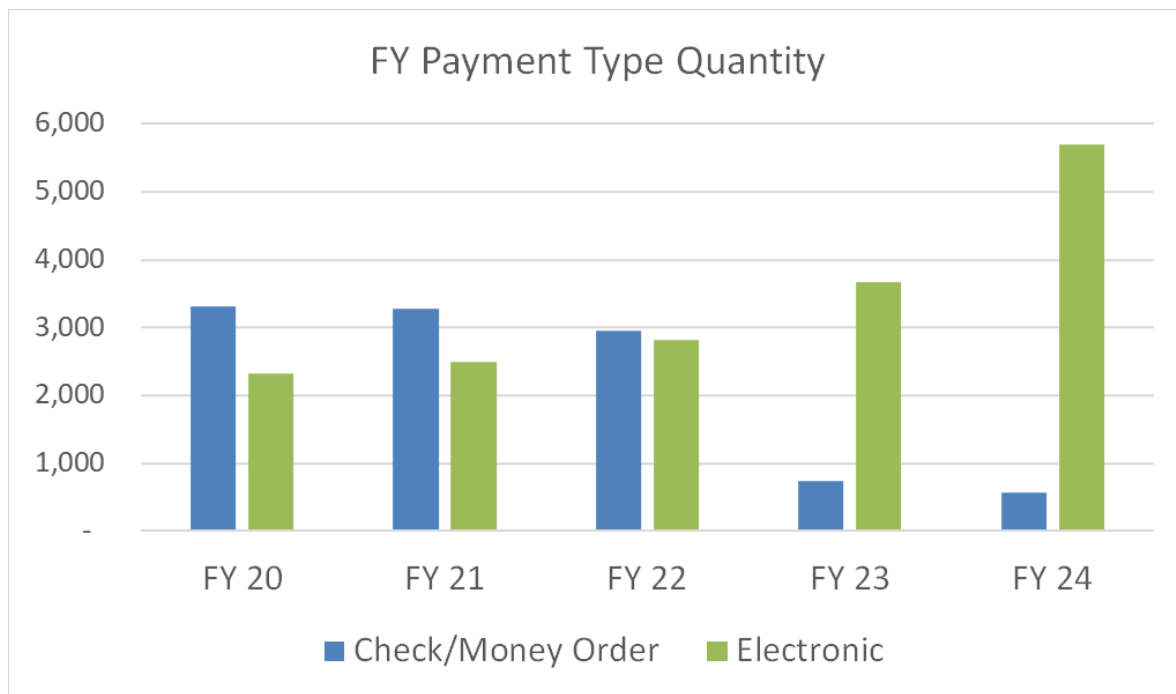
### NIIMS Achieves Milestone in Processing Electronic Irrigation Payments

In FY2024, NIIMS successfully processed 91% of total irrigation customer payments electronically. This represents a 144% increase over FY2020 metrics, and the achievement highlights our commitment to modernizing and streamlining our payment procedures for greater efficiency. See figure below for check/money order and electronic payment metrics processed by fiscal year.

The NIIMS program also introduced a quick response (QR) code to direct customers to the BIA Irrigation Services webpage for convenient electronic payment instructions. This QR code has been included on all BIA irrigation customer billing envelopes, and a poster featuring various electronic payment options was distributed to irrigation project locations for visibility. Utilizing data analytics, the program found there were over 1,000 page views on the BIA Irrigation Services webpage in FY2024, with 52% coming from mobile devices. This insight will guide future efforts to further promote electronic payment adoption among BIA irrigation customers.

### Implementation of Multi-Factor Authentication Login

NIIMS staff have successfully implemented a multifactor authentication (MFA) solution for the legacy NIIMS application, enhancing security by allowing users to log in with their PIV card and PIN. This initiative aligns with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) memorandum M-22-09 Federal Zero Trust Strategy and is crucial for meeting Department of the Interior policies and requirement for meeting application layer, phishing-resistant MFA by November 30, 2024. Non-compliance could jeopardize the irrigation program's mission, making this implementation vital. Additionally, it enables irrigation project staff to continue using the legacy NIIMS system until modernization is complete, effectively replacing traditional username/password logins.



Check/money order and electronic payment metrics

## 2025 National Irrigation Meeting

The National Irrigation Meeting was held in December 2024 and was hosted at the San Carlos Irrigation Project (SCIP) in Coolidge, Arizona.

The meeting brought BIA leadership and staff across the irrigation program together, in person and remotely, to discuss program policy, accomplishments, challenges and key issues affecting the program. In-person attendees also received a tour of SCIP facilities and a short-course in modernization from Dr. Howes from the Cal Poly Irrigation Training and Research Center (ITRC).



*Field tour at San Carlos Irrigation Project, Arizona*



*National Irrigation Meeting group photo on field tour at San Carlos Irrigation Project, Arizona*



*Field tour photos at San Carlos Irrigation Project, Arizona*

