



TRUST LAND RESOURCES • RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP • RESULTS THAT MATTER

**Message from the Deputy Director**

The Office of Trust Services had a remarkable year thanks to the hard work and dedication of our staff. The results are detailed in our FY24 Accomplishments Report highlighted on Page 4 of this newsletter.



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We started Fiscal Year 2025 by onboarding 19 new OTS Team Members in key environmental, energy, natural resource, geographic information, water and power, workforce and cultural resource management positions. A few introductions to new staff are included in this newsletter and their work will be highlighted in future newsletters.

Our team submitted up-to-date reports for the DOI Transition Team on our programs, projects and future goals as is custom for a new Administration taking office in January 2025. Our OTS Strategic Plan developed as a collaborative project with all Division Chiefs was approved in 2024 further outlines our goals. See <https://www.bia.gov/bia/ots>.

As you read through the newsletter, I would encourage you to pay particular attention to upcoming training events, opportunities to request technical assistance, and the scheduled tribal consultations. We at Trust Services remain dedicated to providing effective resource stewardship and delivering results that matter. We welcome your feedback by email at [OTS@bia.gov](mailto:OTS@bia.gov).

Best wishes to you and your families this holiday season!

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**ALASKAN PROVERB**

*“If you wish your merit to be known, acknowledge that of other people.”*

## OFFICE OF TRUST SERVICES STAFFING



### Current & Future USAjobs.gov Announcements

<u>Pay Rate</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Trust Services Division</u>
GS-0301-07/09	Admin Support Specialist (7 positions)	Various Divisions
GS-0193-13	Archeologist	Cultural Resource Management
GS-0343-09/11/12	Program Analyst	Directorate, Environmental & Natural Resources
GS-0343-12/13	Management Analyst	Directorate, Environmental & Natural Resources
GS-0301-12	Administrative Support Asst.	Directorate, Environmental & Natural Resources
GS-1313-12	Geophysicist (2 positions)	Energy and Mineral Development
GS-0401-13	Natural Resources Specialist (2 positions)	Environmental Management
GS-1170-14	Realty Officer	Indian Energy Service Center
GS-0401-12/13	Natural Resources Specialist (3 positions)	Natural Resources
GS-0454-14	Range Management Specialist	Natural Resources
GS-0343-12	Program Analyst	Resource Integration & Services
GS-0343-12	Data Quality Assurance Analyst	Resource Integration & Services
GS-0850-14	Supervisory Electrical Engineer	Water and Power
GS-0343-13	Supervisory Program Analyst	Water and Power
GS-0089-12/13	Emergency Mgmt. Security Coordinator	Water and Power
GS-1350/1810-13	Geologist/Civil Engineer	Water and Power
GS-1315-14	Branch Chief, Water Resources	Water and Power
GS-0343-07/09/11	Program Analyst	Workforce & Youth Development
GS-0301-13	Program Manager, Pathways	Workforce & Youth Development

### Departed Staff Members

<u>Employee</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Trust Services Division</u>	<u>Reason</u>
Payton Batliner	Supy. Economic Development Specialist	Energy & Mineral Development	Transfer
Lillian Gallegos	Program Analyst	Trust Asset Ownership & Title	Retired
Daniel Kaim	Supervisory Petroleum Engineer	Energy & Mineral Development	Transfer
Nathan Lillie	Special Assistant	Deputy Bureau Director	Transfer
Duane Matt	Supervisory Petroleum Engineer	Energy & Mineral Development	Transfer
Mackenzie Neal	Program Manager	Pathways Internship Program	Resignation

We wish our former colleagues great success in their future endeavors.



Payton Batliner, Daniel Kaim, Nathan Lillie, Duane Matt and Mackenzie Neal. Lillian Gallegos not pictured.



**New Staff Members**

<b>Employee</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Trust Services Division</b>
Rene Joseph	Administrative Specialist	Deputy Bureau Director
Tonya Almaraz	Realty Specialist	Real Estate Services
Luree Livermont	Realty Specialist	Real Estate Services
Christina Varela	Realty Specialist	Real Estate Services
Lonny Anderson	Realty Specialist	Real Estate Services
Elizabeth Berndt	Realty Specialist	Real Estate Services
Randall Hothouse	Realty Specialist	Real Estate Services
Misti Big Bow	Realty Specialist	Real Estate Services
Ronald Lodgepole	Regional Geospatial Coordinator	Resource Integration & Services
Jessica Rodriguez	Regional Geospatial Coordinator	Resource Integration & Services
John Trebesch	Civil Engineer	Water & Power
John Connors	Civil Engineer	Water & Power
Mark McNearney	Civil Engineer	Water & Power
James Gappa	Civil Engineer	Water & Power
Elaina Via LaPaz	Public Affairs Specialist	Wildland Fire Management
Whitney Malatare	Fuels Data Analyst	Wildland Fire Management
Darryl Martinez	Post Wildfire Recovery Coordinator	Wildland Fire Management
Shane Santos	Assistant Branch Chief, Operations	Wildland Fire Management
Troy Phelps	Safety Program Manager	Wildland Fire Management
John Cervantes	Branch Chief, Aviation	Wildland Fire Management
Darryl Monteau	Program Manager, Youth	Workforce & Youth Development

**NEWS YOU CAN USE**



Main Interior Building, Washington, DC



**OTS Publications: Year-end Report & Strategic Plan**

The final FY 2024 Accomplishment Report for OTS was published on the main OTS website at <https://www.bia.gov/bia/ots> and includes the final Government Performance and Result Act (GPRA) performance results.



**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>.

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Content for the January newsletter is due by December 13, 2024.

**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.

## DIVISION OF ENERGY AND MINERAL DEVELOPMENT (DEMD)



*Solar Panel Project completed in AZ*

### **Grant Monies for FY2023 are Fully Obligated**

In FY 2024, \$14 million was awarded to 51 energy, mineral, and capacity-building projects, serving 46 Tribal Entities and Alaska Native Villages.

- 30 EMDP applications were awarded for a total of \$10.4 million.
- 21 TEDC applications received \$3.6 million in funding.

### **Energy and Mineral Development Program (EMDP) Grant Program**

The EMDP grant provides opportunity for Tribes to receive financial assistance to evaluate the energy and mineral resource potential of their lands. In FY 2024, the EMDP solicitation was posted on Grants.gov for a three-month period and attracted 37 applications requesting a total of \$17.6 million.

### **New Administrative Officer**

DEMD is very excited to announce Keena Figueroa (Assiniboine/Sioux) has joined our Division as an Administrative Officer. Ms. Figueroa is the current Administrative Officer for the Division of Energy and Mineral Development (DEMD).

She previously worked as the Administrative Officer for both the Division of Trust Land Consolidation and the Land Buy-back Program. She was also a Program Analyst for the Division of Transportation at the Rocky Mountain Region.

Ms. Figueroa graduated from Fort Peck Community College with an Associate of Arts in business administration, followed with a Bachelor of Science in business administration from the University of Montana—Northern. She currently holds her master's degree in business administration from the University of Mary.



*Keenali Figueroa, Administrative Officer*

Before beginning with the BIA, Ms. Figueroa worked primarily with higher-education institutions that include Fort Peck Community College, University of New Mexico, and Montana State University—Billings. Her BIA career began in 2014 with the Division of Transportation at the Rocky Mountain Region as the Program Analyst. She then transitioned to the Land Buy-back Program (which then became the Division of Trust Land Consolidation) as the Administrative Officer before beginning with the Division of Energy and Minerals Development in May 2024. Working within the BIA has given Keena a huge sense of pride serving and giving back to her Native people.

Ms. Figueroa is an enrolled member of the Fort Peck Tribes, along with her husband Jose, who is also a BIA Office of Justice Employee. Keena has 6 children and enjoys traveling, powwows, sewing, cooking, garage sales and do-it-yourself projects.

## Staff Departures

We saw two members depart this quarter. Daniel Kaim, our NIOGEMS Branch Chief, and Duane Matt, a Solid Minerals Geologist, both accepted positions with the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Indian Energy Policy & Programs (OIEPP). We wish Dan and Duane well and thank them for their work.



*Daniel Kaim, former NIOGEMS Branch Chief and Duane Matt, former Solid Minerals Geologist*

They won't be too far away, as we work with the OIEPP team regularly, not just because we are in the same business of supporting Tribes' efforts toward sovereignty and economic development through developing energy resources, but because the Energy Policy Act of 1992, as amended, authorized both DEMD and OIEPP and requires the offices to coordinate. Dan and Duane both made solid contributions while here at DEMD. So, we look forward to continuing a working relationship with both professionals.

## Ongoing Technical Assistance and Grant Management Activities

The DEMD is charged with administration of Indian Affairs' grant and technical assistance programs supporting Tribal economic development interests through balanced stewardship of their energy and mineral resources. The DEMD maintains a staff of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) professionals with expertise in energy and mineral development to fulfill BIA's responsibility to provide information and capacity-building to Tribes.

Available resources focus on all phases of Tribal energy and mineral development including resource development planning, economic assessments, mineral agreement negotiations, final project design and more.

## Regional Project Summaries and Tribal Technical Assistance and Grant (TTAG) Tracking and Reporting

At any given time, we have about 100 active grants and numerous active Technical Assistance (TA) requests. We track and catalog this information and report it to our OTS colleagues and to the BIA Regional Directors and Superintendents in the form of Regional Project Summary (RPS) reports. In FY 2024, DEMD developed and implemented a new system to track the status of all DEMD grant projects, technical assistance projects, Indian Mineral Development Act reviews, business agreement reviews, and internal technical DEMD projects. This system, called Tribal Technical Assistance and Grant Tracking (TTAG), is designed to make reporting project status, statistics and details efficient. From TTAG, DEMD develops the RPS reports, which are distributed internally to the BIA Regions and Agencies to provide updates on Tribal energy and mineral development activity receiving DEMD technical support in their areas of operation.

## Tribal Energy Development Program (TEDC)

The TEDC provides the opportunity for Tribes to receive financial assistance to establish the legal framework for developing and regulating their energy resources. In FY 2024, the TEDC solicitation was posted on Grants.gov for a three-month period and attracted 28 applications requesting \$6.8 million.



*Rock sample showing copper mineralization*

### **Tribal Critical Minerals Initiative**

The DEMD supported this multi-agency Tribal consultation that sought feedback to prioritize and implement the September 2023 *Recommendations to Improve Mining on Public Lands* report that will benefit Tribes. In February 2021, President Biden announced an Executive Order on securing America's supply chains—including critical minerals—to further our national security and climate goals, including transitioning to a net-zero emissions economy by 2050. Critical minerals are the building blocks of this energy transition. In response to several Tribal inquiries about the Administration's actions on critical minerals, the White House Council on Native American Affairs (WHCNA) created a Critical Minerals Working Group. August 20, 2024, in-person and virtual session in Anchorage, Alaska.

### **Tribal Consultation**

The DEMD created content and led the logistical effort to complete Tribal consultations, prepare and circulate consultation scoping materials, and receive, compile and report Tribal input.

Four consultation sessions were held via Zoom and in person, as follows:

- July 30, 2024, in-person and virtual session in Denver, Colorado
- August 13, 2024, virtual-only session
- August 20, 2024, in-person and virtual session in Anchorage, Alaska
- August 21, 2024, in-person and virtual session in Anchorage, Alaska

Together, approximately 99 representatives of Federally Recognized Tribes, Alaska Native Villages, Tribal Consortia, Alaska Native Organizations, and Alaska Native Corporations attended the sessions. WHCNA also accepted written comments as part of the consultation and received 20 written submissions. Participating federal agencies included Department of Energy, Department of the Interior, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Defense/U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Department of Commerce.

This Working Group also created a Draft National Tribal Critical Minerals Initiative to improve Tribal consultation and engagement in the domestic critical minerals supply chain. The purpose of this initiative is to ensure Tribal interests are meaningfully considered early and often in the pursuit of a domestic critical minerals supply chain, including environmental and human health protection, Tribal and cultural resources protection, and economic development and other benefits sharing. A summary report from the consultations is expected to be released in fall 2024.



*Aerial view of Elim, Alaska*

**Project Highlight: Elim Geologic Assessment**

The DEMD solids branch has been involved with various inquiries from the Village of Elim over the years, such as providing technical assistance for selection of a future aggregate quarry site and possible port. The village recently applied for (and was awarded) and EMDP grant to conduct exploratory drilling to determine the quality and quantity of their aggregate resource. DEMD solid minerals will continue working with the village to ensure they complete the requirements stated in their EMDP, and then will move on to the next step of involving the DEMD business branch (or any other DEMD branch) to assist with developing their resource for their economic benefit.

**Industry Events**

A highly important and critical function for achieving the DEMD mission is to continuously advance DEMD’s expertise and provide sound technical and economic advice in program areas. The DEMD participates in various industry conferences to stay well-informed on market trends, current and emerging technologies, regulations, and other federal, state and local programs and funding opportunities.

Notable events that DEMD participated in summary includes:

- ESRI User Conference
- Hydro Vision International
- National Transportation in Indian Country Conference
- IMAGE 24
- RE+ Annual Conference
- Critical Minerals Symposium
- SPE ATCE Conference
- GIS in the Rockies

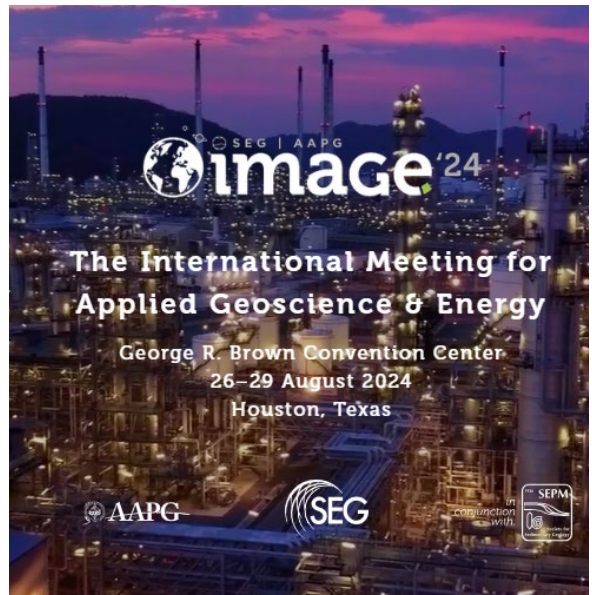


IMAGE 24 Conference Participation



Renewing What's Possible RE+ Conference



## **Renewable Energy Accelerated Development Initiative (READI)**

In FY 2023, the DOI launched the Renewable Energy Accelerated Development Initiative (READI), seeking input on how to streamline and advance Tribal renewable energy development. Eight Tribal engagement sessions were held to hear directly from Tribes about renewable energy resource needs and priorities. The DEMD led an OTS effort to plan and execute five in-person Tribal consultations and two virtual sessions on behalf of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs. A consultant vendor with expertise in Tribal government and renewable energy was procured to facilitate and administer consultation sessions and reporting on program activity and Tribal input.

### **Tribal Engagement Session Next Steps**

In FY 2024, DEMD staff analyzed input from the eight Tribal engagement sessions and organized the data into categories that allowed BIA leadership to determine recommendations to adequately address Tribes' concerns and experiences with renewable energy development. Final READI recommendations are being developed to improve interagency coordination, establish mechanisms for ongoing Tribal consultation, establish programs to support regional inter-Tribal efforts, develop renewable energy toolkits, design and implement regular training sessions, and consider additional program enhancements. The READI final report is undergoing executive review and is expected to be released soon.

## **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. Access is provided to Tribes through direct installation of the NIOGEMS system on the Tribes' computer network server, which requires logistical and software maintenance support from both the DEMD and the Tribal NIOGEMS user.

Presently, NIOGEMS has been installed with 13 Tribes (including a new installation with the Otoe-Missouria Tribe) and over 200 federal users, with access granted to 53 new users in FY 2024. Further, five training sessions were held throughout the year, training a total of 27 students (10 Tribal and 17 federal).



ESRI ArcMap 10.8x, which serves as NIOGEMS' base application, will sunset soon, beginning with the discontinuation of ESRI product support beginning on March 1, 2026. NIOGEMS V4.x, the current application version, is scheduled to be replaced with a NIOGEMS V5.x update in anticipation of the ESRI ArcMap sunset. To this end, DEMD is presently engaged with the BIA and Department IT groups to plan for migration of the NIOGEMS application to a cloud-based or other platform that is directly accessible to Tribes from a single location. We've also brought on two version upgrade system development staff on our professional services contract to develop and migrate to a new platform prior to the ArcMap sunset.

This planned platform migration will streamline necessary support sources to maintain Tribal access while greatly expanding the availability of NIOGEMS to Tribal users across Indian Country. Anticipated goals of the future NIOGEMS V5.x platform include cloud-based access by Tribal employees and other non-Department users, reduced maintenance costs, and expanded functionality to include tracking DEMD program effectiveness and Tribal capacity growth in the areas of energy and mineral development and capacity-building, as well as lending the capacity tracking mechanism to all of OTS.



BRANCH OF TRIBAL CLIMATE RESILIENCE

**Welcome New Team Member**

Transitioning from BIA Pathways Bridge Program to Permanent Climate Planning Specialist



*Coral Avery, Climate Planning Specialist*

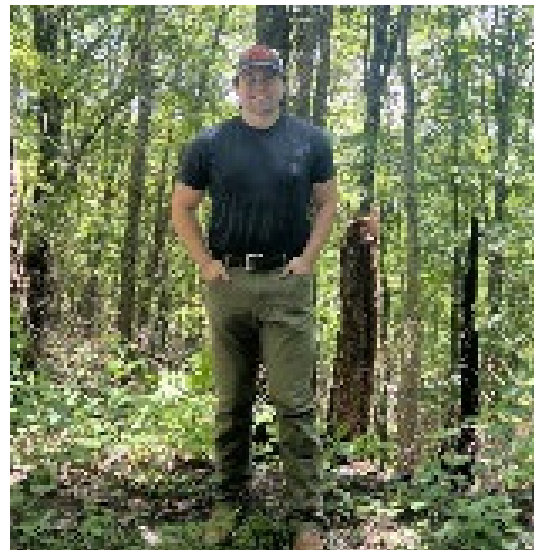
Coral Avery (they/them) is a citizen of the Shawnee Tribe of Shawnee and of mixed-European descent. They have a decade of professional experience in the environmental field at grassroots organizations, non-profits, and in the federal workforce. They are a graduate of Oregon State University where they earned a double Bachelor of Science in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources and Sustainability.

Here, Coral began as a BIA Pathways intern at the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians Natural Resources Department and then at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Climate Change Program. They graduated into the bridge position as a Natural Resource Specialist with the BIA Branch of Tribal Climate Resilience (BTCR) in 2020 where they worked part time as a Tribal Youth & Climate Liaison at the USGS Northwest Climate Adaptation Science Center.

Now, they're continuing their work at BTCR as a Climate Planning Specialist while pursuing a Master of Science in environmental justice at the University of Michigan. Outside of work, Coral enjoys gardening, hiking, kayaking, and beadwork.

**Introducing Our BIA Pathways Student Interns**

Cody Spillman is from Mustang, Oklahoma and member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. He is a senior at Oklahoma State University completing his bachelor's degree in Natural Resource Ecology and Management. He will be staying at OSU next year to start his master's degree in plant and soil science. Cody has past worked as a wildland firefighter for the Bureau of Land Management in 2022. This year he has joined the BIA doing work in natural resource management in the Eastern Region and now working with BTCR.



*Cody Spillman, Natural Resource Intern*



*RMP Cohort Retreat*



### **Cultural Resource Management**

My name is Clarissa Dixon, and I am from the Pueblo of Isleta, NM. I am a senior at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, majoring in Anthropology. I'm interested in Anthropology because I want to learn more about Indigenous cultures, their development over time, and ways to preserve their culture and traditions.



*Clarissa Dixon, Pathways Intern*

In 2019, I worked for the Pueblo of Isleta Department of Natural Resources as a Student Trainee. I worked on various Natural Resources projects related to forestry, wildlife, rangeland management, and cultural and historic preservation. I have been in the Pathways Program for about three years and worked with various agencies such as the South-Central Climate Adaptation Center, Pacific Islands Climate Adaptation Center, SWRO Division of Environmental Services and Cultural Resource Management, and now the Tribal Climate Resilience Program.

Some goals of mine include cultural awareness of other tribes, learning more about Natural Resources conservation, and being able to apply my current knowledge of Natural Resources conservation and Anthropology with others in the Pathways Program. In the future, I plan on attending an Archaeology field school and then pursuing a master's degree.

### **Highlights from the 2024 National Tribal and Indigenous Climate Conference**

The third Biennial National Tribal and Indigenous Climate Conference (NTICC) took place in Anchorage, AK, from September 9-12, 2024, with nine staff members from the BTCR in attendance.

#### **Day 1**

On the first day, the conference featured a one-day Community-Led Relocation, Managed Retreat, and Protect-in-Place (RMP) Coordinator Cohort retreat. This gathering brought together Tribes from RMP Cohorts 1 and 2, along with Tribes involved in the Community-Driven Relocation (CDR) demonstration project. Participants focused on sharing experiences, networking, and creating actionable road maps.

#### **Day 2**

The second day included a partnership meeting between BTCR and the Regional Tribal Climate Resilience Liaison Network (RTCRLN). This meeting aimed to foster in-person collaboration and discuss opportunities for enhancing support for Tribal climate adaptation and resilience efforts.



*Branch of Tribal Climate Resilience and Regional Coordinator Partnership Meeting*

**Technical Assistance Networking Event**

In addition to the partnership meeting, BTCR Regional Coordinators (RC) participated in a Technical Assistance Networking Event, where they showcased materials and connected with conference attendees.

Throughout the week, RCs also engaged in a Technical Assistance Lounge—a dedicated space for Tribes and Tribal organizations to meet with technical assistance providers to discuss their needs. RCs utilized a calendaring tool to help schedule meetings and set reminders for those who signed up.



*Booths at the Technical Assistance Event (above and below)*



*Networking Participants*





Group Dinner – Branch of Tribal Climate Resilience Regional Coordinators and Tribal Climate Liaisons

### Tribal Climate Resilience Annual Awards Program

#### REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

BTCR opened its 2024 Annual Awards Program Request for Proposals (RFP) on July 17, 2024, with a submission deadline of October 18, 2024. The application period funding opportunity is now closed.

Award applications are currently being evaluated. Awardee selections are expected to be announced in January 2025.

This opportunity was available to Federally recognized Tribes and Tribal organizations as defined by 25 U.S.C. § 5304(l). The program allocated approximately \$120 million in funding for fiscal year 2024 to support Tribal climate resilience initiatives.

Since 2020, TCR has funded a total of 568 Tribal projects, amounting to \$194.3 million, with funding peaking in fiscal year 2023 at \$120.8 million across 150 awards. Fiscal year 2024 represents the final year of enhanced funding made possible by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act. For information on awarded projects for FY24, please visit the [TCR Annual Awards Program](#) webpage, with updates expected to be available in early 2025.

### BRANCH OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

#### New Employee Chester McGhee

The Division is excited to announce that Chester “Chet” McGhee has joined our group to lead the Branch of Environmental Services.



Chester “Chet” McGhee

Chester McGhee is an enrolled member of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians who began his career with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in 2007, serving the Eastern Region as an Executive Management Analyst, Environmental Protection Specialist and as the Regional Environmental Scientist. Mr. McGhee has taken tremendous pride, over the last seventeen years, in working to support and advance the needs of Regional Tribes while meeting the mission of BIA.

Prior to joining BIA, Mr. McGhee worked for a decade as an Environmental Protection Specialist with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in Jacksonville, FL. He is a graduate of Troy University, and resides in Nashville, TN with his wife Natalie and their two teenage daughters.

## NEPA Policy Updates

In a July 1, 2024, memorandum, the Department of the Interior (Department)'s Senior Agency Official for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) highlighted eight provisions that bureaus and offices needed to undertake to implement the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ's) Bipartisan Permitting Reform Implementation Rule, also known as the NEPA Phase 2 regulations.

The CEQ Phase 2 regulations require all agencies to revise their NEPA procedures to complete the process of implementing the final rule. While the Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance (OEPC) is preparing revisions to the Department-wide NEPA procedures, BIA will need to evaluate our bureau-specific NEPA procedures located in Departmental Manual (DM) Part 516 Chapter 10. While the DESCRM Branch of Environmental Services will be leading the effort to update the appropriate BIA NEPA policies, we will need the support of all Regions and Programs to ensure the updated policy meets the CEQ requirements and ultimately improves the way NEPA reviews are conducted. BIA's NEPA policy will need to be updated and submitted to DOI-OEPC by May 2025.

## NEPA Training

BIA will be partnering with the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society to offer both in-person and virtual NEPA training across Indian Country in 2025 and 2026 for BIA and Tribal staff. The trainings will be over three days and will cover the basics of NEPA, the National Historic Preservation Act and the Endangered Species Act. A training schedule with locations is being developed and will be announced later this year.

## BRANCH OF CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

### BIA Main Interior Building, Washington DC Museum Collections Space Renovation

After our recent newsletter update, the BIA Museum Program began renovating our collections space in the Washington DC Main Interior Building on October 15, 2024.



*Carpet removed preparing to install rolling racks*

This project is a pivotal part of our national effort to update all BIA Museum spaces to meet the required curatorial and environmental standards. We have commenced at the DOI Headquarters, where we house 2,300 objects used in DOI Leadership office spaces and exhibited throughout the Main Interior Building. With a proper collections housing space, we can fulfill our trust and stewardship responsibilities for collections care and management in Washington, DC. We anticipate the renovation to be completed this October 2024, with other collections returning to the updated housing space. This upgrade exemplifies a significant success for the BIA Museum Program, made possible by the support and involvement of our leadership, staff, and valued stakeholders. This initiative will serve as a national model, showcasing and housing additional BIA Museum Collections. (See construction pictures, which are in progress.)



*Preparing to install rolling racks, Space Saver cabinets & shelving*

## One Lacrosse Gathering Celebration – Washington DC National Mall

The BIA Museum Curator presented indigenous roots, history and culture of Lacrosse at a reception prior to lacrosse clinic on the National Mall.

- DOI - Secretary Haaland guest speaker
- Health & Human Services (HHS) – Admiral Lavine speaker and attended event on Mall
- Indian Affairs – Assistant Secretary Indian Affairs (ASIA) Bryan Newland and Deputy Assistant Secretary Management (DASM) Jason Freihage attended event on Mall
- Oren Lyons, Lacrosse Hall of Fame
- BIA – Curator Justin Giles Speaker and managed event on Mall



Lacrosse Event (L to R): Justin Giles, BIA Curator, unidentified person, Admiral Levin, HHS, Oren Lyons, Lacrosse Hall of Fame, unidentified White House Intelligence Committee/ Lacrosse player holding stick, unidentified person, and Ben Jacobs, Presidents Council on Sports and Nutrition.

The **President’s Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition (Council)** aims to promote healthy eating and physical activity for all people, regardless of background or ability. The Biden-Harris Administration’s Council recognizes the importance of sports as a medium to bring together people of different backgrounds, to uplift different cultures, and to improve health and wellbeing. Traditional stick games have deep roots in Native traditions and cultures that carry through to the present day.

The Council, along with the *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, the National Park Service Office of Public Health, the National Fitness Foundation, US Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs Museum Program, and lacrosse leaders from across the country*, hosted an event to honor the commitment to sharing America’s first games, first foods, and the meaningful intersection of cultural traditions, food, and health through outreach and collaboration.

Washington Post Article:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2024/09/08/lacrosse-national-mall-olympics/>

Website: <https://onelacrossegathering.com/Home>



Deb Haaland, Secretary of Interior opening the event. Lacrosse gear displayed in front of podium.



*Lacrosse being celebrated on the National Mall, Washington, DC*

### **Lacrosse Gathering Summation**

This one-day event is designed to share the basic foundational principles of lacrosse: respect, strength, endurance, teamwork, and (most importantly at the core of the sport) inclusivity for all. Our goal is to provide an exciting and educational opportunity for the public to appreciate the importance of maintaining vital Native traditions through a lens of the contemporary Indigenous experience and highlight the ways in which culture and identity manifest in a rapidly changing world. For generations lacrosse has become and been viewed by outsiders as a game of East Coast elites and Ivy League communities.



This event will bring lacrosse and other traditional stick games back to their roots, bringing together partner organizations from local independent D.C. youth lacrosse organizations to national lacrosse organizations focused on spreading the principles of the game into a multitude of urban and diverse communities. Lacrosse has truly grown into a global game.

The National Lacrosse League and Premier Lacrosse League are in the company of being the fastest growing professional sports leagues in the United States, showing the support, inclusion, and interest of all demographics is alive and well.

### **Conserv Dataloggers System Acquired for Environmental monitoring for BIA Museum Collections**

The BIA Museum Program has recently acquired and will be installing a cutting-edge Conserv datalogger environmental monitoring system. We will deploy fifteen (15) of these dataloggers to twelve (12) Indian Affairs Repositories that curate BIA museum collections.

These dataloggers, by collecting real-time data, empower us to make informed decisions that create a stable environment for the museum's objects. They also enable users to set environmental thresholds and receive alerts when the environment deviates from these thresholds. For instance, a spike in humidity could alert staff to a potential water break in the building. The Museum Program is excited to witness the impact of these dataloggers on the adequate care of museum objects in our IA Repositories nationwide. These data loggers are crucial in maintaining a stable, balanced temperature and humidity level, vital for preserving museum objects.

The recommended environment for preserving objects is between 68-72 degrees F (20-22 degrees C) and 40-55% humidity. Monitoring light exposure is also crucial, as excessive light, particularly UV light, can cause colors to fade and damage objects over time. Ideally, objects should be displayed in dark areas for better preservation.



## DIVISION OF FORESTRY (DOF)



### Forestry Projects Funding Deadline

FY 2025 Forestry Projects proposals were due to Division of Forestry by November 8, 2024.

Forestry projects proposals are submitted to the Regional Forester, per regional guidelines, for submission to Central Office.

Forestry projects funding may be used for the following program areas:

- Forest Development - Pre-commercial thinning, planting, site preparation, cone collection, seed processing and storing, and greenhouse operations.
- Forest Management, Inventory, and Planning - Forest management planning, inventories (continuous forest inventory and stand exam), and inventory analysis.
- Woodlands Management - Sale preparation and administration, marketing and branding, inventory work, species composition manipulation, and density reduction operations.
- Timber Harvest Initiatives - Preparation of sales and the administration of timber contracts and permits, small infrastructure projects.
- Timber Team - Support for regional and Tribal staff to work with the Timber Team on any approved and scheduled Timber Team projects.

### 2025 Tribal Forestry Youth Camp Funding

Proposals for 2025 Tribal Forestry Summer Youth Camp funding were accepted through October 18, 2024. This funding is for camps that advance the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Tribal Forestry objectives, and support education and participation in Forestry and Natural Resources activities for Tribal Youth.



*Summer Youth camp participants learning to fly a drone*

The content of the proposed event is at the discretion of the Tribe but should include Forestry and Natural Resources focused activities. Proposals should be submitted to the Regional Forester for submission to Central Office.



*Karuk students learn about the cultural value of basket willow while removing invasive plants that encroach willow patches, such as Himalayan blackberry*

## Empowering Forest Management: The Mission of the Branch of Forest Inventory and Planning

The Branch of Forest Inventory and Planning (FIP) provides specialized technical expertise in forest inventory and management, specifically tailored to assist American Indians and Alaska Natives. Our mission is to support these communities in all phases of forest resource inventory and management planning, ensuring the successful stewardship of trust forest resources.

FIP's work is multifaceted, encompassing inventory, data collection design and analysis, and the management planning process. The FIP team facilitates the processing of inventory data, improves branch developed applications, and models and analyzes data. This comprehensive approach ensures that tribal forest resources are managed effectively and sustainably.



*Tree Core to determine tree age*

### Key Services Provided by FIP:

- **Data Processing and Analysis:** FIP ensures accurate and reliable processing of forest inventory data, which is crucial for developing comprehensive forest inventory analyses.
  - **Allowable Annual Cut Calculation:** FIP analyzes CFI data to guide the calculation of the Allowable Annual Cut, as required by the 25 CFR 163, ensuring sustainable forest management.
  - **Stand Exams and Inventories:** FIP assists with Stand Exams and other types of forest inventories, providing detailed insights into forest conditions.
- FIP also serves as the Division of Forestry's national archive for reservation forest data and the national library of forest planning documents. Additionally, they manage the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Tribal employee enrollment in the National Advanced Silviculture Program (NASP), fostering advanced skills and knowledge in forest management.
- Through these efforts, FIP not only supports the technical aspects of forest management but also strengthens the capacity of American Indian and Alaska Native communities to manage their forest resources sustainably and effectively.

- **Pre-Inventory Planning:** FIP assists with field inventory design, specifications, and sampling design, laying the groundwork for accurate and efficient data collection.
- **Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI):** FIP plans and coordinates the installation or re-measurement of CFI, ensuring ongoing monitoring and management of forest resources.
- **Field Inventory Training:** FIP provides training on data collection methodologies and forest application usage, empowering tribal and regional foresters with the skills they need.



*Violet Holley reviewing field manual*



*Jesse Wooten hiking to the next Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) plot*

### **Collaboration with Eastern Region Foresters and Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe for Innovative Forest Inventory**



In collaboration with the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, foresters from the Branch of Forest Inventory and Planning (FIP) and Eastern Region met in Hogsburg, NY with the intent to provide technical assistance in the development of a forest inventory tailored to the tribe's unique needs.

This initiative aimed to

- better understand the tribe's current forest management goals and objectives,
- observe the current conditions of the tribe's forest lands, and
- ultimately design a planning inventory that addresses policy requirements and compiles the information needed to inform the tribe's future forest management planning efforts.

## Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Meeting Highlights

From October 1-3, 2024, FIP foresters Ben Bagdon and Steve Singleton met with their counterparts John Cook, Anthony Waupochick, and Julian Maddox from the Eastern Region and Jessica Raspitha, Angello Johnson, and additional forestry staff from the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe to discuss the tribe's forest management goals and objectives. The intention was to identify the most efficient and effective inventory design.



*Foresters Ben Bagdon and Steve Singleton meet with Eastern Region counterparts*

The meetings involved participant introductions, a spatial overview of the tribe's forest lands and past inventory sample design, a discussion of the past inventory analysis, and the tribe's future forest management plan goals and objectives.

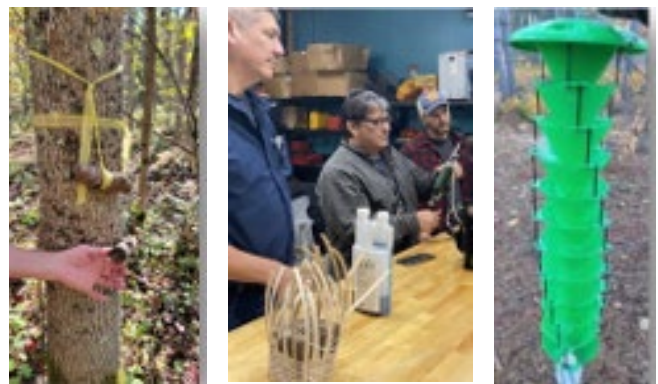
### Strategic Inventory Design

Through discussions with the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe and the Eastern Region, the FIP team proposed a strategic inventory design, starting with field tests to determine the optimal plot size. A hands-on training session on Tuesday afternoon allowed tribal, regional, and FIP foresters to form designated crews to conduct measurements over the next couple days. The information collected during the field tests were compiled and the preliminary results shared with the tribal and regional forestry staff.



*Training on conducting measurements to determine plot size*

### Emerald Ash Borer Management



BIA foresters also had an opportunity to learn about the tribe's innovative strategies to combat the Emerald Ash Borer, a pest threatening these vital trees. The tribe currently utilizes parasitic wasps that predate on the Emerald Ash Borer, insecticide injections, and funnel traps.

### **Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Cultural Significance of Black Ash**

A highlight of the visit was a demonstration of the cultural significance of the Black Ash tree species. The tribe showcased how this species and its health are integral to their traditional basket weaving, offering FIP and regional foresters a deeper understanding of its importance.



*Stand of Black Ash on the Saint Regis Mohawk Reservation*



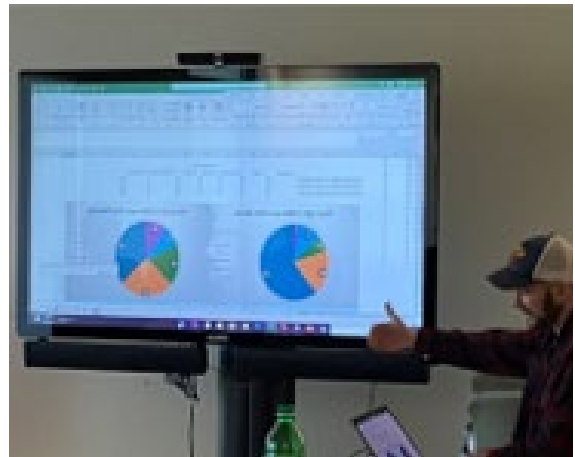
*Black Ash Basket*

### **Development of Specialized Inventories**

Blending traditional inventory designs and modern forestry techniques with the cultural importance of the Black Ash tree species led to the development of two specialized inventories:

**Planning Inventory:** The compiled plot and tree level data will guide future forest management of the tribe's Non-timber Forest Products (NTFM) resources.

**Black Ash Stand Inventory:** This focuses on mapping the locations of the tribe's Black Ash Stands, ensuring their preservation through monitoring for Emerald Ash Borer and their sustainable use.



*Display of plot and tree level data inventory*

### **Next Steps**

The project will culminate in follow-up virtual meetings to analyze field data and refine the inventory plot design. This partnership not only enhances forest management practices but also strengthens the bond between the FIP foresters, regional forestry staff, and the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, blending scientific expertise with cultural wisdom.

## BIA TIMBER TEAM

The Timber Team has been actively engaged during the last quarter of FY 2024. The team recently traveled to the Hualapai Reservation in northern Arizona to provide training to local technicians in remeasuring Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) plots.



*Timber Team reviewing CFI manuals and the CFI Fielder Program in Hualapai Reservation, AZ*

Working alongside two Forest Analysts from the Branch of Inventory and Planning, as well as foresters from the Uintah and Ouray Reservation, the Timber Team mentored the Hualapai Tribal Forestry staff on locating plots, remeasuring trees, and recording data using CFI Fielder Tablet software.

Prior to the Hualapai trip, the Timber Team spent four weeks in New Mexico, assisting the Pueblo of Acoma with a woodland stocking survey and training technicians in timber sale preparation techniques on the Pueblo of Jemez.



*The Timber Team at the Pueblo of Acoma measuring a pinyon pine for a woodland stocking survey*

In Acoma, the team collaborated with foresters from the Southwest Regional Office to monitor pinyon pine and Utah juniper woodland stands by measuring diameter at root collar and analyzing growth over time.

At Jemez, the team trained local staff in boundary layout, timber marking, and cruising for volume in ponderosa pine timberlands.

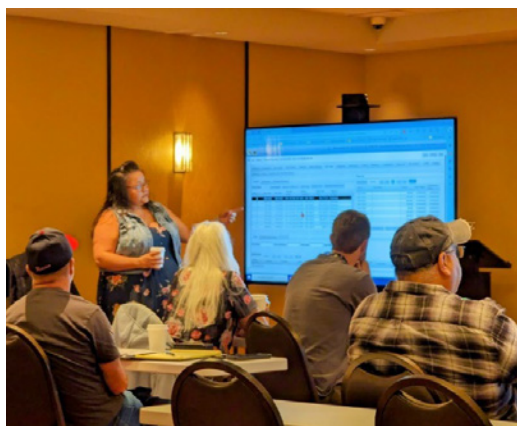


### **Timber Proposals Welcome**

The Division of Forestry welcomes Timber Team proposals year-round. Federal and tribal staff interested in working on upcoming assignments should discuss Team availability with their Regional Forester. For the [project request form](#) and further details about the Timber Team, visit <https://www.bia.gov/service/timber-team>.

## TAAMS Forestry Training

The training cadre has put together tentative dates and locations. If the classes are not filled to meet requirements as formal training, they may be changed to informal training. The following dates and locations are subject to change.



*Julie Estrada-Wallahee presenting Yakama Permit entry at TAAMS informal training*



## FY 2025 Forestry TAAMS Training

### Beginning Courses

<u>Location</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Portland OR	February 3-7, 2025
Ashland, WI	March 10-14, 2025

### Advanced Courses

<u>Location</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Portland, OR	April 7-11, 2025
Ashland, WI	April 28-May 2, 2025

## 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. 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 the Uintah & Ouray Agency. The purpose of this gathering of foresters was to begin the data collection for the fourth 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 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 panoramic view of the forest from a high point on the Hualapai Reservation*

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 2005.



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



## INDIAN ENERGY SERVICE CENTER (IESC)



Circle Ridge Oil Field, Picuris Solar Array

### Services Provided

The Indian Energy Service Center (IESC) coordinates and processes Indian mineral and renewable energy development, resource management and mineral leasing activities for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in the Service Center's role as a support vehicle in coordination with several Interior bureaus.

IESC is staffed by the BIA, the Office of Natural Resources Revenue (ONRR), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA). The IESC supports the facilitation of mineral interest leasing activities to BIA and BLM field offices in Indian Country.

The IESC upholds the Department's fiduciary trust responsibility on behalf of Individual trust beneficiaries and Federally recognized Tribes by:

- Expediting leasing, permitting, and reporting for conventional and renewable energy on Indian lands.
- Providing resources to ensure development occurs safely while protecting the environment,
- Managing risks appropriately by providing support and technical assistance in the assessment of the economic, social, and environmental impacts of energy development.

### Communitization Agreements

The IESC has perfected over 254 Communitization Agreements (CAs) in coordination with the Fort Berthold BIA Agency, Uintah & Ouray (U&O) BIA Agency, and the Southern Ute BIA Agency since 2017, resulting in over \$2.097 billion in estimated royalty revenue to Indian Tribes and individual Indian mineral owners.

### IESC Scope Increase

The IESC was notified by BIA Director memorandum dated March 23, 2022, certain Division of Real Estate Services (DRES) functions are to be performed by IESC. The IESC scope increased to include DRES functions that will allow for modernized energy related business processes, thereby achieving better protection of Trust records and combined efficiencies in energy and mineral development.

The IESC Indian Affairs Manual 48 IAM has been published reflecting organizational realignments, roles, and responsibilities consistent with IESC's new delegation. Please find the publication here: [IESC Indian Affairs Manual](#).

### MRAD Distribution

The Service Center has assumed duties associated with MRAD distribution, Regional Realty Officer's reporting on tracking and processing, the Mineral Users Group, Regulation and Handbook updates, Nationwide Bond processing and Bankruptcy actions.

The IESC has developed a documented process to track its review and response times and enhance data collection efforts. This ensures that BIA has data needed to track its review and response times. Each month the IESC has provided a depiction of the number of pending and approved contracts involved with oil and gas for the current fiscal year. The data is broken out by region and has been presented at the monthly Regional Realty Officer Meetings.

# Training

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SOP Training, Lakewood, CO

## SOP Training

On July 30-31, 2024, the IESC facilitated an in-person SOP Training for 19 students in Lakewood, CO. This training was a multi-bureau collaboration that offers students the opportunity to interact with subject matter experts from the agencies involved in fluid mineral development. The SOP Training discusses the background, agencies involved, responsibilities, and timelines of the Indian fluid minerals process.

## National Realty Training

On June 11-13, 2024, IESC staff attended the BIA 2024 National Realty Training in Albuquerque, NM. This training improved the realty and trust services' field staff's knowledge, skills, and understanding of statutes, regulation, policies, and processes to review and draft decision-making protocols on behalf of BIA, Department of Interior regarding Indian Trust lands and minerals. IESC was well represented at the Training. Payton Batliner, Acting IESC Director co-presented with the Office of Solicitor on the status of Mineral Regulations and Fluid Mineral Handbook updates. Various Federal Partners including the White House Council on Native American Affairs, AVSO, BLM, BTFA, USDA, SOL, ONRR, OHA attended this training and set up booths to promote coordination and collaboration.



From left to right: Laura Little Iron, Realty Specialist, LaWanda Gibson, Realty Specialist, Tonisha Seeder, ONRR IESC Branch Chief, Bethany Hagen-Templin, ONRR Tribal Liaison Officer, Elizabeth Berndt, Realty Specialist



From left to right: Rae Luckett, BTFA Deputy Regional Trust Director, Michelle Morrison, IESC BTFA Branch Chief, Dorothy Graham, BTFA Deputy Regional Trust Director

## Introducing Two New IESC Employees



*Katherine Stevens and Leslie Nelson*

### Permanent BIA Branch Chief Selected

Katherine Stevens was detailed as the Acting BIA Branch Chief at the Indian Energy Service Center (IESC) and now she is a permanent member of the IESC as the BIA Branch Chief.

Ms. Stevens started her career in the Realty Department for the Anadarko Agency BIA, allowing her to work closely with landowners to assist with leasing their trust properties. She became the Deputy Manager of the BIA Southern Plains Region Land Titles and Records Office (LTRO) in 2009. She helped the Southern Plains LTRO gain national recognition as one of the top-performing BIA LTRO offices in the country.

In 2012, Ms. Stevens transitioned to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency (FSA), acquiring knowledge of the Farm Loan Program. In 2019 as a BIA Transportation Specialist, she worked with tribes to utilize federal funding to build infrastructure. In 2022, Ms. Stevens returned to the Realty program at the Southern Plains Region as Deputy Regional Realty Officer.

She earned a bachelor's degree in Native American Studies from the University of Oklahoma and is currently pursuing a master's degree in Indigenous People's Law at the University of Oklahoma. She is passionate about using her career and educational background to continue serving Indian mineral owners and tribes.

She is a member of the Kiowa Tribe and descendant of Choctaw and Apache heritage. She participates in Kiowa tribal ceremonies, including the Kiowa Black Leggings Warrior Society. In her free time, she enjoys attending concerts and sporting events with her husband, Radley, and her two children, Justin, and Kenzie.

### New Petroleum Engineer Introduction

Ya'at'eeh! I'm Leslie Rachel Nelson, Dine (Navajo), Waters Edge Clan. My family is originally from Teec Nos Pos, AZ, near the Four Corners National Monument but Farmington, NM is now where my family now resides.

I attended the New Mexico institute of Mining and Technology (New Mexico Tech) and received my Bachelor of Science in Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in May 2020. I graduated in my pajamas for my graduation was held online and got to watch the livestream on YouTube. I was hired by the Division of Energy of Mineral Development (DEMD) as a contractor Petroleum Engineer two weeks prior to graduation.

I graduated from OU with my Master of Legal Studies in Oil, Gas & Energy Law in December 2021. After a year and a half as a contractor I was hired as a Federal employee with DEMD. I stayed with DEMD until June of 2023 when I detailed to the Fort Berthold Agency as their Petroleum Engineer, which ended up turning into a transfer due to a potential government shutdown. Time with FBA has firsthand taught me Agency life and seeing the direct impacts of our work. I worked closely with the realty staff and took the opportunity to learn, grow and further develop my realty skills. I am currently on detail with IESC where I can now combine my newly acquired realty skills and my engineering knowledge to aid with the tasks presented to me at IESC.

Outside of work, I spend a lot of my time with my two dogs (Honey & Cheii), attending craft fairs as a vendor, and my husband and I are currently training for the Run Crazy Horse half marathon happening October 6 in Hill City, South Dakota.

## Farewell to Two IESC Detailed Employees



Elizabeth Berndt and Sophia Rosette

The IESC would like to thank Elizabeth Berndt for her hard work and dedication to Indian Mineral Interest owners and to the Service Center. Liz joined the Indian Energy Service Center on a detail in November of 2019. She became a permanent and valuable part of our team in January of 2022.

In her time here, Liz has been a fantastic asset to the Service Center as a Realty Specialist. Liz has been instrumental in CA processing, her work on CAs was critical to forwarding the Department's efforts to fulfill its Indian trust responsibility and reduce legal risk. Liz was also instrumental in the processing of lease assignments, drafting of Mineral regulations, and contributing to the Fluid Minerals Handbook revisions. Liz is joining the OTS Division of Real Estate Services. We wish her the best.

### Program Analyst Detail Ends

Sophia Rosette, Trust Accounts Administrator with Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA) was detailed to the Indian Energy Service Center (IESC) from March 2024 to September 2024 as a Program Analyst. While working with the IESC/BTFA branch, she assisted with IESC reporting, the Fort Berthold Agency Communization Agreement project, and the Indian Orphaned Oil and Gas Well Abandonment ILOG project.

## Testimonials from Past ONRR Detailed Employees

*"I have been an ONRR Mineral Revenue Specialist for 4 years working in Volume Comparison. At IESC, I worked on the Communitization agreement (CA) Adjudication and Nationwide Bond Cleanup Projects. The best part was getting a better idea of our commitment to the Indian Trust and the folks that work towards fulfilling that mission."*

**Allen J. Martin**  
**Office of Natural Resources Revenue**

*"I started with MMS/ONRR in 1992 as an Indian Outreach Specialist and now Indian Production Analyst for the Federal Indian Minerals Office (FIMO) aiding the Navajo Allotted Mineral owners for over 30+ years. FIMO is like a mini IESC, staffed with BIA, BLM, BTFA, and ONRR representatives. During my detail to the IESC, I assisted with the Fort Berthold Agency CA Adjudication Project and Nationwide Bonds Cleanup Project. The IESC Detail/Cross training opportunity was a Bucket List item. Mission Accomplished!"*

**Leona R. Begay**  
**Mineral Revenue Specialist-Initial Production**

*"I have been with ONRR for one year, working as an accountant on the Indian Accounts Receivable team. I assisted with the Nationwide Bond cleanup effort, attended the SOP Fluid Minerals Training, and visited the BIA Osage Agency office in Pawhuska, Oklahoma. There I supported efforts for the Osage Orphan Well documentation project. My favorite part of the rotation was the opportunity to interact with colleagues outside of my usual team and learn more about the organization."*

**Ashley Lacoste**  
**Accountant**  
**Financial Services Team 3**

Nationwide Bonds	Request	Pending Reviews	Drafted	Pending Approval	Approved	Pending Objections	Objections Received	Completed
Approval	26	1	0	0	0	0	0	25
Release	45	1	0	0	0	11	2	31
Continuation	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rider	25	6	0	0	0	0	0	19
Replacement	16	12	0	0	0	0	0	15
TOTALS	115	23	0	0	0	11	2	90

**BIA BRANCH**

**Mineral Bonds/Sureties for Nationwide Bonds**

The IESC will house and maintain original BIA nationwide sureties for energy and mineral companies.

- Nationwide bond processing was transferred to IESC in April 2022 AND receiving final approval in October 2022. Inherited was a backlog of approximately 36 bond requests pending from 2016 to 2022. IESC has completed processing of 32 of backlogged bonds, with the remaining four needing company action.
- Overall, 115 nationwide bond requests have been logged and 90 have been approved, completed & distributed. This number includes recent submittals to IESC.
- A complete inventory was completed for the nationwide bond physical files ending in a total of 400 nationwide bonds that vary in status and have been filed.
- Since transitioning from DRES in March 2022, the IESC has responded to 51 requests from the Solicitor and DOJ for information related to energy and mineral bankruptcies.

**Mineral Royalty Accounting Distribution (MRAD)**

The IESC has been overseeing twice-monthly distribution of allotted (individually owned) revenues to Individual Indian owners, nationwide. IESC is also now responsible for the oversight and certification of the transfer of financial data from ONRR to BIA and troubleshooting issues.

MRAD operations involve engagement with the following Departments and three integrated systems: ONRR’s Mineral Revenue Management Support System (MRMSS), BIA’s Trust Asset and Accounting Management System (TAAMS), and BTFA’s Trust Funds Accounting System (TFAS) now the Innovest System.

IESC processed over \$1.233 billion in oil and gas royalties through the MRAD system in FY2024.

**Mineral Regulation review, revision, and update**

The Service Center facilitated a group of subject matter experts which included the BIA, and the Solicitor’s office. This group reviewed the current regulations and provided drafts for review to BIA Regional and Field offices. The group continues to incorporate comments and suggestions made by BIA and the Solicitor’s office.

**Fluid Mineral Handbook review, revision, and update**

The review of the current Fluid Mineral Handbook is on-going. The Fluid Mineral Estate Procedural Handbook was issued in 2012. Several changes to the processing and development of the trust mineral resources are being incorporated into the document. The Service Center plans on having a draft document by the end of the calendar year.



### **TAAMS Mineral User Group (MUG)**

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, complete user acceptance testing, business rule development/modifications, and works with the Contracting Officer's Representative for the TAAMS contract to address CGI, Inc. (TAAMS vendor issues or recommendations). The group is currently drafting the BIA TAAMS business rules for the encoding and processing transactions within the TAAMS Mineral Module.

### **TAAMS Minerals Training**

The IESC has hosted and provided subject matter expertise to the following TAAMS minerals training this year on February 27-29, 2024, and July 16-18, and November 19-21, 2024.

### **A-123 Communitization Agreement Review**

The IESC performed and completed an OMB A-123 Communitization Agreement review at IESC. The IESC virtually reviewed and tested Fort Berthold CAs according to the DRES A-123 Communitization checklist. The IESC submitted review and testing results to the Division of Internal Evaluation and Assessment Office.

### **Southern Ute BIA Agency Active Projects**

Lease Segregation Research project: IESC has concluded the research and provided recommendation memo to the Southern Ute Agency (SUA) in January 2023. The lease and CA files records have been compiled and have been submitted to BIA Southwest Regional Office for Solicitor review to determine next steps.

Completed a royalty payment analysis project for BIA, SUA for two allotted mineral interest owners. This referral was a joint request from BIA and ONRR Indian Outreach.

### **Fort Berthold BIA Agency Active Projects**

- Provided CA Bootcamp, Legal Description and Right of way/Easement Training to MHA Nation, Energy Department, and other Federal staff on December 4-6, 2023, in Bismarck, ND.
- IESC has provided three staff to support the Fort Berthold BIA Agency in the form of details to the offices of Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent and Realty Services.
- Hosted a CA Operator's Meeting October 24, 2023, and March 27, 2024, for Operators on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, ND addressing CA processing on the Little Missouri River.
- Continuing coordination with Federal Partners on the approval of Fort Berthold CAs.
- Reviewed 83 Fort Berthold Agency pending Upland CAs for further adjudication and recommendation to approve.
- Indian Mineral Development Act (IMDA) Lease reviews.  
IESC has coordinated and completed three IMDA lease reviews and provided recommendations that led to approval by the Fort Berthold Agency within the 180-day statutory deadline. An additional three IMDA lease agreements are currently under review.
- Participated in Indian Mineral Owner Outreach at the Fort Berthold, Little Shell Pow-Wow, and assisted in responding to 81 allottee inquiries.
- Processed 44 Fort Berthold, Rural Water, Right of Way applications that resulted in approval.
- Processed 11 ROW oil and gas assignments.
- Processed manual check matching in lockbox for a total of \$78,523,611.

## Uintah & Ouray BIA Agency Active Projects

- 62 CAs submitted by the U&O Agency: 15 CAs have been completed and 47 are in the adjudication process.
- 12 CA lease amendments: nine completed, three in process.
- 49 Oil & Gas lease assignments completed.
- Created SOP for the U&O.
- U&O ROW Name Change Project - 1,021 ROWS were submitted to IESC, of these 1,011 have been completed, the remaining eight are pending Agency Action.
- U&O ROW Assignment Project - 743 ROWs submitted to IESC, of these 738 ROWs were completed and 114 need to be corrected for defects. 5 ROWs are pending Agency Action.
- The IESC is assisting with a Lease Expiration Project and energy related ROWs and Assignment processing. Also, began the lease segregation process for EDA leases for current & future submitted CAs.

## Fort Peck Agency Active Projects

- Oil & Gas lease Sale
- Compiled and provided FPA and DEMD with tract listing of 2, 513 potential/active mineral tracts.

## Ute Mountain Ute Agency Active Projects

IMDA Reviews IESC has coordinated one IMDA lease review and provided recommendations for technical assistance to BIA, Southwest Regional Office and the BIA, Ute Mountain Ute Agency Office.

## Osage Agency Projects

IESC is supporting the BIA Osage Agency with permitting actions related bond money to plug orphan and abandoned wells. This includes staff to provide digitization of well records to maximize efficiency.

## BLM ENGINEERING

### Engineering Activity

- Completed 54 engineering reviews for Applications for Permit to drill in support of the BLM North Dakota Field Office.
- Completed 13 Production Accountability Records Analyses for cases in North Dakota, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah.
- Continuing Production Accountability Records Analyses for 5 cases in New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah.
- Completed 7 Suspension of Production reviews on North Dakota Indian leases.
- Completed 123 engineering reviews and 63 adjudication reviews on Indian leases for Oklahoma Field Office Diligence program
- Conducted in-depth data analysis and review for nationwide Indian orphan well inventory.
- Reviewing production and analyzing economics of low-producing leases for Concho Agency.
- Adjudicated four Uintah & Ouray CAs and currently adjudicating five other U&O CAs.
- Adjudicated six Fort Berthold CAs and currently adjudicating nine other Fort Berthold CAs.
- Provided BLM instructors for in-person and virtual SOP Trainings.
- Provided instructor for CA Bootcamp Training.
- Participated in all FY 2024 Federal Partners Meetings.
- Coordinated with Osage Agency to provide reviews for permitting.
- Identified and analyzed low volume leases for Concho Agency.
- Providing technical assistance for grant review process.

## BTFA ADMINISTRATION

IESC provides direct Fiduciary Trust Officer and BTFA Field Office support services to the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and the Southern Ute Tribe in Colorado through the BTFA field office located in Farmington, NM. In addition, the BTFA branch supports all regions with oil and gas activity by processing manual lockbox transactions, IIM routine file maintenance, IIM and Tribal disbursements and inquiries as needed. Our office has the responsibility to focus on customer service to account holders; including the management of Tribal and Individual Indian Monies (IIM) trust assets, accounts, and to process income revenues and disburse funds to account holders and Tribes.

### Services Provided

To date the IESC/BTFA Branch and the Southern Ute, Farmington Field Office has completed:

- 388 beneficiary case creations (responding to beneficiaries or Tribal inquiries/requests for disbursements, address changes, updates to IIM accounts and questions).
- 11 Automated disbursement system, ADS batches processed to distribute and close IIM accounts and/or refund lockbox transactions.
- 43 Cash batches processed to distribute \$30,560,400 in Tribal trust funds.
- 46 routine file maintenance batches processed to update IIM account records.
- One Trust Records Management Assessment.
- Five Tribal Trust administrative reviews.
- One Tribal Trust Investment Portfolio Reviews

### Outreach

BTFA branch assisted with the following beneficiary outreach sessions:

- One Virtual Outreach session for the Beneficiaries of the Ute Indian Tribes, January 23, 2024.

- Two Virtual Outreach sessions for Beneficiaries of Fort Berthold Indian Reservation on February 13 and March 5, 2024.
- Two in-person Estate planning and Will Clinics in Farmington, NM and Shiprock, NM, January 3-5, 2024.
- One in-person, Indian Mineral Owner Outreach session in Ignacio, CO, on May 15, 2024.

BTFA Branch has contributed and presented the following workshops/trainings offered to Tribes and/or Federal partners:

- Federal Roles in Indian Mineral Development-Navajo and Hopi Tribes, Phoenix, AZ on March 27, 2024.
- BIA Superintendent Boot Camp Training, Albuquerque, NM, August 27-29, 2024.

### BTFA Branch Lockbox Support

By processing manual lockbox transactions:

Wind River Agency- clearing lockbox of Amoco Settlement funds totaling \$20,030 and distributing to approximately 126 IIM accounts.

### BTFA Modernization Projects

IESC is working to enhance the beneficiary experience by providing outreach and training to Indian mineral owners on how to use the new Trust Beneficiary Call Center, self-service automated features. This feature will allow Indian beneficiaries the ability to receive immediate account balance information on oil and gas distribution days.

IESC is logging beneficiary contacts/interactions into the new BTFA, Beneficiary Case Management System, BCMS, to effectively monitor and track individual and Tribal trust fund activities and contacts. It can also be used to effectively managing and track requests for information on trust assets when received by multiple federal agencies.



## Office of Natural Resources Revenue

Indian Lease Valuation Review - The IESC is reviewing lease instruments for more than 6,000 producing Indian leases to identify and categorize the leases by special royalty terms. Many of these terms affect the royalties collected by ONRR.

- 2,337 leases partially reviewed.
- 407 leases fully reviewed and entered ONRR's APEX tool.

Standard Operating Procedures attachment updates (BIA, BLM, ONRR, BTFA)

- SOP Attachment A update in progress – updates to seven sections prepared for Federal Partner review and approval.
- SOP Attachment C update in progress – IESC reviewing to determine scope of work needed for first update.
- SOP Attachment F update in progress – update to one section prepared for Federal Partner review and approval.
- SOP Attachment H – Pending request for comments to Federal Partners for first update.
- Indian Trust and Federal SOP Split to improve efficiency and focus – Approved 8/1/2024, IESC prepared final 508 compliance document for distribution.

## Orphan Well Program

IESC continues its second year of collaboration with and providing on-going technical for the Orphaned Well Tribal grant program. The Orphaned Well Program Office receives funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Section 40601 Tribal Orphaned Well Grant Program. The BIL provides a total of \$4.7 billion to address orphaned wells across the country, including \$150 million specifically for Tribes. The IESC has entered an MOA with the OWPO and provides technical assistance to the program and serves as the main POC for the in Lieu of Grant awards for Tribes.



*Orphaned Well*

IESC coordinated a series of Tribal listening sessions, on January 24, 31, and February 7, 2024, to present changes that had been made for Phase two Grant Guidance. IESC aided in developing the final Phase Two Tribal Grant Guidance announced March 15, 2024. This guidance provided instructions to Tribes on how to apply for two categories of orphaned well grants, 1) development grants and 2) implementation grants. The updated guidance reflects feedback from Tribes on how to streamline and clarify application requirements.

This guidance also informs Tribes that they may also request direct assistance from the Department, through “In Lieu of Grant” funding. This request requires the BIA to administer and carry out plugging, remediation and reclamation activities on the Tribe’s behalf. Tribes may submit requests for Phase Two in Lieu of Grant assistance for review and award on a rolling basis through December 2024.

The Interior Department made \$55 million available in the second phase of Tribal awards and continues to work with Tribes to complete proposals and initiate projects under this opportunity.

A grant management specialist has been hired to assist in this collaborative effort with the Orphaned Well Project Office. The IESC grant specialist completed (2) Requests for Proposals for the Support Services Methane Emission and the Plug and Abandon components of the Phase 1 Tribal in Lieu of Grant (ILOG) project. Both Requests for Proposals were disseminated to potential vendors.

On August 30, 2024, the Department of the Interior announced more than \$12 million investment through President Biden’s Investing in America agenda to help four Tribal Nations clean up orphaned oil and gas wells on their homelands. Four Tribes were awarded monies in this second phase funding from the OWPO. Additional awards are expected before the end of the calendar year.

The IESC will continue to assist the OWPO in the “office hours” sessions weekly through December 2024 to inform Tribes of the “In Lieu of Grant” assistance opportunity.

IESC has continued to work on developing a comprehensive inventory of orphaned oil and gas wells on Trust lands. The IESC received the well data from BOGS and from BLM and is currently compiling this data. The work has been completed on an Idle well list; this list will then be drilled down to an actual orphaned wells listing.

IESC staff participated in the following trainings:

- DOI annual mandatory trainings (Ethics, Cybersecurity, Privacy, Records, FOIA, Travel Card, Concur, prohibited personnel practices, supervisory).
- TAAMS minerals, lockbox, and QLIK training.
- What is a Fiduciary training.
- Federal Roles in Mineral Development workshop
- NPM-TRUS-44, Overview for BIA Field offices, Tribes, Federal partners, and Industry training.
- BIA Realty Training.

- Communitization Agreement Bootcamp, Right-of-way, and Legal description training.
- Tribal Land Staff National Conference
- BIA Superintendent Boot Camp
- Contract Officer Representative (COR Level 2) Certification
- Standard Operating Procedures, Fluid Minerals-Indian Training
- NIOGEMS Training
- Lease Segregation Training
- Natural Resources Energy Development Course
- FNREL Oil & Gas Law Short Course Training

### **Partnerships Contributed to a Balanced Stewardship of Trust Lands**

#### Federal Partnership Collaboration Meetings

The IESC facilitates regular meetings between Federal partners and Tribes to facilitate problem solving on shared oil and gas issues.

- Southwest Federal Partner meeting held January 9, 2024 (July 9, 2024 virtual)
- Fort Berthold Feds Only Federal Partner Meeting held October 25, 2023, and March 20, 2024 (Virtual).
- Fort Berthold Federal Partners Meeting with MHA Nation (Tribe) November 6-7, 2023, and March 26-27, 2024, Lakewood, CO (Virtual).
- OK/TX/KS Federal partner meeting held February 6, 2024, and September 19, 2024 (virtual)
- Rocky Mountain Federal Partners Meeting held March 7, 2024 (virtual)
- Navajo Federal Partner meeting held October 5, 2023, and April 4, 2024 (virtual)
- Uintah & Ouray (U&O) Federal Partners Meeting held November 3, 2023 and May 2, 2024 (hybrid).
- Big/Little Missouri River Meeting – Fort Berthold Federal Partners & MHA Nation held March 2, 2024 (Virtual).



**Indian Energy and Minerals Steering Committee (IEMSC) and Executive Management Group (EMG)**

These entities provide BIA, BLM, ONRR, BTFA coordination and oversight. Members include Senior executives.

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Meeting</u>
February 21, 2024	EMG
February 22, 2024	IEMSC
June 26, 2024	EMG
June 27, 2024	IEMSC

Onshore Energy and Mineral Lease Management Interagency SOP, Indian Fluid Minerals SOP Training by the IESC held on:

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Students</u>	<u>Location</u>
Oct 31-Nov 1, 2023	45	Vernal, UT
March 26-27, 2024	44	Virtual
July 30-31, 2024	19	Lakewood, CO

**Alternative Staffing Approaches, Recruitment and Retention Efforts**

This fiscal year, the BTFA branch added two full-time employees by advertising and filling two new staff positions, a Program Analyst, and Fiduciary Trust Advisor, as temporary detail opportunities. With the addition of these positions, the BTFA branch was able to offer much needed staff support to IESC to assist with reporting, tracking, pulling TAAMS title records and building digital files for the Communitization Agreement review process. In addition, the details provided staff the ability to gain broader experience to promote employments development and training and to foster career ladder progression with the IESC organizational chart.

In FY 2024, the ONRR branch utilized ONRR’s Job Rotation program to hire seven detail employees to assist on two ongoing IESC projects, the Nationwide Bond Cleanup and Communitization Agreement Adjudication projects. With their assistance, the IESC was able to complete the bond cleanup and reduce the overall time spent on the CA approval process.

**Outreaches to Tribes Regarding Renewables, TERA/TEDO**

- IESC completed two Tribal outreaches to inform about the TERA/TEDO process and other technical assistance
- IESC responded to Office of Legislative Affairs regarding an inquiry on the status of TERA/TEDO activities.

**Opportunities**

The IESC has identified numerous opportunities for continued and expanded services and continues to support inter-bureau coordination on the following efforts:

Administrative appeals and precedent-setting acreage and boundary determinations for leases affected by updated cadastral determinations along waterways on Indian lands because of river course migration. This is one of the key issues holding up development and subsequent royalty distribution to Indian Mineral Owners, and IESC is committed to working with all parties to overcome these barriers.

Lands affected by judicial review (active litigation in the US District Court System), with respect to lands underlying the bed of the (Big) Missouri River, which are subject to competing claims against title.

IESC is signatory on the Hopi and Navajo Energy Transition Memorandums of Understanding. This effort is primarily coordinated by the US Department of Energy and requires IESC leadership to attend planning sessions with both tribes. This work will be ongoing.

The IESC has identified a gap in Orphan Well programming available to allotted lands. As currently structured, grant dollars are unavailable via the tribal grant program to plug and remediate orphan wells on allotted trust lands. IESC has submitted a budget request to address this issue and fill this critical gap.

IESC is increasingly being asked to engage on energy projects in Alaska. Most recently, IESC attended the BIA Providers Conference in Anchorage, AK, where a READI Listening Session was hosted (more information the READI program below).

### **Renewable Energy Accelerated Deployment Initiative (READI) for Indian Country**

The IESC, in coordination with the Division of Energy and Mineral Development (DEMD), established a work strategy to support the Department's goal to further clean energy initiatives. The READI process is aimed at presenting clean energy development options to Tribal and Individual Indian Owners and receiving input through structured and coordinate dialogue. A final READI report was published in the READI website in the fall 2024. Please visit <https://www.bia.gov/readi> Website for updates and ore information on the program.

IESC has participated in multiple White House Council on Native American Affairs Subcommittees, including Economic Development, Energy, and Infrastructure, Electric Vehicles, and Internal Indigenous Issues committees. These subcommittees meet on a consistent basis and include representatives from across the Federal government.

### **Challenges**

IESC has been unable to fill numerous realty vacancies listed on the organizational chart, including staffing for the IESC strike team. Recruiting efforts have been combined with other Office of Trust Services divisions to run continuous and open announcements on <https://www.usajobs.gov> to help fill the realty specialist vacancies.

Both BTFA and ONRR have added temporary staff through job rotation and detail opportunities to assist IESC during the staff shortage.

### **Best Practices**

IESC perfected the twice a month MRAD distribution by working with federal partners to split the MRAD file into two separate files: Fort Berthold Agency and the rest of the Regions to increase efficiency and reduce delays. To date this process has been successful in facilitating the processing of large files that had previously caused significant delays in royalty distribution.

IESC has incorporated alternate staffing plans to add personnel by utilizing detail opportunities and rotating volunteers to assist with multiple projects. The additional details have resulted in a 500% increase in completed Communitization Agreements completed this fiscal year compared to FY2023. Also, the IESC details have cleaned up over 400 Nationwide Bond Files and have assisted ni the ONRR lease evaluation project that analyzed over 6,0000 Indian leases. The workload at IESC is ever growing and IESC will be innovated in its staffing approaches to facilitate flexible response to field office needs.

IESC has enhanced its processes to deliver higher-quality service through the Energy and Mineral Support Processing initiative. This allows government agencies to request operational support for energy and mineral projects. Agencies can request assistance by completing an online form at [Request for Indian Energy Service Center Assistance Online Form](#) or by emailing [IESCRequests@bia.gov](mailto:IESCRequests@bia.gov).

## DIVISION OF REAL ESTATE SERVICES (DRES)



*Badlands in South Dakota*

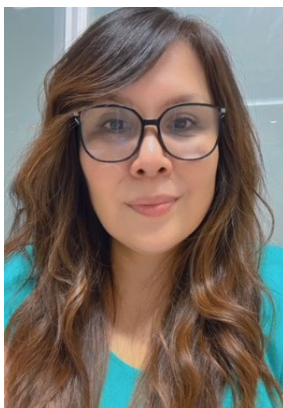
### DRES welcomes new Realty Specialists

Tonya Almaraz, Lonny Anderson, Elizabeth Berndt, Misti Bigbow, Randall (Jamey) Hothouse, Luree Livermont, Iva Ollar and Christina Varela. Ms. Varela and Mr. Anderson provided bios for the issue of the newsletter.

**Lonny Anderson** (not pictured below) is a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. He began his career with the BIA in 2007 working for the Great Plains Region, Land Titles and Records Office. In 2014, he shifted to the Great Plains Region, Realty Office, where he was a realty specialist focusing on oil and gas leasing, agricultural leasing, rights-of-way, mortgages and appeals. Lonny graduated from South Dakota State University in 2006, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Journalism and Mass Communication.

**Christina Varela** (pictured below) is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation born and raised in Southern Utah. After years of working in customer service, Christina brought that passion of helping others to the BIA where she is a Realty Specialist. She currently holds a Master of Public Administration from Southern Utah University and a Bachelors' Integrated Studies with an emphasis on Business and Communication from Utah Tech University.

Growing up in a small community she found a passion to understand where her family comes from and that led to a heart for diversity and inclusion. Christina was raised between her maternal and her paternal family in Utah and California. Christina makes her home in Southern Utah where she raised her daughter Victoria. She enjoys traveling, reading, and spending time with her bonus family in Arizona.



*DRES has 8 Realty Specialists: Tonya Almaraz, Luree Livermont, Iva Ollar, Christina Valera. Not pictured Lonny Anderson, Elizabeth Berndt, Misti Bigbow and Randall (Jamey) Hothouse*



*Broadband high-speed internet a priority for Tribal rural areas, photo credit AVSO*

### **Broadband Collaboration Activities**

DRES is engaged in ongoing collaboration in several interagency working groups on Rights of Way (ROWs) for Tribal broadband and infrastructure projects

Discussions have been held on Tribal Broadband Projects in New Mexico, Nevada and Nebraska

DRES staff attended the National Tribal Telecommunications Association (NTTA) Broadband Summit in Chandler, AZ on September 23-25, 2024

### **Collaborative Efforts with Other Federal Agencies on New Broadband Initiatives**

- Participation Broadband Permitting Collaboration discussions
- Streamlining Federal Processes
- Cadastral Surveys
- Audio/Visual Production

### **Excess Land Transfer Requests**

DRES has processed seven (7) transfer requests from the Tribes for BIA excess real property, namely former BIA day schools under 40 U.S.C § 523 and one (1) USDA Forest Service real property to a Tribe.

DRES have been working on excess land transfer handbook with the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Collaborative Action (RACA) and it is in the final stages of review. The training to the BIA field staff on the handbook will be provided once it has been issued.

### **Fee to Trust and Fee to Trust Strike Team**

Land Acquisitions, Fee-to-Trust 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

DRES detailed one full time employee into the FTT Strike Team Lead position at the beginning of the fiscal year and permanently filled two FTE positions in the Quarter 4.

# System Updates

## TAAMS Enhancements (Change Requests)

Multiple change requests for enhancements to TAAMS will assist the field with encoding will be submitted to the TAAMS Change Management Board (TCMB). Change requests are routinely submitted when an opportunity to improve TAAMS processing of realty transactions is identified. The TCMB is comprised of subject matter experts tasked with reviewing and approving requests.

## TAAMS Online Portal Submissions

DRES is working with contractors on updating the TAAMS system portal to allow online submissions from applicants.

This will streamline the process for applicants by providing a means to submit large application packages that typically are sent through mail. It will also allow immediate receipt by BIA and provide transparency on the process for the applicant through the portal.

## General Accounting Office (GAO) Engagement

DRES is working to address the six recommendations found in GAO-24-105875 to improve the processing of realty transactions and improve delivery of real estate services and the customer service experience with individual Indian landowners and Tribes.



Source: GAO-24-105875 document

## SmartSheets Initiative

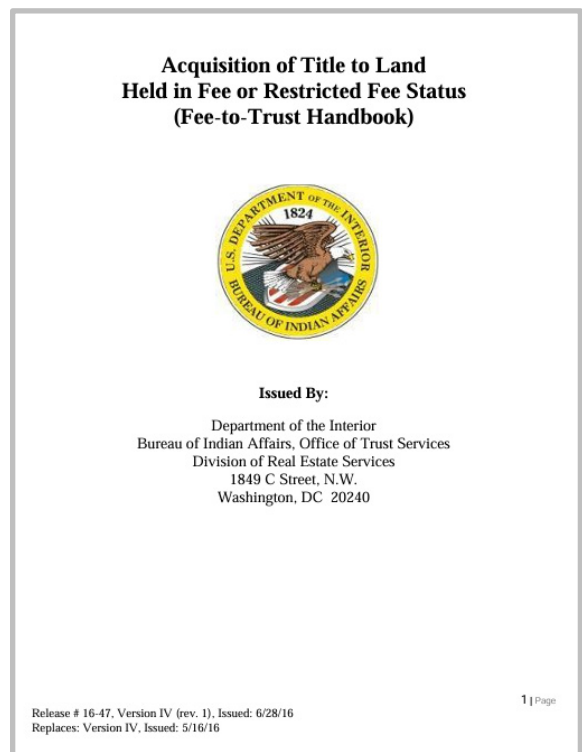
HEARTH Act Application Tracking System (HAATS) on-line application tool for submission and tracking of Tribal HEARTH Act regulations.

Excess Real Property Transfers tracking of Notice of Availability (NOA).

## Policy Updates

The Fee-to-Trust Handbook is being finalized to support updated 25 CFR Part 151, Land Acquisitions Regulations issued December 2023. Once the handbook is finalized and issued, DRES will schedule nationwide FTT training. Updates include:

- Guidance for requesting legal description reviews
- Clarify documents required for Title Opinion Reviews
- Clarify which FTT processes can run concurrently and allow for internal timeframes for processing applications



The FTT handbook was last updated in June 2016



*AVSO site visit to Taylor Creek Acquisition in Montana*

### **Policy Collaboration Activities**

Policies are under development address the following programs

- Appraisal and Valuations Services (AVSO) Pilot Project with BIA Realty and Central Office
- Federally funded programs in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)
- Department of Commerce NTIA's Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP)
- Collaboration on policy amendments for Tribes eligible for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Recreational and Public Purpose Act

### **Training and Information Sharing**

Regional Realty Officers MS Teams calls are held monthly to provide updates to Regional Office realty employees.

- Superintendent's Boot Camp Training held August 26-29, 2024
- Updates the BIA DRES website with current policy and information on RES transactions

### **Best Practices**

- Working to update its external BIA Web pages for easy navigation for Tribes and American Indians and Alaska Natives inquiries
- Updating the internal BIA Sharepoint site for easy navigation and support to field offices.
- Created and issued Realty brochure/flyers for distribution to Tribes and landowners on realty transactions.



## DIVISION OF RESOURCE INTEGRATION & SERVICES (DRIS)



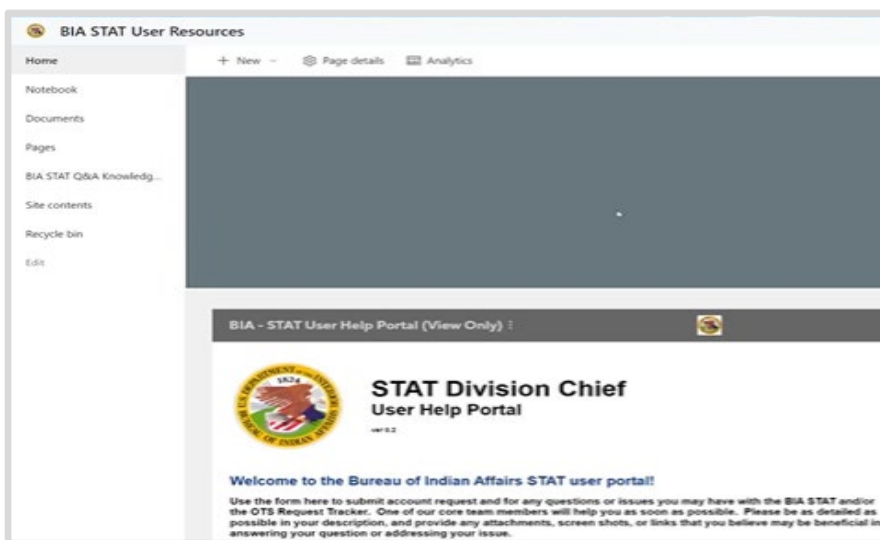
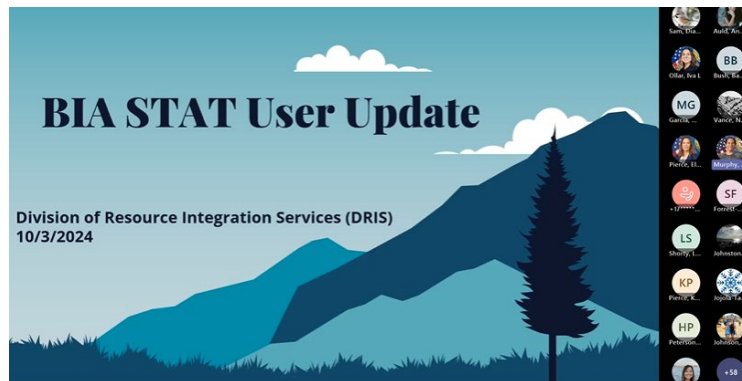
### BIA STAT 1.0 Updates

BIA STAT 1.0 received Authority to Operate (ATO) and is in the final phase of approval to be promoted into Production. What moving into Production means is that 'real or live' data can be utilized, and Workspace Business Owners will be responsible of managing users, permissions, and groups.

The respective Workspace Business Owners will also be responsible for monitoring data content. Although, the BIA STAT system is rated as a FISMA Moderate, the current 1.0 authorization DOES NOT yet allow for sensitive Personally Identifiable Information (PII) to be utilized, although that is planned for the next release of BIA STAT.

### STAT User Session

A User Update session was conducted on October 3, 2024, and the slides and recording from the meeting are located on the BIA STAT User Resources site; see: <https://doimsp.sharepoint.com/sites/doi-bia-ots/ris/bsur>. The new User Help Portal will be enabled upon receiving our final Change Request to deploy the system into Production mode, so watch this space.



Dashboard at <https://doimsp.sharepoint.com/sites/doi-bia-ots/ris/bsur>



*Division of Resource Integration and ESRI staff*

### **OTS Staff Dashboard**

An exciting innovation is the launch of the OTS Staff Dashboard, which features a Mission Critical Travel Request/Speaker Request. Also on this dashboard, a Human Resources Remote/Telework Agreement card will display the most recent agreement on file with the Federal Personnel and Payroll System (FPPS). Lastly an OTS Directory includes the ability for managers to update information and interface with other application tools.

The Dynamic View feature is available now and enables the capability for end users to automatically have their view of selected sheets/dashboards/reports showing their entries, rather than having to sift through the entire set of results.

Owners of the objects can easily set up the functionality by user and/or group and be confident that only the fields or sets of values that were set up by the owner are visible and manipulable by the targeted users or group of users.

### **BIA ROW IT System Update**

Patterned after the success of the Capacity Building Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) executed in April 2024, the follow-on ROW IT System MOA is in the final signatory stage with the goal of having funds flow soon after the Financial Business Management System (FBMS) reopens in November 2024.

In response to suggestions for executive-level resources for a detail assignment to help guide the effort, DIRES is drafting up a posting for Career Connections. In conjunction with BIA Acquisitions and the Office of Information Technology (OIT) Project Management Office (PMO), DRIS is continuing to refine the draft Statement of Work (SOW)/Performance Work Statement (PWS), Independent Government Cost Estimate (IGCE), and other elements that comprise a procurement package, and is conducting recurring working sessions regarding internal resources, project timeframe, and approach.

## DIVISION OF WATER & POWER (DWP)



*Tufa Stone Dam in San Carlos, AZ*

### Early Warning System Monitoring

SOD's EWS Team monitors reservoir elevations and sends alerts to support decision making before, during, and after storm events or other dam-safety incidents to reduce the risks to life and property downstream of BIA dams. The data management system, known as Safety of Dams Environmental Monitoring System (SDEMS), is a critical component of the EWS. In August 2024, SDEMS achieved a formal Authority to Operate, indicating that it meets the information technology security controls required for all DOI information systems. In addition, EWS operation and maintenance is dependent on a service support contract. The current contract expires in November 2024; the contract for the next five years was awarded in September 2024 to ensure continuous support.



*Early Warning System*

### SOD Workshop

Save the date for the 2025 Safety of Dams Workshop to be held in person February 4-6, 2025, in Fallon, Nevada (pending approval) at the Fallon Convention Center. The workshop will include SOD Program updates, dam design and construction projects, a detailed look at the Weber Dam incident of 2023 and a field visit to Weber Dam.



### Dam Tender Training

Save the date for Dam Tender training to be held in person December 3-5, 2024 in Mescalero, New Mexico at the Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort & Casino. The training will include basic dam-safety terminology, identification of potential dam-safety issues, discussion of the role of the dam tender/operator and a mock dam inspection at Lake Mescalero Dam.



Lakewood, CO

From left: Matt Young, Sam Stegeman, Isobel Smith, Karina Morrison, Michele Minihane, Tim Pauls, Danny Saiza, Roxanne Vallo, Drew Lockman, Delores Herman, Lorraine Shorty, Rod Eisenbraun, Brandi Helms, Devin Hougardy, John Chua, Dustin Walsh, Bryce Herbert, Angeline Kronyak, Miles Blair, Jeff Good, Ali Knaak

**Architect Engineering (A/E) IDIQ Contract**

Most SOD Program activities are completed through AE-IDIQ contract task orders. The SOD Program's portion of the Division of Water and Power Architect-Engineering Multiple Award Contract (DWP A-E MAC) has been awarded to four Indian Small Business Economic Enterprise (ISBEE) pool A/E firms and six unrestricted pool A/E firms. Requirements in support of the SOD Program will be set aside for and only announced to the ISBEE pool if the requirement is estimated to be \$500,000 or less, in accordance with FAR clause 52.219-7, Notice of Partial Small Business Set-Aside. Requirements in support of the SOD Program will be announced to the unrestricted pool if the requirement is estimated to be more than \$500,000 or if the requirement is \$500,000 or less and a Buy Indian Act waiver has been approved. The DWP AE-MAC was awarded for a five-year ordering period extending from August 16, 2024 to August 16, 2029.

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

A flood in the spring of 2019 severely damaged the spillway at Oglala Dam and nearly resulted in a catastrophic release of the reservoir. Damage was so significant it prompted the draining of the Oglala Lake until the spillway could be replaced and other repairs to the embankment dam could be made.





*Exposed bedrock near the bottom of the excavation for the new spillway at Oglala Dam; placing the first layer of concrete for the new spillway at Oglala Dam*

Construction to repair the spillway and address other safety concerns at the dam began in the spring of 2024 and is now about 20% complete. The construction contractor has nearly finished excavation for the new roller-compacted concrete spillway and recently began laying bedrock at the spillway foundation. This step is necessary to reduce the potential for leakage beneath the dam and to make sure that the nearly-70-foot-tall concrete structure will be placed on a strong and competent surface.

An aggressive schedule is necessary with winter weather coming soon; the crews will continue to work long days with the goal to complete the first phase of construction before a winter shutdown begins.

**UPDATE: Menager’s Dam Rehabilitation Construction, Tohono O’odham Indian Reservation, Arizona**



*Menager’s Dam during tropical storm Rosa, October 2018*

Rehabilitation designs have been developed to bring Menager’s Dam in southern Arizona to modern safety standards. A construction contract was recently awarded to replace the dam and increase its capacity to safely manage floods and future storms. Construction is anticipated to begin in early 2025.

## DIVISION OF WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT (DWFM)

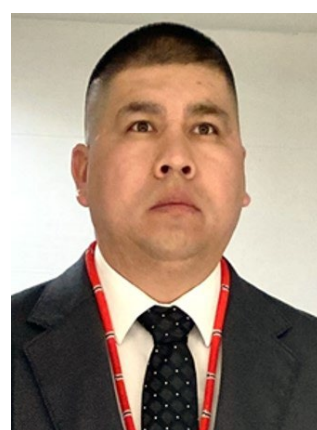


### The Division of Wildland Fire Management Fills Several Critical Positions

The Division of Wildland Fire Management is pleased to have filled several critical fire management positions at central office this past quarter. We have welcomed many qualified individuals who have built their careers within wildland fire management and are taking on national leadership roles within the Division. Additionally, two individuals with higher education and professional experience serving their tribal governments in similar roles are excited to take on their new positions within the Bureau of Indian Affairs.



*Pictured above: John Cervantes, Branch Chief for Aviation, Elaina Via LaPaz, Public Affairs Specialist, and Whitney Malatare, Fuels Data Analyst*



*Pictured above: Darryl Martinez, Post Wildfire Recovery Coordinator, Troy Phelps, Safety Program Manager, Shane Santos, Assistant Branch Chief-Fire Operations*

## Aviation Provides Interagency Support and Bolsters UAS Program

As the 2024 fire season draws to a close, DWFM staff are pleased to report no accidents with injuries, a testament to the aviation staff's commitment to safety. Despite moderate flight activity, the emphasis on safety awareness remained paramount throughout the season.

The multi-mission Pilatus PC-12 aircraft, equipped with WESCAM MX15i sensors, continued to provide critical intelligence to dispatch offices, fire managers, and incident personnel. One aircraft commenced its Mandatory Availability Period (MAP) in the Eastern Oklahoma Region in mid-February, with the second starting in mid-April in the Midwest Region. The crews and data specialists have collaborated closely with interagency partners and dispatch centers, ensuring accurate and timely data delivery to optimize operational decisions.



*Jeremy Harlan (left), Uncrewed Aircraft System (UAS) trainee from BIA Fort Apache Agency assembles an aircraft with a UAS team member while on assignment for the 2024 South Fork and Salt Fires outside Mescalero, NM.*

## Contracted Aircraft

The BIA contracts two of the six federal aircraft equipped with aerial remote sensors (Pilatus PC-12 aircraft). These aircraft play a crucial role in early fire detection and rapid response, allowing on-the-ground fire response and other air response to effectively contain fires before they escalate.

## Hopi and Navajo Aerial Survey

In April, one of the aircraft and crew assisted the Western Region Reality office along with the Solicitors office with a special aerial survey mission for a court case needed for land condemnation for the Hopi and Navajo reservations, saving BIA's Western Region over \$150K in aerial survey cost.

## Search and Rescue

In August, one of the aircraft and crew also successfully assisted the National Park Service with another search and rescue mission for a person in Glacier National Park. This response provided a timely and effective search of a missing person at a critical time.

## Trained Pilots

The Uncrewed Aerial Systems (UAS) section of the aviation program continues to expand its capabilities. BIA has now trained a total of 18 BIA and tribal pilots and integrated 24 state-of-the-art aircraft into the fleet, with additional aircraft on order. These efforts enhance the program's ability to support multiple bureau and tribal needs.

## Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Program (WFAP)

In FY 24, the DWFM officially started the Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Program (WFAP). The goal of WFAP is to hire-entry level firefighters and provide them with opportunities to work in various fire functional areas such as aviation, engines and hand crews. This is while also mentoring and coaching them throughout their tenure as a wildland fire apprentice.



*Great Plains Region Apprentice Joshua Whirlwind Soldier.*

Selected apprentices attend two academies, a basic and advanced fire academy, where they are immersed in fire training, leadership skill building, and professional attributes associated with wildland firefighters. Upon graduation from WFAP, the apprentices can be non-competitively converted from the WFAP position and into a federal GS-5 senior firefighter full-time employee.



*Eastern Oklahoma Region Apprentice Brayden Smith*

Currently this program is funded by the bipartisan infrastructure law (BIL) and the DWFM. Our goal is to maintain 15 – 20 students as apprentices, who, through a partnership with the Department of Labor, are considered full-time employees (permanent seasonal) that begin accruing federal benefits on day one.

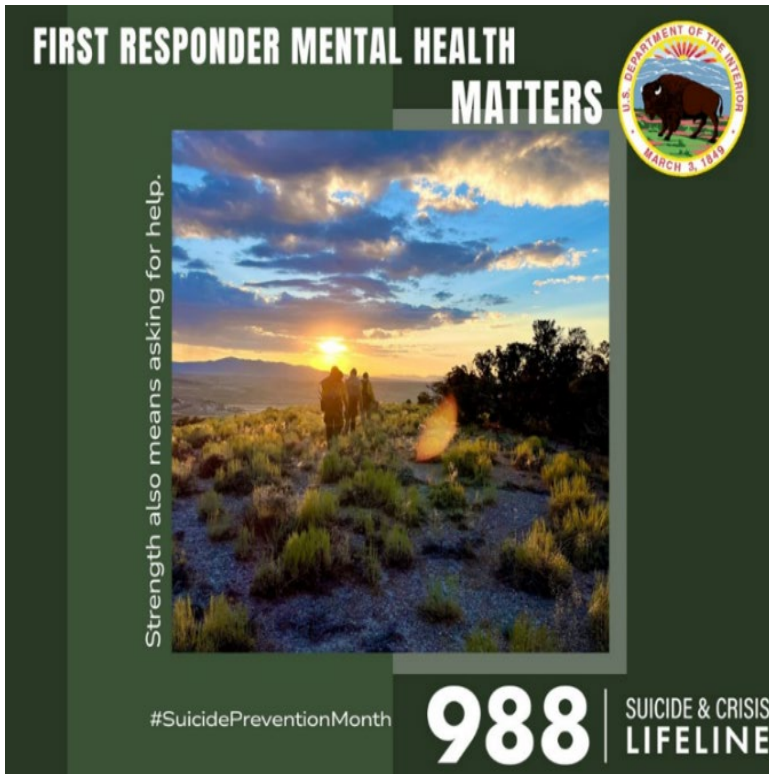
We currently employ three WFAP apprentices in three BIA regions: the Southwest region, the Great Plains region and the Eastern Oklahoma region. We expect the Western region to also hire two apprentices by the year's end.

The WFAP is providing our BIA and Tribal staff with an excellent beginning to what we hope to be a fun, rewarding and dedicated career in wildland fire. The program itself is a great accomplishment to garner youth interest in wildland fire careers while supporting program recruitment and retention efforts and wildland firefighter training.



*SW Region Apprentice Jayden Headdress*





Graphic provide by the Office of Wildland Fire

**Mental Health Program Managers Support First Responders**

In January, two mental health program managers were hired to initiate the development of a comprehensive mental health and wellbeing program for BIA and tribal fire personnel. The initial focus for the program is to build awareness and support for mental health programming at all levels within fire management, assess the mental health needs unique to fire in Indian country, and to identify existing community supports in addition to gaps in care. With these goals in mind, the program has achieved several notable accomplishments for FY2024.

**BIA and Tribal Ad Hoc Committee**

To engage the broader BIA and tribal fire communities, a mental health ad hoc committee was approved in May 2024. Participation is open to all BIA and tribal fire personnel and serves as an opportunity for collaboration with program managers on program development. Current projects include the development of program mission and vision statements, a BIA Loss of Human Life handbook, and a wallet card for carrying on assignment that contains pertinent self-care and mental health support information.

April to August, program managers visited eight fire bases to meet with fire personnel, establish rapport, provide education and awareness, and encourage collaboration in program development. Bases were in the Eastern Oklahoma, Southwest, Eastern, and Rocky Mountain Regions. Additionally, directories of tribal and BIA fire programs have been compiled, and direct efforts to connect with all BIA and tribal fire programs through email and phone are underway.

To strengthen the connection between fire bases and their local communities, healthcare resource guides are an ongoing project to provide short summaries of and contact information for local primary care, mental health care, substance use treatment, crisis intervention and emergency services. As guides are completed, they are provided to each fire program to reduce the burden and stigma on the individual for navigating healthcare and to educate personnel on local, culturally sensitive resources available.

**Long Term Goals**

Longer term goals for FY 2025 will include establishing a central phone line and email for personnel to request support with seeking care for self and others, request critical incident peer response, and to address general mental health questions or concerns in a timely manner. This shared line will be the first of its kind among DOI fire programs. Education, skills training, timely and appropriate critical incident response with follow up, and connection to care are essential elements that will continue to be developed under this program.

## DIVISION OF WORKFORCE & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (DWYD)



### DOI Pathways Program

The Pathways Programs help agencies recruit and hire well-qualified students and recent graduates by streamlining hiring processes and providing applicants with clear paths to internships and full-time employment within the Federal government. Each program provides participants with meaningful training, mentoring, and career development opportunities, and in turn, agencies attract and cultivate new talent to fill key competency gaps and build stronger succession and workforce plans.

The **Indian Affairs (IA) Pathways Internship Program** connects post-secondary students to paid internship opportunities with the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs and Tribal Nations across the United States. With meaningful projects, rotational assignments, and multi-semester opportunities, Pathways prepares interns for an impactful career public service and offers a direct pipeline to full-time employment with Federal Agencies or Tribal Nations upon graduation.

### Pathways Program Playbook

The Office of Personnel Management issued final regulations governing the criteria in relation to all Pathways Programs as it pertains to recruitment, participation, and conversion on June 11, 2024. These updated regulations and the updated policy will greatly enhance our ability to recruit and retain early career talent via Pathways Internships, Recent Graduates, and the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) program. Attached is the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Human Capital Management, Human Capital Management, Pathways Programs Playbook.

### Some of the key changes are:

- Pathways Internship and Recent Graduate Programs applicant eligibility requirements expanded to include “qualifying career or technical education programs” (which may include Registered Apprenticeship Programs, Job Corps, Climate Corps, AmeriCorps, and Peace Corps).
- Public notice can be met by advertising Pathways opportunities on USAJOBS or the agency's public facing career or job information web page.
- Initial recent graduate appointments up to the GS-11 level (or equivalent).
- Recent graduates and PMFs may be converted to term or permanent positions in the employing agency or in different agencies when the employing agency is unable to convert.
- Agency Pathways Policy replaces MOU requirement with OPM.
- Pathways interns must be converted within 180 days of completing degree or career or technical educational program, instead of the previous 120 days.
- Agencies can convert interns to term or permanent Federal positions once they complete a minimum of 480 hours, or fewer with the below waiver, instead of the previous 640 hours.
- The work hour waivers are still based on work performance and demonstrated high potential. In addition to grade point averages and class standings, agencies may also approve a waiver based on letter of recommendation attesting to their outstanding program performance.