

Tribal Pesticide Program Council Executive Committee
Monthly Conference Call
08/19/26
Call Notes – Final

Join by Teams: <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/22740938037674?p=1Ddfwc1INwjZXQ6aAD>
or phone: 928-331-0022 (conference ID: 570 443 809#)
Meeting ID: 227 409 380 376 74
Password: YB9qA6WR

Roll call:

Tribes (18)

- Amanda Holm, White Earth Nation
- Brady Hartmann, White Earth Nation
- Camilo Perez, Quechan Indian Tribe
- Eric Gjevre, Coeur d'Alene Indian Tribe
- Erica Taylor, Cherokee Nation
- Jefferson Biakeddy, Navajo Nation
- Jessica Raspitha, St. Regis Mohawk Tribe
- Nina Hapner, Kashia Band of Pomo Indians
- Olivia Pospisil, Ponca Tribe of Nebraska
- Renee Keezer, White Earth Nation
- Ronnie Satepauhoodle, Kiowa Tribe
- Sarah Deshazer, Spokane Tribe of Indians
- Steve Anderson, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
- Tacy Jensen, Gila River Indian Community
- Terry Hill, San Carlos Apache Tribe
- Theodore Puetz, Ak-Chin Indian Community
- Tyler Jacobs, St. Regis Mohawk Tribe
- Virginia Snake-Bumann, Winnebago Tribe

Tribal Organizations (2)

- Africa Dorame-Avalos, Inter Tribal Council of Arizona
- Melanie Kirby, Institute of American Indian Arts

EPA (1)

- Linsey Walsh, EPA/OPP

Other (1)

- Mark Daniels, Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals

Reported in advance as absent (2)

- Emma Cross, EPA/OECA
- Diania Caudell, California Indian Basketweavers Association

1. Tribal Caucus

2. Welcome/Introductions

Renee Keezer, White Earth Nation facilitated the roll call

3. EPA Updates

Linsey Walsh, EPA/OPP reported that EPA recently distributed a notice through the TPPC listserv seeking nominations for EPA's Small Community Advisory Subcommittee, a subcommittee of the Local Government Advisory Committee. Interested individuals were encouraged to review the information sent via email and contact the EPA representative listed in the announcement for additional information or application instructions.

4. TPPC Coordinator Updates

a. Fall Meeting Update

Mark Daniels, ITEP provided an update on planning for the TPPC Fall Meeting, which will be hosted by the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe in Akwesasne, New York, November 3-5. Mark noted that **a registration link will be distributed next week**. Registration is especially important for those planning to attend in person, as TPPC travel support will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. Although registration is not required for virtual attendees, Mark encouraged all participants to register to assist with attendance tracking and EPA reporting requirements.

5. Tribal Partnership Review Update from the American Indian Environmental Office

Daniel Vaught, EPA/AIEO and Stephanie Ackerman, EPA/Office of External Affairs joined the meeting to discuss EPA's ongoing Tribal Partnership Network Review. Daniel explained that the review is intended to evaluate and strengthen the broader EPA Tribal Partnership Network, which includes the National Tribal Caucus (NTC), Regional Tribal Operations Committees (RTOCs), and media-specific Tribal Partnership Groups (TPGs) such as TPPC. He emphasized that the effort is focused on identifying strengths, addressing challenges, improving communication, and formalizing effective practices. Daniel described ongoing outreach efforts, including engagement with NTC, National Tribal Water Council, National Tribal Air Association, TPGs, RTOCs, and two national listening sessions. A second virtual listening session is scheduled for September 1.

TPPC Feedback and Discussion

Renee discussed the relationship between TPPC and the National Tribal Caucus. She noted that although the designated NTC representative does not attend every TPPC meeting, engagement has generally been available when TPPC concerns need to be elevated to the national level. She also noted that several TPPC members serve on RTOCs and provide additional pathways for communication with NTC.

Eric Gjevre, Coeur d'Alene Indian Tribe asked whether the review was intended to downsize or consolidate existing Tribal partnership groups. Daniel responded that EPA leadership has communicated that there is no current intent to eliminate organizations or reduce representation. Instead, the focus is on improving communication, breaking down information silos, and strengthening coordination among Tribal and EPA partners.

Jasmine Courville, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes emphasized TPPC's long-standing role as a resource for all Tribes, regardless of membership status. She noted that many Tribes have built trusted relationships through TPPC and cautioned that reducing representation or participation opportunities could diminish Tribal voices and limit access to technical expertise.

Mark asked whether EPA was considering funding mechanisms to support NTC, since unlike the TPGs it does not have a grantee managing the organization. Daniel acknowledged that funding support has emerged as a recurring theme during outreach discussions. He noted that many Tribal leaders and representatives contribute significant time beyond their primary job responsibilities and that sustainable support mechanisms remain under discussion. Jasmine added that Tribal leaders, coordinators, and chairs routinely dedicate substantial amounts of unpaid time to partnership activities and emphasized the value of supporting those contributions.

Nina Hapner, Kashia Band of Pomo Indians questioned what information and data prompted the review and asked how feedback was being gathered. She expressed concern that reviews can sometimes rely too heavily on internal EPA perspectives without adequate Tribal input. Daniel responded that EPA has been conducting outreach with RTOCs, Tribal Partnership Groups, listening sessions, regional Tribal coordinators, and headquarters staff. He stated that feedback is still being compiled and analyzed.

Africa Dorame-Avalos, Inter Tribal Council of Arizona raised concerns about previous decisions to reduce the number of RTOC meetings in some regions, noting that fewer meetings may reduce opportunities for Tribal engagement and regional input. She questioned how EPA intends to reconcile goals of strengthening Tribal partnerships while simultaneously reducing opportunities for communication and collaboration. Daniel acknowledged that concerns regarding RTOC meeting reductions have been raised repeatedly during outreach efforts. He clarified that changes related to GAP funding and meeting limitations were separate from the Tribal Partnership Network Review, although he recognized that many Tribal representatives view the issues as interconnected.

Africa also asked how EPA intends to evaluate Tribal partnership groups and what measures will be used to assess effectiveness. Daniel explained that EPA is currently gathering both qualitative and quantitative information, including participation levels, communications, reports, comment letters, deliverables, and other indicators identified by Tribal representatives as important measures of success. Several TPPC members emphasized that the value of Tribal partnership groups extends beyond measurable outputs. Participants highlighted the importance of relationship-building, peer-to-peer information sharing, institutional knowledge, historical context, and trust developed through long-term engagement between Tribes and EPA staff.

Ted Puetz, Ak-Chin Indian Community suggested that TPPC consider documenting important historical milestones and developments within Tribal environmental programs to help illustrate the lasting value of Tribal partnerships and capacity-building efforts.

Following Daniel and Stephanie's departure, several TPPC members continued discussing the review. Participants agreed that additional discussion time with AIEO would be beneficial, as many important topics could not be fully addressed during the allotted presentation period.

Africa, Nina, Jasmine, Ted, and others emphasized the importance of communicating not only quantitative accomplishments but also the relational and collaborative benefits provided by Tribal partnership groups. Members expressed concern that Tribal organizations are often asked to repeatedly justify their value despite decades of demonstrated success supporting Tribal environmental capacity and Tribal sovereignty.

Linsey acknowledged those concerns and stated that she would communicate them to AIEO. She agreed to coordinate a follow-up discussion.

Mark also noted that the TPPC is planning to submit comments before the September 29 deadline. He will prepare an initial TPPC comment letter draft based on previous discussions and circulate it for review by the Policy Workgroup and interested TPPC members.

Members discussed the importance of documenting the history, accomplishments, and capacity-building benefits of Tribal environmental programs and partnership networks. Several participants noted that Tribe-to-Tribe communication, peer mentoring, and long-standing relationships with EPA staff are often critical to successful environmental program implementation and are difficult to capture through traditional performance metrics alone.

Nina encouraged TPPC members to develop examples demonstrating how Tribal partnership structures have contributed to capacity building and program success over time. Africa emphasized the importance of maintaining reliable and trustworthy partnerships that respect Tribal sovereignty and support Tribes consistently across changing administrations.

6. Tribal Caucus Report-out

Skipped due to lack of time

7. Workgroup Report-out

Skipped due to lack of time

8. Other Issues, Concerns, and Hot Topics

During discussion of other pesticide-related topics, Theodore Puetz shared information from a recent Association of Structural Pest Control Regulatory Officials (ASPCRO) meeting regarding upcoming Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) drone regulations. Ted explained that proposed regulatory changes related to beyond-visual-line-of-sight drone operations could significantly expand drone use in agriculture and structural pest control applications. He noted concerns related to drone failures, pesticide spills, and response procedures if drones carrying pesticides were to crash or malfunction. He sent Mark pictures of slides from the presentation, and Mark agreed to distribute the slides to TPPC members via email.

*(Yellow highlighting in the notes above indicates action items)