



# PROGRESS REPORT

Highlighting Federal Actions Addressing the Tribal Supplemental Recommendations of the State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience

September 2016







# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Promote Full Tribal Inclusion and Participation.....	2
Provide Better Access to Data, Information, and Federal Programs.....	3
Improve Education.....	4
Address the Lack of Institutional Capacity to Undertake Comprehensive Planning .....	4
Provide Support for Long-Term Planning to Build Climate Resilience.....	5
Ongoing Programs .....	5



## Introduction

Climate change is affecting every region of the United States and key sectors of our economy. Tribes are on the front lines facing the impacts of extreme weather events, wildfires, drought, flooding, and the resulting disruptions to economies, public health, the environment, and daily life. The Obama Administration is committed to ensuring that communities are equipped to develop smart strategies and partnerships for building climate resilience.

Tribes feel the effects of a changing climate in ways that are unique to their ways of life, geography, and relationships with the Federal Government. According to the Third National Climate Assessment, “the consequences of observed and projected climate change impacts have and will undermine indigenous ways of life that have persisted for thousands of years.”<sup>1</sup>

That is why, in 2013, the President established the State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience (Task Force) to provide his Administration with recommendations on how the Federal Government can respond to the needs of communities nationwide. The Task Force was co-chaired by the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs and the Council on Environmental Quality. Twenty-six governors, mayors, county officials, and Tribal leaders from across the country served on the Task Force, including former Tribal Chairwoman of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Karen Diver and former Mayor of the Northwest Arctic Borough of Alaska Reggie Joule who brought their firsthand experiences of recovering from natural disasters and taking action to prepare their citizens for a changing climate.

In November 2014, after soliciting input from hundreds of Tribal leaders, former Chairwoman Diver and former Mayor Joule delivered a set of recommendations to the President. The Tribal supplemental recommendations expanded upon the overarching Task Force recommendations to further identify the specific and unique perspectives of Tribal communities.

The Tribal supplemental recommendations covered five major themes:

- 1) **Promote full Tribal inclusion and participation** within every decision-making activity with regard to preparation for or recovery from the effects of climate change so that Tribal governments are the main decision-makers for their communities;
- 2) **Provide better access to data, information, and Federal programs**, and to begin and improve inter-jurisdictional coordination;
- 3) **Improve education** for children, college students and community members on climate change and its effects on community planning;
- 4) **Address the lack of institutional capacity to undertake comprehensive planning**; and
- 5) **Provide support for long-term planning to build climate resilience.**

These recommendations have served to guide and inform the climate resilience priorities of the Obama Administration, especially as they relate to Tribes. This report highlights examples of progress made to strengthen the resilience of Tribal communities to a changing climate under each of the overarching themes above.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report>



## Promote Full Tribal Inclusion and Participation

**U.S. Forest Service Tribal Engagement Roadmap.** In April 2015, the U.S. Forest Service collaboratively developed a Forest Service Research and Development (R&D) Tribal Engagement Roadmap that helps highlight and prioritize the Forest Service's efforts and raise the visibility of Tribal engagement for the Forest Service's scientists, political leadership, Tribes, and the public. The Roadmap outlines an agenda for Forest Service R&D staff regarding services to, engagement with, and learning from Tribes and other indigenous groups.

**Arctic Executive Steering Committee.** President Obama established the Arctic Executive Steering Committee (AESC) with his January 2015 Executive Order, "Enhancing Coordination of National Efforts in the Arctic." The group is charged with providing guidance and coordinating priorities and activities across Executive Branch agencies under the National Strategy for the Arctic Region. These responsibilities include improving the coherence of engagement with the State of Alaska and Alaska Native communities and supporting the U.S. Chairmanship of the eight-nation Arctic Council for 2015-2017.

**Tribal Treaty Rights Guidance.** In February 2016, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced its first-ever Tribal Treaty Rights Guidance, outlining a process to help navigate treaty rights discussions with Tribes during Tribal consultations. The guidance is an initial step in EPA's efforts to improve the methods and process in place to meet the commitment to honor and respect Tribal treaty rights and resources protected by treaties. The Guidance complements EPA's successful Tribal consultation efforts, building upon the May 2011 EPA Policy on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribes.

**Tribal Climate Resilience Resource Guide.** In May 2016, the Environment, Climate Change, and Natural Resources Subgroup (Subgroup)—part of the White House Council on Native American Affairs--hosted a convening for Tribal leaders and Administration leadership to discuss the impacts of climate change on their Tribal communities. The Subgroup launched the [Tribal Climate Resilience Resource Guide](#) - an online portal that creates a centralized place for Tribal government professionals to locate available resources from the Federal Government. This guide enables Tribal governments to identify resources, tools and expert advice from multiple agencies, responding to the often-heard request from Tribal governments for the U.S. Government to speak to Tribal partners with one voice. The guide supports Tribal communities in building knowledge and connections, increasing climate change resilience.

**Arctic Science Ministerial.** As part of its coordination and engagement effort in the Arctic, on September 28, the White House will host the first Arctic Science Ministerial to bring together ministers of science, chief science advisors, and other high-level officials from countries around the world, as well as representatives from indigenous groups, to expand collaborations focused on Arctic science, research, observations, monitoring, and data-sharing. The goals of the event are to advance promising, near-term science initiatives and create a context for increased international scientific collaboration on the Arctic over the longer term. Indigenous communities from around the Arctic, including Alaska Native groups, will be invited to participate in conversations with key Administrative officials to convey their scientific needs and priorities, and provide guidance on how best to incorporate the role of indigenous knowledge and community-based observing into the implementation of Arctic-related research, data-sharing, resilience planning, and STEM education.



## Provide Better Access to Data, Information, and Federal Programs

**Climate Resilience Toolkit Tribal Nations Theme.** In 2015, the Administration expanded the Climate Resilience Toolkit (CRT) to include a new “[Tribal Nations](#)” theme, comprised of more than 40 resources—with more being added regularly—to assist Tribes in climate-change planning, adaptation, and mitigation. Resources include a comprehensive Tribal Climate Change Adaptation Planning Toolkit and a set of guidelines for considering traditional knowledge in climate change initiatives. In July 2016, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in collaboration with the U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) and a number of agencies, released new capabilities through the CRT, including county-scale climate projections for the continental United States, making climate information more locally relevant.

**Local Environmental Observer App.** In 2015, EPA’s Indian Environmental General Assistance Program (IGAP) provided a grant to the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) to support the release of a Local Environmental Observer (LEO) App. Expanding on the successful computer-based tool, the app allows observers to share photos and text from the field, complete with GPS locations. The app transmits the field observations to technical experts, providing communities with the resources to monitor, respond to, and adapt to new impacts and health effects. LEO experts apply local and traditional knowledge, western science and modern technology to record and share observations and to raise awareness about the conditions in the circumpolar north. Due to the success of the program, EPA, the U.S. Indian Health Service, the Western and Arctic Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, and ANTHC are working to expand the LEO App internationally and in the Lower 48.

**Catalog of Programs and Funding.** In July 2015, the Arctic Executive Steering Committee (AESC) released a [catalog of programs and funding resources](#) that may assist Arctic coastal communities in addressing resilience needs. While a variety of programs and authorities are available for villages and communities to prepare for and respond to coastal erosion issues, no compendium of available sources of assistance existed that is tailored to the needs of Arctic communities. To fill that gap, Federal agencies, through the AESC, collaborated to develop this catalog, which is available through the Denali Commission and on the U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit.

**Native One Stop.** In July 2015, the Administration launched [NativeOneStop.gov](#) to provide American Indians and Alaska Natives—and Tribal communities more broadly—with improved, personalized, online access to Federal resources and programs. NativeOneStop.gov will make it easier for Tribes, Alaska Natives, and American Indians to find services, receive consistent information, and streamline outreach and services by Federal agencies. This is especially valuable for Tribes due to the cross-cutting nature of climate change impacts—working to compile and highlight new and existing funding resources throughout the Federal Government.

**Stafford Act Declarations Guidance for Tribes.** Climate change will lead to more and greater impacts on Indian Tribal governments and the communities they serve. Direct Tribal access to Stafford Act declarations will allow Tribal governments to build more resilient communities. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently concluded a third round of consultation on guidance for a rule for Tribes to request Stafford Act declarations. The pilot guidance is intended to reflect the unique circumstances that impact Tribal communities. The final guidance is scheduled to be published by the end of 2016. Once the final guidance is published, FEMA will begin a pilot period of utilizing the guidance for direct Tribal declarations. FEMA will utilize lessons learned and feedback received during the pilot period to inform the development of the final rule. In addition, FEMA has added Tribal liaisons for better coordination and accessibility.



**Public Assistance Program Alternative Procedures.** FEMA is currently piloting Public Assistance Program Alternative Procedures, which provides increased flexibility in the use of Public Assistance funds to allow an applicant to integrate ecological or climate-related considerations into the redesign and reconstruction of disaster-damaged facilities. Tribal governments who have experienced a declared disaster on or after May 20, 2013 are eligible to receive Public Assistance under the rules of this pilot program.

## Improve Education

**Tribal Youth Climate Leadership Congress.** In July 2015 and 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the National Park Service, USDA Forest Service, and the US Geological Survey launched an annual Tribal Youth Climate Leadership Congresses to promote youth engagement and positive community action for climate resilience for 89 native youth. In 2016, the partnership expanded to include the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Global Change Research Program. The Congress is supported partly through the BIA Tribal Climate Resilience Program's Tribal youth engagement strategy for climate resilient native communities. Additionally, EPA is continuing its Tribal EcoAmbassador Program, which partners Federal scientists to Tribal college and university students to address environmental problems, many of which are related to climate change impacts.

## Address the Lack of Institutional Capacity to Undertake Comprehensive Planning

**Community-Based Monitoring Methodology.** NOAA is supporting a project to foster adaptation in Alaska Native coastal communities to maintain or improve their health and vitality over time by anticipating and adapting to change. The project, known as “Resilient Alaska Native Coastal Communities: Integrated Social-Ecological Monitoring and Assessment Supporting Adaptation Decisions,” will continue for two years. In August 2015, a project partner began designing a community-based social-ecological monitoring and assessment methodology that will be used and implemented by Alaska Native communities.

**Rural Alaska Villages Grant Program.** In September 2015, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) finalized a rule that streamlines the application process of the Rural Alaska Villages Grant Program. As a result, vulnerable Alaskan villages will not have to wait until disaster strikes to improve critical water infrastructure. This unlocks significant resources for resilience planning.

**Technical Assistance Energy Providers Network.** In July 2016, the Department of Energy (DOE) selected eight inter-Tribal organizations and Alaska regional corporations to receive nearly \$7 million in funding to develop and build their capacity to provide regional technical assistance to meet the needs of their member Indian Tribes (including Alaska Native villages). Tribes will leverage DOE funding to maximize the deployment of energy solutions that can improve quality of life in Tribal communities by reducing energy costs, enhancing human capacity, and creating job opportunities.



## Provide Support for Long-Term Planning to Build Climate Resilience

**Monument Designations.** In February 2016, President Obama designated three new national monuments in the California desert, encompassing nearly 1.8 million acres of America’s public lands. The new monuments, supported by Tribal leaders because of the monuments’ cultural and environmental importance to Tribes, encourage climate resiliency in the region. The new monuments will link already protected lands, including Joshua Tree National Park, Mojave National Preserve, and fifteen congressionally-designated wilderness areas, permanently protecting key wildlife corridors and providing plants and animals with the space and elevation range that they will need in order to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

**Incorporating Ecosystem Services into Decision-Making Processes.** In October 2015, President Obama issued a Presidential [Memorandum](#), “Incorporating Ecosystem Services into Federal Decision Making,” directing all Federal agencies to incorporate the value of natural, or “green,” infrastructure and ecosystem services into Federal planning and decision making. The memorandum directs agencies to develop and institutionalize policies that promote consideration of ecosystem services, where appropriate and practicable, in planning, investment, and regulatory contexts. It also establishes a process for the Federal Government to develop more detailed guidance on integrating ecosystem-service assessments into relevant programs and projects to help maintain ecosystem and community resilience, sustainable use of natural resources, and the recreational value of the nation’s unique landscapes. This is of particular importance to Tribes, many of whom continue to practice subsistence ways of life and are often the first to be impacted by ecosystem changes.

**Food Distribution Program.** USDA is expanding its Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations and assisting in forming partnerships with nearby Tribes and providing access to produce healthy foods. This is of particular importance to Tribes in food deserts and with transportation infrastructure vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

## Ongoing Programs

In addition to new initiatives and programs that have been implemented since the recommendations were released, the recommendations confirmed the importance of several ongoing programs while also helping to focus that work in response to Tribal needs. All five of the overarching themes identified in the recommendations are addressed at least once by these ongoing programs.

**Tribal Climate Resilience Program.** In July 2014, the BIA announced the Tribal Climate Resilience Program to provide funding to support Tribal climate change adaptation, and ocean and coastal management planning. The program supports Tribal climate adaptation planning, training, and capacity building, improves access to data, tools, and expert support, and promotes youth engagement and internships. The majority of the program is delivered through direct support for Tribal-generated climate adaptation proposals that build climate adaptation capacity and improve climate resilience.

**Climate Adaptation Training and Workshops for Tribes.** Through the Federal-Tribal Climate Resilience Program, BIA, in cooperation with the Institute of Tribal Environmental Professionals of Northern Arizona University, delivers Tribal climate adaptation planning courses nationwide. In addition, an average of 15% of the BIA climate adaptation awards support Tribally-generated climate adaptation training and workshops for Tribes to address self-identified adaptation needs.



**Tribal Climate Science Liaisons.** To improve climate science and impact analysis delivery to Tribal managers the Department of Interior (DOI) supports six Tribal climate science liaisons at the DOI Climate Science Centers (CSC). The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), which manages the CSCs, sponsors one Tribal climate science liaison, and the BIA sponsors five. In a unique collaboration, the USGS-sponsored position is provided by a Tribe and the five funded by the BIA are hired by Tribal organizations under cooperative agreements. These arrangements leverage the expertise and reach of Tribes and Tribal organizations to improve delivery of climate adaptation information and gather Tribal climate science needs.

**Tribal Adaptation Partnerships.** The U.S. Forest Service Tribal Adaptation Partnerships leverage Forest Service research and tools, and incorporate traditional and western knowledge, in meeting the needs of Tribes as they prepare for and adapt to the impacts of climate change, including assistance in carbon capture and prevention of catastrophic releases. The Forest Service is also currently engaged in active discussion with Tribes in the Eastern Region to develop a joint climate science planning council.

**Farm to School Grant Program.** Every year, the USDA Farm to School Grant Program funds projects to help schools connect with local producers and teach children about where their food comes from. Over the past five years, USDA has awarded 18 Farm to School Grants that primarily serve Tribal communities and these projects have supported the increase of traditional foods and recipes in schools, nutrition, agriculture, and cultural education, and school gardens. This program supports and understands the importance of Tribal food sovereignty.

**START Program.** In March 2016, DOE announced funding for 24 American Indian and Alaska Native communities to deploy clean energy and energy efficiency projects. DOE plans to invest over \$9 million in 16 facility- and community-scale energy projects in 24 Tribal communities. These projects provide Indian Tribes and Alaska Native villages with clean energy solutions that will save communities money and reduce carbon pollution. DOE's funding is expected to be leveraged by nearly \$16 million in cost sharing under the selected Tribal energy projects, meaning the projects represent a potential total investment value exceeding \$25 million. Since its December 2011 launch, the START Program has helped 21 Tribal communities advance their renewable energy technology and infrastructure projects – from solar and wind to biofuels and energy efficiency.

**NOAA Tribal Consultation Handbook.** The NOAA Procedures for Government-to-Government Consultation with Federally Recognized Indian Tribes and Alaska Natives (NOAA Tribal Consultation Handbook), issued in 2013, provides guidance to NOAA line offices to support a more consistent, effective and proactive approach to conducting tribal consultations. This Handbook is intended to improve NOAA's management of its relations and cooperative activities with Indian Tribes, and to provide for meaningful and timely input from Tribes into the Federal decision-making process on policy matters having substantial direct effects on them.

**Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) Co-Management Agreements.** Through Section 119 of the MMPA, NOAA and the USFWS were granted authority to enter into cooperative agreements with Alaska Native Organizations (ANOs), including, but not limited to, Alaska Native Tribes and tribally authorized co-management bodies. Individual co-management agreements incorporate the spirit and intent of co-management through close cooperation and communication between federal agencies and the ANOs, hunters, and subsistence users. Agreements encourage the exchange of information regarding the conservation, management, and utilization of marine mammals in U.S. waters in and around Alaska. As changing climate conditions affect subsistence hunting patterns NOAA will work closely with ANOs to adapt to change.