



NEWS FROM OTR

A Report on Tribal Relations Topics from the Forest Service Tribal Relations Program

Office of Tribal Relations

Helping to build long term collaborative partnerships with Tribes



February, 2008

This periodic report provides the Department of Agriculture and its Agencies an update of Tribal Relations issues and proceedings within the USDA Forest Service. The information contained within this report is public information and may be shared with members of the public and other interested parties. For further questions and inquiries, please contact Fred Clark at fclark@fs.fed.us, and at (202) 205-1514.

OTR STAFFING

OTR is getting ready to make a selection on a GS-0343-12/13 Program and Management Analyst. The announcement (Vacancy announcement ADS08-WO-TR-0024G (NW)) is currently slated to close on February 7, 2008.

This position fills behind David Scholes, who now works for the Job Corps in Virginia. David has been an excellent asset for OTR and the Tribal Relations community. We'll miss him a lot.

David E. Clark, from Region 2, The Rocky Mountain Region, is on detail into that Analyst position through April.

We are also working on getting a detailer into the Assistant Director position (GS-14), to follow behind Sonia Tamez, who helped us out into February. The other detail to fill is identified as an IPA (Intergovernmental Personnel Act) appointment.

STAFFING IN THE REGIONS

No changes.

RECENT MEETINGS ATTENDED BY OTR STAFF

- Indian Nations Conservation Alliance, in Las Vegas
- National Association of State Foresters, in San Antonio, TX
- United South and Eastern Tribes (USET), in Marksville, LA
- Robin Thompson, Associate Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry, attended the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) Leadership Group meeting, in Milwaukee, WI
- Sonia Tamez represented OTR at the NCAI meeting in Denver, CO
- State of the Indian Nations Address, NCAI, in Washington, DC

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- USET Impact Week, Washington, DC (February, '08)
- ITC Winter Board, Pechanga, CA (February, '08)
- NCAI Executive Council, Washington, DC (March, '08)
- FS New Employees Orientation, Columbus, OH (March, '08)
- ITC Spring Board, Warm Springs, OR (April, '08)
- NAFWS, Worley, ID (May, '08)
- National Tribal Timber Symposium, Hon-Dah, AZ (June, 08)

UPCOMING PRODUCTS

- Tribal Relations Resource Guide (update and revision)
- Forest Service Tribal Consultation Database (new, internal)
- Interagency Tribal Relations Training (contributing agency)
- Indigenous Perspectives area of HD.gov interagency web portal site (contributing agency)
- Additions to Forest Service "Hall of Tribes" in the Yates Building
- Interpretive and educational materials relating to Tribal Relations (brochures, posters, etc.)
- Update of Guide to USDA Programs for American Indians and Alaska Natives (contributing agency)
- OTR brochure and banner
- Draft Forest Service Tribal Relations Program Strategic Plan

CURRENT PROJECTS

- Preparing for national Tribal Consultation on proposed FS Sacred Sites Policy
- Facilitating Tribal involvement in FS State and Private Forestry Redesign
- Forest Service Transformation
- Tribal Forest Protection Act Implementation
- Tribal Forest Protection Act Report to Congress
- Special Forest Products Policy Development
- National Consultation on Energy Corridors
- National Tribal Relations Program Strategic Planning
- Indian Fire Crew Business Development Train-the-Trainer

Additional Information on Selected Topics Transformation

With the Forest Service's fixed costs rising as budgets remain flat or decline, the WO and RO programs are looking at the potential impacts from a proposed 25% cut in the operating budgets for the Washington Office and the Regional Offices. Adapting to this operational reality is at the core of what is being called the Forest Service Transformation. WO Director areas, including OTR, are very much involved in this analysis.

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Special Forest Products Policy

A draft national policy that provides guidance on the collection of non-timber forest products was recently published in the Federal Register. This policy has major implications for traditional gatherers, and comments received are being compiled. The public comment period had been extended to January 22, 2008.

Here is the reference for the draft policy: FR 72, 59496–59506, published on Monday, October 22, 2007

- As well as for the extension A Federal Register Notice to extend the public comment period was also published. Comments must now be received, in writing, by January 22nd. Here is the reference for the extension:

FR 72, 72319 published on Thursday, December 20, 2007

Tribal Relations Resource Book

The Forest Service National Resource Book on American Indian and Alaska Native Relations has been a fixture on the desks of Forest Service line officers since its publication in 1997. Times change and an update of what has come to be commonly known as the “yellow book” (the color of its cover) has been much needed. With some new staffing and a new year coming up, OTR anticipates publication of a new version later in this fiscal year.

TFPA

The Tribal Forest Protection Act TFPA was passed in 2004 following the horrendous wildfire season of 2003. Its purpose was to provide Tribes a tool with which to propose work and enter into contracts and agreements with the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management, in order to reduce threats to Indian trust land and Indian communities. Tribes can propose conservation and protection work on public forest and grazing lands that are adjacent or near to their reservations and potentially pose a risk to their own lands and resources. Tribes can enter into this work under current contracting and agreements authorities. The Forest Service Interim Directive was recently renewed until November of 2008.

Sacred Sites Policy

The work of a task group chartered in 2002 to develop a draft policy for the Forest Service to use in managing sacred sites was completed in April of 2007. The results of their work is undergoing a broad internal review in preparation for nation-wide Tribal consultation, after which it may become an agency directive

Building Community Capacity for implementation of the Tribal Forest Protection Act

Indian Dispute Resolution Services, Inc., in collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service, has initiated a Pilot Demonstration Project that will work with up to five western tribes to take advantage of new opportunities made available through the TFPA.

State and Private Forestry Redesign

The new Redesign approach, which is the first phase of implementation, will focus on three consensus-based S&PF National Themes:

- Conserve working forest landscapes,
 - Protect forests from harm, and
 - Enhance public benefits from trees and forests.
- Tribes are invited to work with the State Foresters in their areas to get involved in the State Assessments, which are key in the competitive funding process.

Forest Service Focal Themes

Gail Kimbell, the Forest Service Chief, has identified three broad areas of interest that tie together much of the work the Forest Service is doing. These are not new initiatives, but rather a way of organizing the way we think about the work the Agency does:

- Climate Change
- Water
- Connecting Kids with Nature

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