

# US Forest Service Tribal Relations Program Report



FY 2012

U.S. Forest Service Tribal Relations Program.....	1
Mission.....	1
Organizational Structure.....	2
Washington D.C.....	2
Regional Tribal Relations Program .....	3
Strategic Plan Framework.....	3
Redeeming Trust Responsibility.....	3
Leveraging Partnerships.....	7
Goal 3– Promoting Integration and Utility.....	11
Cultural Transformation.....	13
Tribal Relations in the Field.....	15
Regional Consultation at a Glance * .....	15
Northern (R1) and Intermountain (R4) Regions.....	16
Rocky Mountain Region (R2).....	17
Southwest Region (R3).....	18
Pacific Southwest Region (R5).....	19
Pacific Northwest Region (R6).....	20
Southern Region (R8).....	20
Eastern Region (R9) .....	21
Alaska Region (R10) .....	23
Challenges.....	24
Inconsistency.....	24
Training .....	25
Communications.....	25
Resource limitations .....	25

\*Appendices and data tables available upon request

# U.S. Forest Service Tribal Relations Program

As current stewards of historically tribal lands, the Forest Service (FS or Agency) is charged with managing [National Forest System](#) (NFS) lands and resources to benefit the general public and Indian tribes, while also respecting the special trust relationship that exists between the United States and Indian tribes. This is a unique government-to-government relationship, wherein all branches of the federal government recognize Indian tribes as sovereign entities possessing inherent rights to self-governance and self-determination pre-dating the U.S. Constitution. The government thus has a fiduciary duty to consider these rights when Agency activities and programs have the potential to affect tribal interests.

In addition to treaty rights, legislation, Executive Orders and Memoranda of Understanding and Agreement, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) directives require the FS to actively consult with Indian tribes, and Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs) in some cases, on policies and activities that may affect them. The Tribal Relations Program (TRP) provides policy and direction on tribal consultation to FS leadership and staff to ensure that Agency programs and activities are implemented in a manner fulfilling the legally mandated trust responsibility, honors Indian treaty rights, and maintains a government-to-government relationship with federally recognized Indian tribes.

## Mission

The Tribal Relations Program facilitates a Forest Service culture that:

- Recognizes the inherent sovereign status and reserved rights of Indian tribes.
- Honors the federal trust responsibility.
- Excels at conducting substantive consultative processes.
- Supports tribal rights to pursue the vitality of their cultures, economies, and land.
- Promotes collaborative natural and cultural resource management.
- Uses traditional ecological knowledge in combination with the best Western science and technology.
- Advances American Indians and Alaska Natives in the workforce.
- Respects tribal connections to traditional landscapes.
- Seeks to enhance and maintain important relationships with Indian tribes and communities.

In fulfilling its mission, the Tribal Relations Program seeks to achieve a vision of the Forest Service as a recognized leader among federal land management agencies in

partnering appropriately and collaboratively with Indian tribes for mutually beneficial outcomes.

## Organizational Structure

### Washington D.C.

Responding to identified needs and Executive direction, the FS established the first Tribal Relations Program Manager (TRPM) position in the Washington Office in 1988. Subsequently, in 2004, the [Office of Tribal Relations](#) (OTR) was formed as a permanent organization, housed within the [State and Private Forestry](#) (S&PF) Deputy Area, and funded through an Agency-wide cost pool. The OTR's key mission is to facilitate consistency and effectiveness in FS program delivery to Indian tribes, and to institutionalize long-term, consultative and collaborative relationships with tribal governments through policy and direction.

The OTR is committed to helping Indian tribes benefit from FS programs. The OTR also strives to help the FS benefit from tribal input in policies supporting tribal sovereignty, self-governance, and self-determination, as well as FS goals such as climate change adaptation and mitigation. The OTR initiates and works to institutionalize relationships with internal and external partners, working closely with other staffs to ensure tribal concerns and opportunities are addressed in new and existing policies. The OTR also develops implementation processes for new authorities.

The current OTR staff consists of six employees located in the Washington D.C headquarters (WO OTR) who:

- Oversee FS programs and policy that may affect Indian tribes, encouraging and supporting respectful, supportive government-to-government relationships that strengthen external and internal coordination and communication about tribal concerns and the FS mission.
- Prepare and implement policy and direction outlining legal requirements and opportunities within existing authorities relating to Indian tribes.
- Clarify the Agency's responsibilities regarding tribal trust and reserved rights.
- Develop and support education and training for federal employees, helping them work more effectively with tribal governments and other partners.
- Explore innovative ways to interact with Indian tribes, tribal members, and others to enhance the Agency's interaction with tribal communities.

## Regional Tribal Relations Program

The TRP is threaded throughout all FS [Deputy Areas](#), and is reflected in the organizational structure of the nine FS Regions throughout the country. The Regional TRPMs are based in different staff areas and at different levels within the Regions, some reporting to the Regional Forester and others to Staff Officers.

This brings both depth and breadth of experience to the program as a whole. Each Region has a single, assigned TRPM, with the exception of Regions 1 and 4, who share a single position. TRPMs in the field, along with the WO OTR, comprise the core of the Tribal Relations Program. An extended team of Tribal Relations employees includes personnel at the forest level as well as at FS research [Stations and Laboratories](#). Tribal Relations Program personnel facilitate work that spans the Agency and transects research projects, forest and project planning, wildlife management, watershed restoration, cultural resource management, and many other issues.



## Strategic Plan Framework

The [Tribal Relations Program Strategic Plan](#) guides the TRP in achieving its mission. Final Program Direction for FY 2011 for the S&PF Deputy Area directed the foundational program areas to work toward these goals.

- Goal 1:** Ensure the Agency redeems its trust responsibility and protects American Indian and Alaska Native reserved rights as they pertain to Forest Service programs, projects, and policies.
- Goal 2:** Leverage partnerships to maximize mutual success.
- Goal 3:** Promote integration and utility of the Tribal Relations Program throughout the Agency.

## Redeeming Trust Responsibility

The TRP ensures that the FS redeems its trust responsibility and protects Indian tribes' reserved rights as they pertain to FS programs, projects, and policies. Specifically, the OTR provides advice and assistance to WO staff in identifying the need or opportunity for government-to-government consultation, developing strategies and tactics for conducting consultation, and following up on the results. The OTR helps create explicit policy and direction to foster effective consultation between the Agency and Indian tribes on policies and actions that may affect their interests. This encourages a consistent relationship with Indian tribes throughout all FS mission areas, clarifies

communications, and enhances collaborative opportunities. In addition to government-to-government relations with Federally-recognized Tribes, and government-to-corporation relations with ANCs, the FS encourages engagement with non-Federally recognized Tribes and Native Hawaiians, as well as American Indian and Alaska Native individuals, communities, inter-tribal organizations, enterprises and educational institutions.



The FS also celebrated the creation of the Chimney Rock National Monument by President Obama on September 21, 2012. The Monument, managed by the Forest Service, totals 4,726 acres and incorporates spiritual, historic, and scientific resources of great value and significance.

In 2010, Secretary Vilsack directed the FS to work with [USDA's Office of Tribal Relations](#) to review existing laws, regulations, and policies for their effectiveness in securing consistent protection for American Indian and Alaska Native sacred sites located on NFS lands.

Secretary Vilsack asked the FS to consult with tribal leaders to determine how the Agency can improve balancing the need to protect sacred sites with the Agency's mission to deliver forest goods and services for current and future generations.

USDA and the Forest Service began a comprehensive effort across Indian Country focused

on improving federal approaches to sacred site issues in July 2010. Throughout 2010 and 2011, more than 100 meetings with Tribes, agency personnel, and the public were conducted to gather information. In December 2012, the [REPORT TO THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE – USDA Policy and Procedures Review and Recommendations: Indian Sacred Sites](#) was released, with implementation across a wide variety of policy areas beginning immediately thereafter. Release of this report represents a significant accomplishment and represents the cornerstone of sacred sites policy across the federal government.

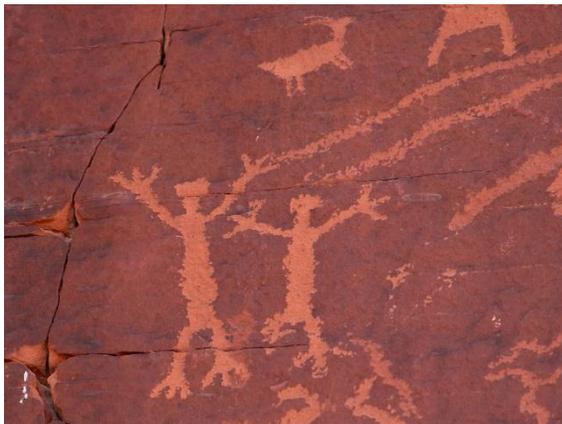
## Reburial

In addition to the completion of the Sacred Sites report, the Forest Service continued to support the reburial of approximately 5,000 sets of repatriated human remains on National Forest System lands. In 2012, the Forest Service invested \$205,000 towards completing a subset of these reburials.

FY12 Reburial Allocations by BLI and Region		
Region	Revised FY 2012 Amount	% of Total
2	\$20,000.00	11%
3	\$100,000.00	53%
5	\$10,000.00	5%
8	\$20,000.00	11%
9	\$10,000.00	5%
10	\$30,000.00	16%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$190,000.00</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Cultural and Heritage Cooperation Authority

In the spring of 2012, the OTR convened Tribal Relations Program Managers and staff from around the country in a National Tribal Relations Program Workshop in Warm Springs, Oregon. The primary goal of this gathering was to leverage the collective resources of the team to analyze and strengthen policies in the Forest Service Manual and Handbook on Tribal Relations, including clarification of the [Cultural and Heritage Cooperation Authority](#)<sup>1</sup> provisions. Authorized by the 2008 Farm Bill, these provisions relate to Tribal rights and interests in forest operations, and particularly focus on sacred sites and traditional and cultural uses. Work groups were formed to address policies on



consultation, reburial of repatriated human remains on NFS lands, temporary closures of NFS lands for cultural and traditional uses, providing forest products for traditional and cultural purposes, and keeping culturally sensitive information confidential. An additional work group was formed to begin development of an Agency-wide tribal relations training program in response to recommendations in the Sacred Sites report.

## National Level Consultation

The OTR provided advice and assistance to staffs across the Agency to initiate or complete consultation on national level issues and policies with tribal governments and

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<sup>1</sup> 25 U.S. Code Chapter 32A, Cultural and Heritage Cooperation Authority.

ANCs, which included considerations of treaty and reserved rights, sovereignty, and tribal and ANC interests.

National Best Management Practices for Water Quality on National Forest System Lands	Informal OTR review	Released April 2012
Small Business Timber Sale Set-Aside Program – Proposed Policy Directive	February 1, 2012	May 31, 2012
Objection Process Consultation, Revision of Regulations at 36 CFR 218	April 2, 2012	September 7, 2012

The OTR advised national headquarters staff on national legislation, as well as Departmental and Agency policy. This advice focused on positive relations with tribal governments, and adhering to trust responsibility and Executive direction in support of the Chief's emphasis areas. The OTR advised the Chief, the Associate Chief, Deputy Chiefs, Regional Foresters, Station Directors, and other FS leaders on the Tribal Relations Program, policies, and procedures, as well as current tribal issues affecting FS resource management on the national level. In the field, TRP staff provided advice and assistance at appropriate organizational levels.

A critical component of FS consultation policy was addressed in FY 2012 with the implementation of the revised FS Tribal Relations Handbook, which expands the opportunity for Tribes to meaningfully review and discuss concerns and suggestions regarding national FS policy and actions in a realistic timeframe. [Interim Directive 1509.13-2012-1](#) now mandates that FS consulting officials provide a consultation period of at least 120 days, and clarifies that only line officers may conduct tribal consultation.

## Tribal Engagement

OTR staff participated in numerous briefings and tribal meetings throughout 2012, providing Congressional and Departmental leadership with regular status and informational reports, as well as facilitating visits from more than a dozen tribal delegations. Many relationship-building meetings between Tribes and the Forest Service also occurred out in the field. For example, in January 2012, the FS Southern Research Station (SRS) Director met with the Chief of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians to



further strengthen the relationship between the SRS and the Tribe. In September 2012, Pacific Southwest Station (PSW) leadership and staff met with members of the Yurok Tribe in Klamath, California to reestablish a dialogue between the Tribe and the PSW regarding management and research within the Redwood Experimental Forest.

## Briefings and Leadership Meetings

The OTR further engaged other stakeholders with presentations to the Indian Nations Conservation Alliance/Intertribal Agriculture Council Conference (in support of the FS Agroforestry Center), the Andean delegation hosted by International Programs, and USDA's Terra Preta do Indio Fellowship program. The National OTR Partnership Award was presented by staff at the "To Bridge a Gap" conference," an annual gathering designed to strengthen government-to-government relationships between the FS and federally recognized tribal governments. The OTR also participated in the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Alaska Native Sisterhood in Sitka, Alaska with R10 staff. (See Attachment: Appendix B.)

## Leveraging Partnerships

The TRP aims to ensure effective leadership, consistent performance, and accountability throughout the FS, while leveraging partnerships to increase synergy and efficiency, as outlined in the [Tribal Relations Program Strategic Plan](#). Ongoing relationship-building, which begins with meaningful tribal consultation and communication among both Tribes and staff, allows the FS to engage with Tribes in program delivery and other opportunities as they arise. In addition to Regional and forest-level efforts, the OTR cultivates relationships with several key intertribal partners at the national level, resulting in important benefits to all stakeholders and their member Tribes.

## Washington Office Partnerships

### Intertribal Timber Council

Established in 1976, the [Intertribal Timber Council](#) (ITC) is a nonprofit nationwide consortium of Tribes, ANCs, and individuals dedicated to improving the management of the natural resources important to tribal communities. The ITC works cooperatively with government agencies, private industry, and academia to explore issues and identify practical strategies and initiatives to promote social, economic and ecological values, while also protecting and utilizing forests, soil, water, and wildlife. Over 60 Tribes and ANCs currently belong to the ITC. The OTR presents quarterly to the ITC Board via teleconference, and annually at the ITC Symposium, providing updates on FS projects in Indian Country and Alaska. The OTR also works cooperatively with [WO Research and Development](#) (R&D) on the ITC Research Subcommittee to craft solutions to tribal research issues. Based on this engagement with the subcommittee, in 2012 R&D began developing a tribally-driven research agenda that will be rolled out in 2013. In addition to regular engagement with ITC and its member Tribes, the FS and the OTR manage several significant contracts awarded to ITC, including:

- **Indian Forest Management Assessment Team Study (IFMAT III).** In 2011, the Intertribal Timber Council began the third decennial Indian Forest Management Assessment Team Study (IFMAT III), an assessment of tribal forests and forest management. Work under this grant continued in 2012 and will result in the mandated IFMAT III Report required of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in 2013. The ITC has unique expertise in developing such reports, as the ITC created both [IFMAT I](#) in 1993 and [IFMAT II](#) in 2003.<sup>2</sup>
- **Anchor Forests.** Anchor Forests are large tracts of land under active management by tribal, federal, and state agencies that represent an extension of the community forest concept. In partnership with the FS, this project seeks to 1) contribute to the ability of the FS to manage NFS lands to maintain forest health; 2) coordinate management across ownership boundaries for sustained stewardship of desired ecosystem services; 3) reduce vulnerability of severe wildfires; 4) provide opportunities for climate change adaptation strategies; and 5) provide sufficient economic benefits to rural communities across the landscape. The FS Pacific Northwestern Region provided a \$694,138 multi-year grant to the ITC to explore the potential use of [Anchor Forests](#) to balance economic and ecological needs. These Anchor Forests potentially keep our forests healthy through collaborative efforts involving Indian tribes, the FS, the BIA, NGOs, universities, and other federal, state, and local agencies.
- **Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA).** The FS provided \$302,000 to the ITC to help conduct an analysis of the implementation of the TFPA program, which continued throughout 2012. This work is being carried out by staff from the WO Forest Management staff, the FS OTR, the BIA, and the ITC. The report from this analysis will include recommendations for ways to expand tribal use of the TFPA to accomplish work on National Forest System lands to protect adjacent Tribal forest lands.

## National Congress of American Indians

Founded in 1944, the [National Congress of American Indians](#) (NCAI) is the oldest, largest, and most representative tribal organization, serving the broad interests of tribal governments and communities. The OTR maintains regular dialogue and engages with NCAI as a key contact for sharing information and FS notices. The OTR presents to NCAI several times a year, at the NCAI Executive Council Session, Mid-Year Conference, and Annual Convention. In addition to formal presentations, the FS maintains a regular dialogue with NCAI staff on natural resource issues. The OTR has also engaged with [Our](#)

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<sup>2</sup> Note: these are very large downloads.

[Natural Resources](#), a burgeoning intertribal consortium for which NCAI is fiscal sponsor and manager.

### *Native American Fish & Wildlife Society*

The [Native American Fish & Wildlife Society](#) (NAFWS) is a national tribal organization established in 1983 to develop a national communications network for the exchange of information and management techniques related to self-determined tribal fish and wildlife management. The society is comprised of over 1,000 professional biologists, managers and technicians, representing all aspects of tribal fish and wildlife management, conservation and enforcement, as well as 265 tribal governments and 8 intertribal organizations. Throughout 2012 the OTR worked to reinvigorate the historic relationship between the NAFWS and the FS through support of, and participation in, their annual meeting, and promoted collaboration with NFS staff.



### *Salish Kootenai College*

The existing partnership with [Salish Kootenai College](#) (SKC) on the Woods Work program ([Forest Restoration Skills and Small Business Training](#)) was expanded in FY 2012 with \$50,000 in funding from FS R&D to develop a DVD that shares lessons learned from a workshop series on traditional ecological knowledge and wildfire management. Tribal elders, native and non-native scientists, resource managers, and academics explored ways to integrate Native American traditional knowledge, stewardship practices, and philosophies with Western science to address contemporary forest health and wildfire. Results of this 2010 collaborative workshop were also published in the Journal of Forestry.<sup>3</sup>

### *United South and Eastern Indian Tribes*

Established in 1968, [United South and Eastern Tribes, Inc.](#) (USET) is a consortium of 26 Eastern and Southern Tribes dedicated to enhancing the development of Indian tribes, to improving the capabilities of tribal governments, and assisting the member tribal governments in dealing effectively with public policy issues. The OTR, often in collaboration with Regions 8 and 9, provides regular FS updates at the USET annual meeting, and engages with the USET Committees on Culture and Heritage and Natural

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<sup>3</sup> Listening and Learning from Traditional Knowledge and Western Science: A Dialogue on Contemporary Challenges of Forest Health and Wildfire. [Journal of Forestry](#), Volume 110, Number 4, 9 June 2012, pp. 187-193(7).

Resources. This relationship continued to grow in 2012 with OTR presentations and engagement on the Sacred Sites report, ethnobotany, and climate change.

### **Additional Tribal Support**

The FS Community Forest Program is a grant program that authorizes financial assistance to local and tribal governments, as well as qualified nonprofit entities to establish community forests that provide continuing and accessible community benefits. On August 28, 2012, the FS announced the ten grant winners, including two Indian tribes:

- The [Eastern Band of the Cherokee](#) was awarded \$302,305 to conserve the highly significant, 108-acre Hall Mountain tract, approximately six miles north of Franklin, North Carolina. The Tribe plans to incorporate a scenic hiking trail system that will exhibit uses of natural resources traditionally used by the Cherokee. These exhibits will serve as educational learning centers for regional public schools, and organizations like Boy and Girl Scouts.
- The [Kalispel Tribe of Indians](#) will utilize their \$350,000 award to procure the Indian Creek Community Forest in northeastern Washington, about 60 miles north of Spokane, adjacent to Colville National Forest. This forest is designated as critical habitat for the threatened species of bull trout, woodland caribou and grizzly bear, and offers a wide variety of recreation opportunities including mountain biking, hiking, horseback riding, fishing, and hunting.

In 2012, the S&PF [Technology Marketing Unit](#) at the Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) continued its partnership with the [College of Menominee Nation](#) and [Menominee Tribal Enterprises](#) (MTE). With \$60,000 in federal funds and \$15,000 from the College, a Memorandum of Understanding was executed that allows the FPL to provide entrepreneurial startup technical assistance, market research, and marketing plan development for MTE cabinetmaking operations. Other partners include the State of Wisconsin Division of Forestry and the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Project completion is anticipated by the end of 2014. In addition, every year the FS Forest Health Protection Program provides funding to the DOI to assist Tribes' forest health projects. In 2012, a total of \$958,000 was allocated to fund 16 projects on tribal land.

The OTR took the lead on pulling together FS contributions from the OTR, NFS, and R&D in support of the inaugural [First Stewards Symposium](#) in Washington, D.C. at the National Museum of the American Indian. Hosted by the Makah, Quileute and Hoh Tribes and the Quinault Indian Nation, this event brought together tribal, Executive, and Congressional leadership, agency representatives, academics, and non-profit advocates to demonstrate the impacts of climate change in regions throughout the U.S. and its territories, and how indigenous adaptations to climate change can guide

society moving forward. The OTR and R&D participated as exhibitors and attendees, and were able to expand the internal and external conversation on tribal climate change. In partnership with the Rocky Mountain Research Station, the OTR provided a small stipend to the Tribal Environmental Resource Center at Northern Arizona University in support of an American Indian student in the 'Wildlife in Native Schools' program.

The FS and the OTR also continued support in 2012 for American Indian interns, contributing to placement and development opportunities for 3 students. The OTR, the National Agroforestry Center, and the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest jointly sponsored a local intern from the Red Cliff Band of Chippewa Indians to work with the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center (NGLVC). Also at the NGLVC, an additional 5 students were sponsored by the OTR and the Chequamegon-Nicolet for projects throughout the school year. On the other side of the country, the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest provided project opportunities for 3 students within the Tulalip Tribe's Summer Youth Work Experience Program. These youth all worked on the Huckleberry Enhancement Project, which is made possible through a challenge cost-share agreement between the FS and the Tribe.

### Goal 3– Promoting Integration and Utility

In addition to strategic partnerships with the Intertribal Timber Council and others, the OTR worked both internally and externally throughout FY 2012 to strengthen the FS trust responsibility, and to make programs more accessible through improved relationships and knowledge. This year also saw a stronger emphasis on coordination among federal partners to leverage funding and resources, particularly on sacred sites and climate change.

#### Intra-agency

The OTR continues to build stronger relationships among Tribal Relations Program staff as well as in Washington DC, and the roster of "OTR liaisons" continues to grow. These liaisons are drawn from across all Deputy Areas in the WO, and facilitate OTR contact and interaction with other program units. In addition to the National Tribal Relations Workshop, the OTR hosted several "meet and greets" with OTR liaisons to provide updates on the work of the Tribal Relations Program and to educate them about FS programs, policies, and issues as they relate to tribal interests.



## Tribal Research Roadmap

FY 2012 saw the continued collaboration between the OTR, FS R&D, and the Chief's Climate Science Advisor office. Outcomes include a new tribal research agenda that will receive final clearance in 2013. Building upon previous R&D work under the All-Station Climate Change and Tribes project, additional projected outcomes include the incorporation of traditional ecological knowledge into FS research programming and increased engagement of research Stations in tribal relations. R&D has also formalized tribal relations responsibilities among research staff (Station Tribal POCs).

R&D is committed to institutionalizing many of its ongoing tribal research and engagement activities to provide a more coordinated approach to sharing knowledge and experiences across Regions and ownerships. It will seek to deliver information relevant to both Tribes and other land managers. Given the ever-growing tribal interest in climate change, the OTR will continue to connect Tribes with FS efforts in that arena, primarily within the national [Climate Change program](#) in the WO.

## Interagency

The OTR regularly participated in several standing interagency work groups in FY 2012, including:

- **Federal Inter-Agency Workgroup on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK).** Recently formed in FY 2012, this consortium of natural resource agency staff from Washington D.C. and the field convene monthly via teleconference to share TEK resources and strategies for incorporating TEK into programmatic work.
- **Interagency Land Management Adaptation Group.** Led by the Forest Service, this working group meets regularly to engage on issues surrounding climate change vulnerability assessments, adaptation, and monitoring. The OTR has successfully advocated through this group to increase attention to tribal needs and perspectives related to climate change.
- **Interagency Working Group on Indian Affairs (IWGIA).** The IWGIA is a government-wide group of federal agency representatives who work with Indian tribes. The purpose of the IWGIA is to foster interagency collaboration and coordination, to improve federal-tribal consultation, and improve service delivery to Indian tribes.

- **National Council of the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU).** The CESU Network is a national consortium of federal agencies, Tribes, academic institutions, state and local governments, nongovernmental conservation organizations, and other partners working together to support research, technical assistance, education, and capacity building that is responsive to long-standing and contemporary science and resource management priorities.
- **USDA Native American Working Group (NAWG).** Chaired by the USDA Office of Tribal Relations, the NAWG is a USDA-wide group of leaders and staff who work on tribal issues and programs. The OTR represents the FS on the NAWG. In addition, the OTR represents the FS as the lead agency on the NAWG Subcommittee on Accountability and Reporting.

The OTR additionally participated in the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service Advisory Council, USDA's Small and Beginning Farmer and Rancher Work Group, and NASA's Interagency Forum on Climate Change Adaptation.

## Cultural Transformation

The OTR and the Tribal Relations Program remain committed to Departmental and FS efforts to achieve cultural transformation, and made significant investments in these efforts in 2012. The OTR provided \$20,000 in program funds to support several interns from Lac Courtes Oreille Ojibwa Community College, a Tribal College and University (TCU) in Wisconsin that's working on FS projects in Wisconsin. The OTR also supported an American Indian summer intern at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center on the



Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, in partnership with the Forest and the National Agroforestry Center. Additional outreach efforts in 2012 included ongoing engagement and support of the Society of American Indian Government Employees, the American Indian Science and Engineering Society, and the annual National Environmental Justice Conference.

Complementing the OTR's efforts, FS R&D continued outreach to tribal students and youth through internships, mentoring, and cooperative efforts with TCUs. The Northern Research Station continued engaging with the College of Menominee, supporting a local liaison position as well as a visiting scholar to teach and mentor tribal students. Rocky Mountain Research Station hosted an intern from the Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute, and other scientists hosted youth programs with the Oglala Sioux and with Tribes in the Southwest. Finally, in cooperation with the University of

Washington, scientists from the Pacific Northwest Research Station have been serving as graduate degree advisors for multiple tribal students.

## Staff Training

The OTR ensures service-wide orientation and training of FS employees for competency in tribal relations, including the appropriate procedures necessary for government-to-government consultation. The OTR also contributes to interagency training on Federal Indian law, the history of federal/tribal relations, and exercising the federal trust responsibility to Indian tribes. With the imminent release of the Sacred Sites Report, the OTR began shifting its focus towards implementing the Report recommendations, with a strong emphasis on staff training. This work is continuing in 2013 with the support of a newly-formed interagency working group on the protection of sacred sites.

Within the OTR, staff participated in numerous sessions to inform the Agency's work, including training on water law, Federal Indian law, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) directives on solar energy, and environmental justice. All staff engaged in a two-day, team-building retreat at Grey Towers, and "mini-details" to Region 1/4 and R9 were completed by two staff members. These visits were particularly useful in strengthening the Tribal Relations Program as a whole, and encouraged the cross-pollination of ideas and issues confronted by the WO and Regional programs.

## Tools and Resources

In support of the strategic goal of program integration and utility, the OTR continuously strives to increase tribal access to Forest Service resources. In furtherance of this goal, the OTR began working closely with FS staff and tribal stakeholders to create a user-friendly guide to FS grants and agreements for Tribes. This tool will help Tribes obtain federal financial assistance and partner better with the Forest Service, and is expected to move through final clearance in 2013.

For several years the OTR has also been exploring opportunities to improve tribal mapping data through conversation with FS Lands and Engineering staff. The need for such data has been demonstrated in numerous instances, including improved decision-making in both incident and resource management, and in defining the scope of tribal needs. In FY 2012 the OTR made additional headway in this effort by leveraging the mapping work of others outside the WO, including Region 9, the BIA, and the Smithsonian Institute.

## Tribal Relations in the Field

In FY 2012 a small cadre of full-time Tribal Relations Program Managers (TRPMs), with the assistance of numerous collateral duty staff, continued to fulfill the FS trust responsibility across the country in highly challenging environments and within innovative partnerships. These personnel continue to help strengthen both the FS and communities in which the Agency operates. Eight full-time TRPMs take the lead on FS trust responsibilities, assisted by another dozen full-time Tribal Relations Program staff. A much larger contingent of collateral duty, part-time, and temporary staff also contribute to this effort, the majority of whom are assigned to the Heritage Program.

Throughout the FS, continued progress is being made across all forests and grasslands in achieving fuller and more complete engagement with Tribes. Forests and grasslands are increasingly hiring Tribal Relations Program staff – some for the first time – and initiating the execution of consultation protocols and Memoranda of Understanding. FS staffs across the Agency are also meeting with Tribes on their homelands, and at their traditional and sacred places to learn from Tribes and strengthen relationships.

Region	F/T	%	Collateral	Total	%
R1/4	1	14.3	6	7	85.7
R2	2	15.4	11	13	84.6
R3	4	22.2	14	18	77.8
R5	5	17.9	23	28	82.1
R6	4	7.5	49	53	92.5
R8	1	4.8	20	21	95.2
R9	2	8.7	21	23	91.3
R10	4	22.2	14	18	77.8

**TOTAL 23 12.7 158 181 87.3**

- \* Where primary responsibility for the TRP is assigned to Heritage staff, it is assumed to be collateral duty.
- \*\* Not all forests/grasslands reported structure of the Regional TRP.
- \*\*\* These figures represent NFS staff only.

## Regional Consultation at a Glance \*

	Forest-level	Regional	National	Total Notification Letters sent
Region 1/4	296	3	16	49
Region 2	13		13	179
Region 3	179		17	
Region 5	1029	245	204	3725
Region 6	973	1	45	508
Region 8	752	24	14	99
Region 9	691		38	676
Region 10	208	2	43	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4141</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>5236</b>

\* Reports indicate that figures submitted are the minimum, particularly for notification letters. Figures are estimated for forests

and grasslands that did not submit numeric data.

## Lead Forest Consultation

Several Regions, including Regions 2, 8, and 9, participate in the Lead Forest Consultation strategy. The Lead Forest approach improves the quality of FS consultation by eliminating redundancy while providing a cross-check to ensure that all Indian tribes and ANCs are given the opportunity to consult. This strategy was designed to achieve consistency in message, meaning, and content and to fulfill the legal mandate while maintaining maximum flexibility to communicate and consult with Indian tribes and ANCs that have a programmatic interest in forest-level projects and historic ties to the landscape. When national consultation is initiated, the lead forest must engage with all affiliated and affected Indian tribes and ANCs, who have discretion to determine their desired level of engagement. (The Lead Forest strategy is not intended to replace relationships established at the local level.)

## Northern (R1) and Intermountain (R4) Regions

### Redeeming Trust Responsibility

The [Northern and Intermountain Regions](#) share a TRPM, with two additional tribal liaisons supporting the Kootenai, Nez Perce-Clearwater, and Payette National Forests. There are approximately four additional, collateral duty staff in tribal liaison roles, typically from the Heritage Program. In FY 2012, the Region reported 315 consultations, with over 90 percent of those focused at the forest level. (See Attachment: Appendix C.) Key issues of tribal interest included roads, access, oil and gas leasing and development, sacred sites, traditional and cultural purposes (forest products and forest uses), mining, and restoration.

### Leveraging Partnerships

FY 2012 was the fourth year of the "Bridging the Divide Project" on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. This effort that brings youth and elders together on the traditional homelands of the Confederated Salish Kootenai and Shoshone-Bannock Tribes for a week-long field camp that blends modern resource management with traditional ecological knowledge in an ecosystem-based curriculum.

The Gallatin National Forest has a unique relationship primarily focused on bison migration, hunting, and habitat with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes (CSKT), and the Nez Perce Tribe. The Gallatin National Forest is the only forest in the state of Montana where Tribes can hunt bison migrating from Yellowstone National

Park. The CSKT, Nez Perce and the InterTribal Buffalo Council are also partners with the Gallatin National Forest on the Interagency Bison Management Plan partner group.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater-Payette National Forests continued their substantial engagement with the Nez Perce Tribe in FY 2012 with the implementation of a \$7.7 million aquatic restoration project. This project contributed to the more than \$30 million in restoration work completed over the past 15 years, yet is only one project among the more than 15 projects that were initiated in FY 2012.

## Rocky Mountain Region (R2)

### Redeeming Trust Responsibility

Among the 45 Tribes with interests in the [Rocky Mountain Region](#), 21 are located within the Regional boundary. The Region 2 Tribal Relations Program provides inter-regional consultation leadership for an additional 5 Indian tribes as outlined in the Lead Forest consultation strategy. One full-time TRPM is located on the S&PF staff at the Regional Office, with 1 full-time and 11 collateral duty staff also assigned tribal relations responsibilities, coming primarily from the Heritage Program. In FY 2012, the Region completed 13 forest-level and 13 national consultations, along with 179 notifications. (See Attachment: Appendix C.)

### Leveraging Partnerships

The San Juan National Forest served as the point of contact for all tribal consultation concerning the proposed Chimney Rock National Monument Proclamation signed by President Obama on September 21, 2012. The Proclamation's purpose is to preserve, protect, and restore the nationally significant archaeological, cultural, scientific, watershed, and scenic resources in the area. The site is surrounded by the Southern Ute Indian Reservation, and this monument holds great significance for the Tribes of southwestern Colorado and neighboring states. The National Monument designation provides for continued access by Indian tribes to sites within the National Monument for traditional and cultural uses. Multiple consultations were conducted between Congressional and tribal representatives, and federal and state officials. In the end, Indian tribes agreed that by proclaiming Chimney Rock a Monument, their interests would be protected.

In May 2012, FS staff made a presentation to the three Ute Tribal Councils to advise them of plans to harvest the Capitol Christmas Tree on the White River National Forest on Ute aboriginal lands, and to invite the Tribes to join in the associated celebrations. Throughout the rest of the year, tribal elders and students created hundreds of ornaments to decorate the 2012 Capitol Christmas Tree. Traditional cultural leaders and

FS staff from the White River National Forest traveled to Washington, D.C. for the tree ceremonies at the Capitol and the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, and an honoring ceremony with the FS Chief.

## Southwest Region (R3)

### Redeeming Trust Responsibility

In [Region 3](#), the TRPM oversees the TRP at the Director level, and is a member of the Regional Leadership Team. Additional TRP staff are located on the Cibola, Coconino, Kaibab, and Santa Fe National Forests, with the Cibola adding its first full-time TRP staff in FY 2011. A part-time liaison to the Navajo Nation also supports the Kaibab National Forest. There are approximately 18 staff with tribal responsibilities, with more than two-thirds managing these responsibilities as collateral duties. The Region reported 179 forest-level consultations and 17 national. (See Attachment: Appendix C.)

### Leveraging Partnerships

Due to a strong outreach program, the Region's Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFRP) is one of the most active in the Agency, delivering approximately one third of the total federal program dollars (\$45.7 million) to tribal recipients. Tribes are doing mission-related work as partners to restore watersheds, utilize small diameter material, biomass utilization, reduce the threat of wildfire, and restore the bosque along the Rio Grande River. Major projects are underway with Ohkay Owingeh, White Mountain Apache, and Mescalero Apache. The Ohkay Owingeh "Birds in the Bosque" project in particular is a prime example of the caliber of partnerships that are routinely generated in the Region:

The project restored 127 acres of riparian ecosystems on Pueblo land along the Rio Grande and Tesuque Creek, and encouraged a private landowner to restore 8 more acres of adjoining wetland. The partnership was also able to leverage additional funding to restore 117 additional acres of bosque at Tesuque Pueblo beginning in 2012.

This has been Ohkay Owingeh's most ambitious and complex CFRP restoration project so far. It is their first project to include migratory bird surveys and is their first CFRP project to successfully restore habitat for a federal endangered species (southwestern willow flycatchers). It is also their first project to include college-level classes for Pueblo environmental staff and restoration technicians, as well as youth job training opportunities and ecological education for Pueblo and other local elementary and secondary students.

The Regional TRPM and staff also actively engage across all Deputy Areas and have very strong intra-agency relationships with program staff that are leveraged to meet tribal needs. Throughout FY 2012 assistance was provided from Grants and Agreements (administration), Civil Rights (recruitment with Regional TCUs), Ecosystems (Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation and water rights), Engineering (flood mapping), Fire and Aviation (wildland fire training), and Pest Management (weed management guides). Additionally, more than half a million dollars was awarded in Forest Health-directed funds. Tribal recipients of this assistance include White Mountain Apache, Cochiti Pueblo, Mescalero Apache, Nambe Pueblo, Santa Clara Pueblo, Hopi, Hualapai Tribe, Navajo Nation, San Carlos Apache, Acoma Pueblo, Isleta Pueblo, Jicarilla Apache, Laguna Pueblo, Taos Pueblo, Ohkay Owingeh, Tesuque Pueblo, and Zuni Pueblo.

## Pacific Southwest Region (R5)

### Redeeming Trust Responsibility

FY 2012 brought a new TRPM to [Region 5](#) who is supported by three full-time TRP staff. Additional responsibility for tribal relations is shared among 14 collateral staff, primarily Heritage Program Managers, along with several line officers. The TRPM is located at the Regional Office and reports to the Deputy Regional Forester. Given the number of Tribes in the Region, all FS personnel engaged in tribal relations carry a substantial portfolio of Tribes on each forest. In addition to federally recognized Indian tribes, Region 5 also engages with a large number of state recognized Tribes and tribal organizations. Issues of concern include wildfire management, temporary closures, feral pigs, co-management, and restoration. The Region reported nearly 1,500 consultations, most at the forest level, and 3,725 notifications. (See Attachment: Appendix C.)

### Leveraging Partnerships

The FS has partnered on several grants and agreements in the Region, primarily for fuels reduction and trails, with a particularly significant award to the Tule River Indian Reservation under a Tribal Forest Protection Act agreement. On August 28, 2012, the Karuk Tribe and Six Rivers and Klamath National Forests signed the Katimiin Cultural Management Area Agreement, ensuring that one of the Karuk Tribe's most sacred landscapes will be restored using traditional land management techniques perfected by the Tribe over countless generations.

The Lassen National Forest has conducted outreach and held multiple workshops to assist tribal members seeking FS employment (2 seasonal staff were hired in 2012), and several other forests held cultural gatherings with Tribes to educate each other. The

Lassen is also working with several other Tribes on a trail maintenance grant that will begin in 2013, and which the forest hopes to expand. (See Attachment: Appendix D.)

## Pacific Northwest Region (R6)

### Redeeming Trust Responsibility

The TRP staff in [Region 6](#) is comprised of the Regional TRPM – another newcomer in 2012 – one tribal Liaison, and one TRPM at the forest level. Additional TRP staff include the Heritage Program Manager, one archaeologist, and almost 50 part-time staff who are assigned collateral responsibility for tribal relations. Several forests hold tribal meetings on a regularly scheduled basis – generally every quarter – and frequently with BLM staff. An annual “program of work” meeting is held with various tribal departments of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, including the departments of Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife, Cultural Resources, and the Board of Trustees. Issues of concern include repatriation of human remains, mining, sacred sites, roads, traditional and cultural purposes, and overuse of resources. The Region reported just over 1,000 consultations and 508 notifications. (See Attachment: Appendix C.)

### Leveraging Partnerships

Numerous forests in the Region maintain Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) delineating consultation protocol, as well as MOUs for access, traditional forest products, and restoration, among other purposes. Four new projects were initiated in 2012 under a Master Stewardship Agreement with the Klamath Tribe (forest restoration) and MOUs with the Tulalip Tribe (huckleberry enhancement, a huckleberry cooperative study with Washington State University, and interpretive signage).

## Southern Region (R8)

### Redeeming Trust Responsibility

The [Region 8 Tribal Relations Program](#) serves more than 51 Tribes, with one full-time regional TRPM assisted by 20 collateral-duty staff. For FY 2012, the regional TRPM continued to report through the Planning Director at the Regional Office, but was remotely located on the Kisatchie National Forest. FY 2013 will see this position moved to the Regional Office and the addition of a second, full-time Tribal Relations Program staffer. Region 8 is somewhat unique in that many of the Indian tribes with interest in NFS lands and activities are located far from their traditional homelands and sacred sites due to the historic removal policy. The Region thus participates in the Lead Forest

consultation strategy (along with Regions 2 and 9), conducting several large, multi-tribal consultations annually. This strategy appears to be particularly well-suited for regional and national policy consultations. Although several Tribes prefer to hold one-on-one consultations, the group efforts were generally well-received. In perhaps a “first,” the Southern Research Station began formal consultation with the Eastern Band of Cherokee and the Region for reburial on an experimental forest, with the fully executed MOU anticipated in 2013. The Region also reported nearly 800 consultations and 99 notifications. (See Attachment: Appendix C.)

## Leveraging Partnerships

The National Forests in Florida hosted the Florida Indian Youth Program on July 19, 2012 for a day-long field trip with various career-oriented presentations by five Forest Service employees. This summer job shadowing program is organized by the Florida Governor's Council on Indian Affairs, and the National Forests in Florida have participated in the program since 1994. Participants are high school seniors and young adults entering college. Among the Tribes represented by the students were the Seminole, Crow, and Lumbee.

The Daniel Boone National Forest works with two Tribes in conducting the Living Archaeology Weekend every year. The event is a free, two-day, outdoor educational program geared towards educating the public about the cultural history of eastern Kentucky. Fridays are for local 5<sup>th</sup> graders and Saturday is open to the public. Multiple demonstrations of early technologies such as hide tanning, pottery making, atlatl (spear) throwing, outdoor cooking, flintknapping, grinding grain are on-site both days. For several years the Absentee Shawnee have presented information on their culture, although they could not attend in 2012. The United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee have participated for the last two years, specifically instructing the 5<sup>th</sup> graders about stickball on Fridays and disseminating information about their Tribe on Saturdays.

Grant awards were made in FY 2012 to the Caddo and Muscogee Creek Nations and the Quapaw Tribe, in addition to a contract with the Caddo Nations for Heritage work.

## Eastern Region (R9)

### Redeeming Trust Responsibility

The Tribal Relations Specialist in [Region 9](#) serves as a Special Assistant to the Regional Forester (RF) and informs and advises the RF and principal line and staff officers on matters of Federal Indian Law and policy, matters of tribal interest, and potential political and cultural conflicts. There is one additional, full-time tribal liaison, and 21 collateral duty staff supporting the TRP throughout the Region. Unique to the Region in

meeting FS trust responsibilities, a [Tribal Relations Strategic Framework](#) (TRSF) for the Eastern Region was developed to provide line officers and other managers with fundamental and foundational information regarding Federal Indian Law and policy. As a desk guide, the TRSF appendices are designed to provide specific guidance when engaging Tribes in government-to-government dialogue. The TRSF is intended to “set the tone” for the TRP at all levels of the Region. The Region’s consultation strategy is embedded in the TRSF and is based on the Lead Forest consultation concept to ensure that all Tribes within the Region, or affiliated by ancestral connection, are provided opportunities for engagement on any or all issues of interest. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) are the standard means of managing tribal relations throughout the Region, and have had positive effects, particularly in a Region with substantial ceded territories and numerous “removed” Tribes. Policies and responsibilities are outlined in MOUs that are reviewed and renewed annually at regular FS-tribal meetings where issues are discussed. The Region reported 691 forest-level consultations and 38 national. (See Attachment: Appendix C.)

## Leveraging Partnerships

Waabezheshi (American Marten) is an endangered species in the Wisconsin ceded territories, and the Tribes have been working for two decades on the restoration of this species, including research into the natural history and demographics of martens. In response to population declines in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest (CNNF) over the past decade, the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, the CNNF, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources agreed to augment the marten population on the Great Divide District. Ninety martens were brought in over a three year period (2008-2010) from Minnesota and a cooperative follow-up research study is to be implemented among the 3 partners to further study the trans-located animals.

The Chippewa National Forest, through the U.S. General Services Administration, conveyed the former Cass Lake Ranger Station site, currently housing the Leech Lake Tribal Police Department, to the BIA which will now hold it in trust for the Band. Years in the making, this transfer benefits both governments by decreasing excess National Forest property, and provides a permanent location for the tribal police force. In addition to the land and buildings, the FS transferred several personal property items including a 1,000 gallon propane tank with fuel, heavy duty air compressor, work benches, various tools, and multiple shelving and storage pieces. Final transfer of the property occurred on June 12, 2012. Elsewhere in the Region, work is underway on the Ottawa National Forest to convey former government quarters to the Lac Vieux Desert Band. The Tribe has been preparing new homes sites and will begin moving the houses in 2013.

The Lac Vieux Desert (LVD) Band's Forest Futures Program, similar to the FS Youth Conservation Corps, supported an 8-week-long experiential work program for 14 Native

American youth and 2 assistant crew leaders. Throughout the summer, the FS coordinated with the LVD for crews to complete several projects on the Ottawa National Forest. These youth teams worked on invasive species management on federal and tribal land, learned about timber sales as timber marking crews, and spent time in a tree nursery. These students felt that FS staff provided them with an unforgettable learning experience.

## Alaska Region (R10)

### Redeeming Trust Responsibility

[Region 10](#) employs Tribal Relations Program staff in the Regional Office and on the Chugach and Tongass National Forests. Cross regional collaboration in tribal relations occurs within the context of the Alaska Tribal Leaders Committee (ATLC), which consists of 4 tribally elected delegates, the Regional Office, line officers on the Chugach and the Tongass, 3 full-time TRP staff (1 TRPM), and an American Indian and Alaska Native Special Emphasis Coordinator from the Pacific Northwest Research Station. This committee was created in 2012 to facilitate more strategic and robust tribal interactions. The Region also utilizes the Federal Subsistence Board and its Subsistence Work Group (SWG), which includes the FS TRPM and Regional Forester, to engage with tribal leaders and Alaska Native liaisons. In 2012 the Federal Subsistence Board adopted the consultation policy developed by the SWG. For FY 2012, the Region reported 208 forest-level, 2 regional, and 43 national consultations. (See Attachment: Appendix C.)

### Leveraging Partnerships

FY 2012 saw the culmination of a successful collaborative effort in which Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI), BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the FS worked together to identify a mutually agreeable resolution to CIRI's land claims. The final agreement provides for resolution of CIRI's land selections, maintains public access to an important fishery, and protects cultural resources and continued cooperation on oversight of the 4,000-acre Sqaillantnu Archaeological District.

In March of 2012, the Haa Aani Committee of the Tongass Futures Roundtable adopted ten priority action items that include the protection of sacred sites through collaborative projects, the distribution of information, and meaningful consultations. Additional action items include acknowledging the Tongass as a Native Place ("The Tongass, A Native Place" is a brand used by the Tongass National Forest), expanding outreach to Alaska Natives, sponsoring cultural sensitivity training, and access to forest products for traditional and cultural purposes

During 2012, the ATLC prioritized FS outreach and recruitment, developing a staff network that reaches out to 67 Alaska Native organizations. The ATLC is now poised to better facilitate Alaska Native employment in the FS, and a draft Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act hiring authority was submitted to the Departmental Office of General Counsel for review at the end of FY 2012. As a precursor to such a policy, a five-person seasonal crew was hired for watershed restoration activities, trail maintenance, invasive plants management, resource monitoring, and stream restoration with a contract awarded to the Angoon Community Association. Other collaboration included 4 Alaska Native Science and Engineering students who interned on the Chugach and Tongass, while the all-Alaska Native Crew 6, sponsored by the Student Conservation Association, completed 4 experiential learning projects in the span of one month.

## Challenges

The Regions and the Washington Office share common challenges in achieving meaningful consultation, and while each Region experiences circumstances unique to local tribal constituencies (intertribal conflicts on the same forest, for example), there is great unanimity in comments about effectively managing the Tribal Relations Program under the following constraints:

### Inconsistency

**In relationships:** Tribes often remark about difficulties in keeping track of FS employees, particularly with increasing retirements. Similarly, when tribal councils change, FS staff can become frustrated because they feel as though communications about projects must start over “from square one.” In both instances, it can be challenging to maintain consistency in relationships, and to keep up the momentum in communicating about projects. FS personnel turnover and chronic vacancies or temporary details continued to exacerbate this problem in 2012.

**In issues and processes across boundaries:** Every Tribe is unique, and tribal interests on a particular forest may or may not coincide with other tribal interests in the same forest. Many Tribes have legal rights or interests that span multiple forests or Regions. Often, policies for acknowledging tribal rights vary among Regions, forests, or even among different districts within the same forest. These inconsistencies are confusing and frustrating. A single FS point of contact has been suggested for Tribes that have interest in, and consult with, multiple forests. This would provide the multiple benefits of reducing redundancy, increasing efficiency in addressing multiple consultation requests, and potentially expediting tribal response times.

## Training

Forests report that it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep up with educating new employees on tribal rights. There is a need for forest-level training to clarify consultation and collaboration (who, what, when, and where). Additionally, issues arose in FY 2012 with non-Tribal government or non-federally recognized tribal stakeholders engaging the FS in a manner that some staff found to be confusing.

## Communications

**FS Communications:** A consistent method for handling national policy consultation continues to need improvement. While some calls for consultation on national policy are sent from the WO directly to the Regions, other notices are distributed directly from the Regions to Tribes. In the case of the [Planning Rule](#), the Agency sent communications directly to Tribes. This created confusion and frustration at the forest-level, where line officers and tribal liaisons were excluded from communications, and yet had to field inquiries from the Tribes. Furthermore, Tribes report that they are inundated by requests from multiple federal agencies to consult on numerous topics and materials that are lengthy and written in highly technical language. While some Regions have adopted a Lead Forest strategy to ease this situation, there is no universal policy or protocol across the Agency. Several forests expressed frustration with a lack of FS documentation of consultation and reporting.

**Tribal Communications:** Even in Regions where tribal relations are generally positive, Tribes often bypass the forest and/or Regional Office to elevate issues directly to the WO, or even the Department. While the OTR provides notice of, and defers to, the Regions about such meetings and outcomes, it would be helpful if other WO staff would also share such information with Regional and TRP staff.

## Resource limitations

**Forest Service:** The funding and allocation of time for staff engaged in tribal relations with collateral responsibilities continues to be an impediment to meaningful consultation and an effective TRP, given both the number of Tribes and magnitude of consultation requests. Reliance on collateral duty staffing for tribal relations continues to exacerbate efficacy. One Region "did the math" and determined that current funding only allows for 3 person days per year to consult and partner with more than 25 Tribes.

Physical distances, travel caps, and budget limitations also continue to constrain meaningful, face-to-face consultation – especially with Tribes who currently reside far from their traditional homelands. The FS and Tribes would like more opportunities for on-the-ground, face-to-face meetings, but the great distances pose a logistical challenge. The distance also reduces opportunities for collaborative partnerships.

**Tribes:** Tribes are not staffed to deal with the magnitude of federal requests to consult, and therefore prioritize their involvement based on strong relationships, urgent issues, and projects where they believe that they can have an impact. They also frequently lack the resources to travel to regional consultation venues or the technology to engage with the FS electronically, through video teleconference for example.

Despite these challenges, the FS TRP continues to improve relations with the first stewards of NFS lands across the country. Through diligent efforts to both comply with statutory authorities and work towards mutually beneficial programs and projects on the ground, the Agency continues to make great strides in redeeming its trust responsibilities and improving the natural resource legacy that has been entrusted to the FS.

