



NWS Tribal & Indigenous Engagement

June 21, 2024 Briefing to IAEM's Tribal Caucus

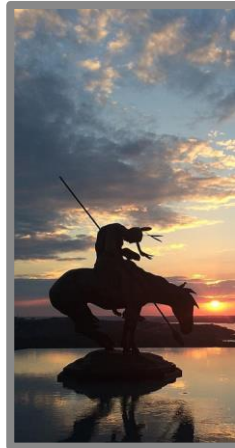
Wendy Marie Thomas, NOAA/NWS, Tribal & Indigenous Team Lead

NWS' Tribal & Indigenous Engagement

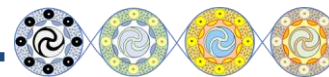


Quick Overview of Tribal Nations & Indigenous Territories:

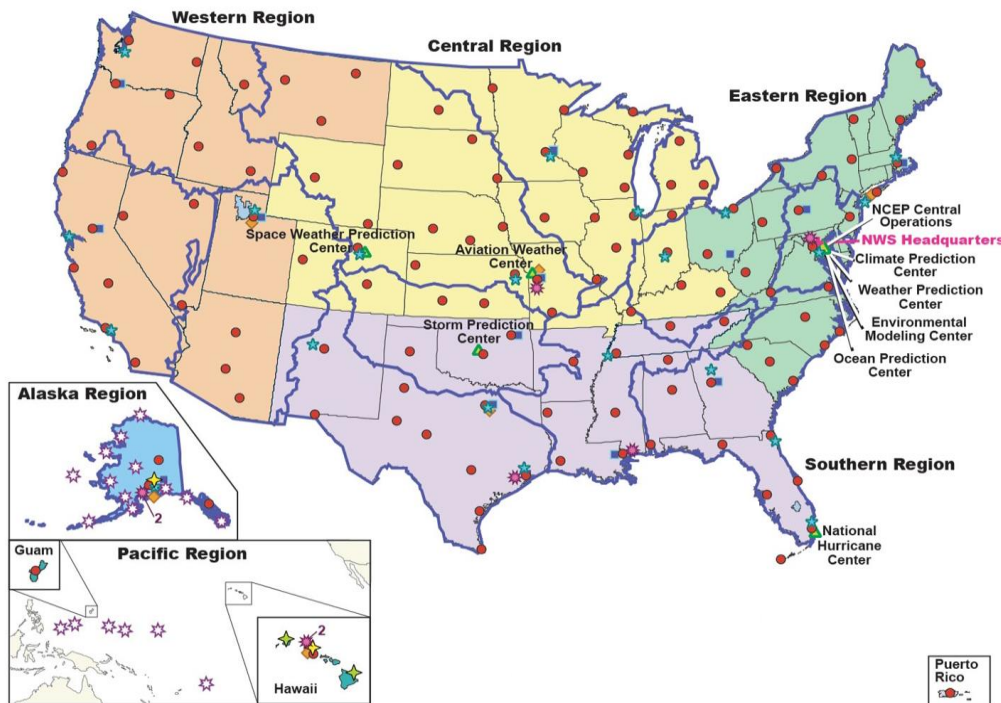
- **574 federally recognized** sovereign tribal nations (**CONUS**)
- **229 federally recognized** Indian Tribes in **Alaska**
- **Pacific Region represents** many Polynesian cultural communities, and The Native Hawaiian Community has a government-to-sovereign relationship with the USG
- **Uniqueness of our Tribal/Indigenous Partners:**
 - They have **Homelands *within* the Mainland** and territorial domains of the U.S., yet they are not “local” by any standard, but are rather *nation-to-nation* or *nation-to-government* partners though outside of Dept of State (DOS) level definition of “international”
 - They are **“international” in the context of our differing customs, laws, and scientific approaches** to comprehending our shared Earth.
 - In light of this, **they are a highly special and unique Core Partner**



NWS has many Tribal & Indigenous Accomplishments in All Regions...



The following slides highlight successes by Region... each success is built from years - decades of persistent relationship building



We conclude with our persistent challenges, along with our viewpoints on potential opportunities to remedy them

O le ala i le pule o le tautau - (Samoon) for “The path to leadership is service”



Successes in Pacific Region

PR + AR IDSS for The Moananuiākea voyage which is of profound cultural significance to all Pacific cultures – unifying them to their ancestral connection with the Earth/Sea, and educating the next generation of youth on their “lost” cultural nautical miles during the 47-month circumnavigation of the Pacific by traditional Polynesian voyaging canoes Hōkūle‘a and Hikianalia. It will cover 36 countries and archipelagoes, nearly 100 indigenous territories and 345 ports.

Supporting the Pacific Islands Regional Collaboration Network Pilot Project, Kea‘ahuli O Pana‘ewa. NOAA and the community are working together to co-produce a poly-forestry dashboard. Working with the community to determine the type of weather and climate data/products/services they would need in this “dashboard”. **These tools will help the community build food security and resilience as the climate in changing.**

PR (WSO Pago, Pago) working with USGS



Translation of Samoa language to enhance NWS’ services, partnerships and outreach in the South Pacific



Successes in Western Region

WFO - Flagstaff deployed to the Navajo Nation EOC in January 2023 in support of record snow.



WRH has funded attendance to several key conferences



WFO - Flagstaff briefed Navajo Nation President Nez weekly during the 2021 monsoon season. Weekly IDSS emails are sent to the Navajo Nation EM, who forwards it to 110 chapter houses.

WFO -Spokane supports "Tribal Coalition Meetings" & Engages in tribal health

Navajo Nation  Hopi  White Mountain



Successes in Eastern Region



The Tribe purchased additional water gauges that they will own and operate. GSP Senior Service Hydrologist **Joshua Palmer** was contacted to support the tribe in identifying locations for these gauges so that they can be of best use for flash flood operations for WFO GSP. They also discussed the importance of rain gauges upstream in the Smokies to get accurate precipitation measurements.



Education + Outreach:

The EMs are aware of the standing offer for WFO GSP to support outreach and talk “science” with tribal youth. Trisha also explained that NWS meteorologists often do curriculum-gearred weather and safety school talks, and that WFO GSP would be thrilled to add Cherokee Central School to the list of school outreach activities.

First StormReady Tribal Nation in ER (WR + SR)

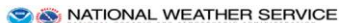
Eastern band of the Cherokee Indians



Successes in Central Region



WFO ABR was instrumental in having a “hail swaths/rotation” tracks algorithm developed to specifically benefit tribal partners



BIA Tribal Resiliency Grant

Partnerships Are Vital!



Baptiste Weed
Wind River Reservation
Tribal Water Engineer



Clinton Glick
Eastern Shoshone Public Health
Emergency Management Coordinator



Harvey Spoonhunter Northern Arapaho
Office of Homeland Security
Emergency Management Coordinator

Wind River Reservation is home to the Shoshone and northern Arapaho. Former WCM Tim Troutman worked for decades. The Reservation became **StormReady and Weather-Ready Nation Ambassadors**



Tri-Ute Tribe (Utah, CO) – Climate Resiliency Workshop with NWS Grand Junction (2023)



IDSS highlights:

- Long-term recovery (winter)
- TCU IDSS for closures
- Mock Wx exercises with Tribal EMs

Outreach highlights:

- Several K-12 tribal schools
- Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (Skywarn/Spotter/WRNA)
- Sitting Bull College engagement
- Fort Berthold Reservation is a COOP observer

Successes in Southern Region



CHANGING CURRENTS

Presented on behalf of NOAA at a water-centric workshop, gaining a lot of wisdom on how to increase NWS' hydro services

NWS' participation in this meeting led to the creation of a NWS subcabinet of operational hydrology.

Important to note: Weather and climate are largely where we “engage” with tribal and indigenous partners, however, in water we have more potential for “co-stewardship” which has a higher bar for agency tracking, observation and reporting.

In both we may gain Indigenous Knowledge, which needs to be protected.

**Tribal Engagement:
Flexibility and Adaptability**

SKYWARN "Flash Flood" Spotter

1. Attended a meeting to listen and learn (phone calls often preferred to email)
2. Conducted small training session – quiet patience
3. Built on prior training – leveraged resources

FEMA G-271 : Hazardous Weather and Flooding Preparedness with NMDHSEM

Adapted established programs to Pueblo NEEDS!

2013, Pueblo of Santa Clara

NWS Albuquerque

2016, Pueblo of Santa Clara

Long-term engagement and adaptation of established NWS programs with and for the Isleta Pueblo. Recently conducted environmental preparedness event in which we used our flood model to reach 100s of residents of the pueblo with flood preparedness information

Outreach:



Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute (a TCU) visited the WFO to learn more about what meteorologists do and careers in the weather enterprise



WaterAware is NWS Field-driven creation for NWS hydrologists and meteorologists to leverage in connecting with potential “future hydrologists”, especially in tribal and indigenous communities.

Successes in Alaska Region



NOAA FISHERIES + AR

Partnered to co - learn "Working with Alaska Natives"



Alaska Weather TV moved to YouTube, and energy and focus remains on reinstating service to regain those who need AKTV back for safety, subsistence, and resilience



First Tsunami Ready Tribal Nation in Alaska (September 2023) – Seldovia Village Tribe and the City of Seldovia became TsunamiReady in Alaska.



NOAA-NWS booths at the Alaska Federation of Natives convention and the Tanana Chiefs Conference annual convention.

Challenges & Opportunities in Operations



1. Showing up culturally-appropriate is personally costly to NWS staff

Context: NWS is one of the most on-the-ground federal agencies on tribal & indigenous lands. As such “we are often the face of the US Government,” which has a documented history of atrocities and violated treaties.

In order to make inroads, NWS staff go above the norm to make “peace” and to gain trust of their tribal and indigenous partners by allocating personal funds (~\$1,000-\$3,000, especially in PR and AR) in order to provide culturally appropriate gifts as a means of national atonement and peace-making.

Opportunity: We are working on many fronts with NWS and external partners to support alignment with service duties and charting a better path forward.

Challenges & Opportunities in Operations



2. Imbalanced CWA:Tribal Nation/Indigenous Community Ratios

Context: On average there may be 1-2 tribal nations or indigenous communities per County Warning Area (CWA), yet there are significant disproportions which are most evident in Southern Region (WFO Norman has 22 tribes, and WFO ABQ has 19 Pueblos, and also all of Alaska Region).

Opportunity: We have internally advanced ideas to rebalance the NWS office with Tribal nations, which includes novel ways to recruit a "Tribal Liaison" to support NWS during times of Tribal Council or Tribal EM turnover.

Challenges & Opportunities in Operations



3. Regional Differences and Nuances

Context: There are 574 tribal nations, with 229 Reservations in Alaska. There are inter-regional differences, many federal grants from NOAA or other agencies, and a lot of outreach potential. WFOs can benefit from more focused regional support from a Regional Tribal/Indigenous POC who spends at least 40-50% of their time on such matters.

Opportunity: We advanced recommendations to have a “Tribal Liaison” who may reside on or closer to the Tribe than our offices. Such a person could be a “NOAA Affiliate”

Challenges & Opportunities in Operations



4. Inclusion of people from tribal and indigenous lands into the NOAA/NWS workforce (especially in locations near their “homeland”)

Context: Many TCU's lack a curriculum that makes it possible for their graduates to be hired as meteorologists and hydrologists. This is a significant barrier. Many NOAA and NWS assets are needed to discuss and to resolve this, else we will hit a “bottle neck” in hiring “local” for tribal and indigenous locations.

Opportunity: We continue to work on education and outreach, and identify paths to support TCU graduates in having a hiring-path into federal service, namely at NOAA/NWS.

Challenges & Opportunities in Operations



5. Sparse Radar coverage due to complex terrain and sovereign rights

Context: As tribal nations have gained NWS' trust, there is an increase in our "science and service". Many tribal nations are located in complex terrains or highly remote locations which lack federal radars. With private sector radars, there may be some tribal lands that gain more coverage, but gaps will remain.

Opportunity: We advanced considerations for placing radars in several locations in the CONUS and Alaska.

Challenges & Opportunities in Operations



6. Inclusion & Protection of Indigenous Knowledge

Context: Indigenous Knowledge is “sacred” wisdom about the earth. It is given optionally from an Elder to those whom have earned their trust. The NWS is earning that by virtue of long-standing partnerships, even prior to current executive requests for more tribal engagement. However, Congress recently denied protection of Indigenous Knowledge from FOIA, and this is a vast concern for NWS, especially as we move to a centralized database (NWS Connect) to record such information for local and mutual aid benefits.

Opportunity: We are working internally to protect this knowledge on our IT systems.

Key NWS Tribal & Indigenous Resources



NWS' First ever ArcGIS map for all Operational Units to use for digestible, comprehensive history of “ceded lands” and the location of their K-12/Tribal Colleges and Universities within CWAs ([CONUS](#), [AR](#), PR is in development)

[Tribal/Indigenous StormReady/TsunamiReady](#) sites (soon to be included is Alaska's 1st TR community)

[NWS Tribal & Indigenous Team](#) intra-net site

[NOAA Tribal Resources](#)





NWS' Tribal & Indigenous Teammates

(alpha order by first name)

Alaska Region

Aviva Braun (WCM, Anchorage)

Michael Mercer (ESSD Chief)

Central Region

John Paul (JP) Martin (WCM-Bismark)

Kelly Allen (MSD Chief)

Kelly Serr (WCM, Aberdeen)

Eastern Region

Trisha Palmer (WCM, Greenville-Spartanburg)

Pacific Region

Ian Morrison (Regional WCM)

Elinor Lutu-McMoore (MIC/WCM, WSO Pago Pago)

Ray Tanabe (Regional Director, Pacific Region)

Southern Region

Amanda Roberts (SR Hydrologist, Lower Mississippi RFC and SR Tribal Lead)

Chris McKinney (Regional WCM)

Rick Smith (WCM, Norman)

Scott Overpeck (WCM, ABQ)

Western Region

Andy Brown (WCM, Spokane)

Bianca Feldkircher (IDSS Program Specialist)

Tony Merriman (WCM, Flagstaff)

Headquarters

Becky Lizama - NOAA Senior Tribal Liaison

Wendy Marie Thomas - NWS lead

Chris Maier - NWS co-lead

John Sokich – NWS Congressional guidance

Pat Brown – leads Diversity Council on Tribal affairs with Regional POCs

Sabrina Johnson – educational outreach & connection to Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)

