



Tribal PFAS Working Group: A Look Back at 2024

Throughout 2024, the [Tribal PFAS Working Group](#) continued to provide outreach and learn more about PFAS contamination and potential treatment or remediation. The following highlights the activities conducted in 2024.

Outreach and Education

The working group held a one-day workshop titled “PFAS 101” at the ITEP Tribal Lands and Environment Forum on August 12, 2024, in Eugene, Oregon. The workshop included presentations on the EPA PFAS Roadmap, tribal-specific concerns, PFAS and air, and mapping of PFAS on tribal lands. The workshop recording is available at: <https://mediaspace.nau.edu/channel/2024+Tribal+Lands+and+Environment+Forum/349437462>

On December 12, 2024, the Tribal PFAS Working Group hosted an open house webinar featuring a presentation on “PFAS in the Southern Plains” by Isabella Gandara, a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Isabella used available information and research to understand the risks, exposure and effects of PFAS to tribes in Oklahoma. The webinar recording is available at: https://mediaspace.nau.edu/media/Tribal%20PFAS%20Working%20Group%20Open%20House%20Webinar%3A%20PFAS%20in%20the%20Southern%20Plains/1_9ap6zl90



Open House Webinar
Presenter: Isabella
Gandara, MIT student

Monthly Meeting Guest Speakers/Presenters

The working group meets monthly and invites speakers to provide presentations or webinars on current information on PFAS detection and treatment. The following presentations were held and many of them were recorded and available for viewing.

- *Expanding the Scientific Foundation for Understanding and Addressing Risks from PFAS*, Susan Burden, EPA
- *PFAS Pollution Treatment by Nano-alloys Doped Carbon Materials*, Dr. Yiming Su, Professor Joan McLean, and Professor Ryan Dupont – Utah State University
- *Updates from the PFAS Project Lab*, Dr. Kim Garrett, Sam Ciaranca, Vic Say, PFAS Project Lab
- *PFAS in the Southern Plains*, Isabella Gandara, student at Massachusetts of Institute of Technology
- *Plasma’s Place in the Water World*, Selman Mujovic, Purafide
- *Sustain Tech and Aclarity Technology Solutions for PFAS*, Kristen Ward, Rodger Strickland, Sustain Tech Partners; and John Tracy, Aclarity



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NEWSLETTER

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Tribal PFAS WG Activities in 2024 *(continued)*

Policy Response

Tribal PFAS Working Group in collaboration with the National Tribal Water Council developed a comment letter to a proposed rulemaking.

- NTWC & Tribal PFAS WG's Comment Letter on the EPA's Proposed Rulemaking for Incorporating PFAS Reporting Requirements into NPDES Application Forms; submitted on April 1, 2024

For additional information, please visit the Tribal PFAS Working Group's web page at <https://www7.nau.edu/itep/main/ntwc/Issues/PFAS>, or contact co-leads Page Hingst, Tribal Science Council, at page.hingst@santeoep.com or Dianne Barton, National Tribal Toxics Council, at bard@crtifc.org.



Introducing the New Region 7 Representative, Kayla Vondracek

Hello! My name is Kayla Vondracek, and I'm thrilled to take on the role of Region 7 Representative for the National Tribal Water Council (NTWC). I currently serve as the Water Quality Coordinator for The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, where I manage the Water Quality Program with a focus on assessing water resources for the Tribe's buffalo herd and tribal members. A recent highlight of our work was receiving Clean Water Act (CWA) 106 Treatment in a Similar Manner as a State (TAS)—an exciting milestone for the program!

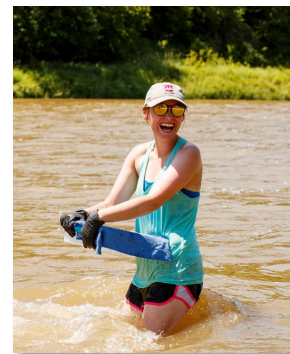
I'm a proud Midwesterner who grew up in South Dakota but have called Nebraska home for the past seven years. My husband Luke and I live in a small town in northeast Nebraska and enjoy the scenic views and rural living of the area.

My passion for water resources began during my undergraduate studies, where I conducted surface water quality research on the Niobrara National Scenic River. My work focused on understanding how human recreation affects water quality in this crucial river. I've also worked in groundwater monitoring, conducting inspections and sampling of domestic, irrigation, and livestock wells to track nitrate levels and groundwater conditions across Nebraska. I also have a background in plants and forestry (my other passion) and enjoy being a life-long learner.

A few things to know about me.

I am a chronic pain warrior. Living with chronic pain due to autoimmune issues has been a lifelong challenge, but despite this obstacle, I've worked hard to pursue higher education and a career in natural resources. In my free time, I love antiques and thrifting and have amassed a rather large collection of antique nature books. I find it fascinating to look at our natural resources through historical lens and see past illustrations and descriptions of the plants and animals we know today. I am also passionate about the intersection of science and art and often find inspiration for my own artwork while working outdoors. I also like to stay active to keep healthy and enjoy hiking, kayaking, or practicing plant identification during my walks.

I'm excited to bring my experience and enthusiasm to NTWC and can't wait to connect with all of you!



UPDATES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEW! Understanding the EPA's New Regulatory Revisions to Water Quality Standards for Protecting Tribal Reserved Rights Rule -- Two-Part Webinar Series

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), in partnership with the National Tribal Water Council (NTWC), National Association of Wetland Managers (NAWM), and the American Bar Association Section of Environment, Energy, and Resources (ABA SEER), invites Tribal Nations, state environmental agencies, and the public to a two-part webinar series hosted by NCAI's Institute for Environmental Sovereignty (IES). The series will focus on the U.S. EPA's newly finalized Tribal Reserved Rights Rule, which revises 40 CFR Part 131 to require the EPA and states to consider Tribal reserved rights—such as fishing, hunting, and gathering—when establishing or revising water quality standards.

- **Part 1 - Thursday, January 23, 2025, at 3:00 PM EST**
Focuses on the rule's key components and Tribal-State collaboration, featuring insights from an EPA representative and the Fond du Lac Band's Water Projects Coordinator.
- **Part 2 - Thursday, January 30, 2025, at 3:00 PM EST**
Explores state implementation challenges and opportunities, with speakers—including state agency representatives and the Native American Rights Fund (NARF)—discussing legal considerations and fostering collaboration.

To register, please visit: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_VSvZJ_aStGOprQVMXZHlw#/registration

NEW! 2025 Tribal Clean Water Act Workshop: May 19-23, 2025

Workshop co-sponsors EPA Region 9 and the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe are inviting Tribal water quality/resource staff to attend the EPA Region 9 2025 Tribal Clean Water Act workshop in Fallon, Nevada, also known as “the Oasis of Nevada.” Attendees will gather in-person to share knowledge, resources, and experiences to better implement Tribal CWA programs and to protect Tribal water resources for future generations.

This workshop will include presentations on various topics, which may include the following:

- Grant Programs
 - CWA Section 106 – Water Pollution Control
 - CWA Section 319 – Nonpoint Source Pollution
 - CWA Section 104(b) – Wetland Program Development Grants
- Regulatory Programs and TAS (Treatment in a Similar Manner as a State)
 - CWA Section 303(c) Water Quality Standards
 - CWA Section 401 Certification
 - CWA Section 401(a)(2) Neighboring Jurisdiction
- Field Trips and Training at Local Water Quality Monitoring Sites and Projects

For more information: <https://www.epa.gov/tribal-pacific-sw/r9-2025-tribal-cwa-workshop>

Call for Abstracts: 2025 Native American Fish and Wildlife Society Annual National Conference

Deadline: March 7, 2025

The 2025 Native American Fish and Wildlife Society Annual National Conference, to be hosted by the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes of the Wind River Reservation, will be held from May 12-15, 2025, in Riverton, Wyoming. The NAFWS is accepting abstracts for 30-minute presentations up to March 7, 2025. Additionally, the NAFWS is providing travel funding assistance and the deadline to apply is March 7, 2025. For more information, please visit: <https://www.nafws.org/product/2025-annual-national-conference/>

Updates & Announcements *(continued)*

EPA Releases a Tribal Water & Natural Resources Conservation Guide

EPA released a [Tribal Water & Natural Resources Conservation Guide](#) for tribal environmental program managers and staff. This guide aims to provide resources to tribal environmental programs about federal assistance opportunities that can support tribally led efforts to protect and restore waters, protect air quality, protect wildlife and habitat, prepare for climate change and natural hazards, steward lands, and support and engage tribal communities. This comprehensive resource guide includes:

- An introduction to federal assistance for new tribal staff,
- Quick reference tables highlighting tribal-specific funding and technical assistance programs,
- 10+ tribal case studies highlighting how tribal programs have completed conservation projects with federal assistance, and
- Examples of federal planning frameworks and tools.

The EPA also published a [federal funding program inventory](#) as a supplement to the guide, available as a downloadable Excel Workbook that contains basic information about 150+ federal funding programs that can support tribal conservation work.

TRIBAL CONSULTATION OPPORTUNITIES

EPA Issues Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to Protect Salmon from Chemical Used in Rubber Products

Deadline: January 21, 2025

The EPA is issuing an advance notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPRM) under Section 6 of the Toxic Substances Control Act to gather information on the potential risks associated with N-(1,3-Dimethylbutyl)-N'-phenyl-p-phenylenediamine (6PPD) and its transformation product, [6PPD-quinone](#), a substance often found in tire-rubber particles. In August 2023, the Yurok Tribe, the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe and the Puyallup Tribe of Indians submitted a [petition under TSCA Section 21 asking EPA to establish regulations](#) under TSCA Section 6 prohibiting the manufacturing, processing, use and distribution of 6PPD in tires. The [EPA granted this petition in November 2023](#) and committed to publishing an ANPRM by Fall 2024 in order to gather more information that could be used to inform a subsequent regulatory action. The EPA will accept written comments on the ANPRM for 60 days following publication via the [docket at Regulations.gov](#).

EPA's Proposed National Primary Drinking Water Regulation for Perchlorate

Deadline: February 28, 2025

The EPA is initiating consultation and coordination on the forthcoming proposed rulemaking, the National Primary Drinking Water Regulation for Perchlorate, as required by recent court orders. The EPA is developing the proposed regulation to improve public health protection by reducing perchlorate exposure from drinking water. The proposed rule would impact owners and operators of public water systems subject to the rule requirements as defined by the Safe Drinking Water Act, along with primacy agencies that enforce drinking water regulations in their jurisdiction. There are approximately 1,000 Tribal public water systems and the Navajo Nation has primacy for over 170 public water systems. The consultation materials are available on EPA's Tribal Consultation Opportunities Tracking System (TCOTS) website at: <https://tcots.epa.gov>.

Two identical informational webinars will be conducted:

- **January 14, 2025, 1:30pm – 3:00pm ET**
To register for this webinar date, please visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1116780272859?aff=oddtcreator>

Tribal Consultation Opportunities (*continued*)

- **January 15, 2025, 1:30pm – 3:00pm ET**

To register for this webinar date, please visit:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/1116780272859?aff=oddtcreator>

Contact Erin Partlan at (202) 564-0155 or email at partlan.erin@epa.gov for questions. Comment letters should be submitted via email to NPDWRperchlorate@epa.gov.

EPA's Draft National Recommended Water Quality Criteria for the Protection of Human Health for PFOA, PFOS, and PFBS

Deadline: February 24, 2025

The EPA has released draft national recommended health-based levels (human health criteria) for three per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in water bodies. The three PFAS are perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), and perfluorobutane sulfonic acid (PFBS). Human health criteria are not legally enforceable, rather they are information for local entities to consider when making local decisions about water quality.

The EPA will accept written comments on the draft human health criteria until February 24, 2025. Section 304(a) of the Clean Water Act (CWA) directs the EPA to develop and publish water quality criteria that accurately reflect the latest scientific knowledge about the effects of particular pollutants on human health and welfare. The EPA's CWA Section 304(a) human health criteria are recommendations to states and Tribes authorized to establish their own water quality standards under the CWA. Once final, these recommended criteria can be used by states and authorized Tribes to develop their own water quality criteria that help protect people from exposure through consuming water, fish and shellfish from inland and nearshore water bodies that may be contaminated by any of these PFAS. For more information: <https://www.epa.gov/wqc/human-health-water-quality-criteria-pfas>

EPA's Proposed Update to the Office of Civil Enforcement's 2007 *Questions and Answers on the Tribal Enforcement Process*

Deadline: March 3, 2025

The EPA is initiating consultation with federally recognized Tribes on a proposed update to the Office of Civil Enforcement's 2007 *Questions and Answers on the Tribal Enforcement Process* ("Questions and Answers"). The Questions and Answers document implements the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance's *Guidance on the Enforcement Principles Outlined in the 1984 Indian Policy* to ensure compliance at federally-regulated facilities in Indian country.

Informational webinars will provide background information on the updated Questions and Answers document and will respond to questions. The informational webinars will be held on the following dates and times:

- Thursday, January 23, 2025; 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Eastern; Click [HERE](#) to join
- Wednesday, January 29, 2025; 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Eastern; Click [HERE](#) to join
- Monday, February 3, 2025; 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Eastern; Click [HERE](#) to join
- Tuesday, February 11, 2025; 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Eastern; Click [HERE](#) to join

Meeting links and more information about the webinars are available on EPA's Tribal Consultation Opportunities Tracking System. At any point in the Tribal consultation process, Tribes may submit written comments and questions to Matt Castelli via email at castelli.matthew@epa.gov.

Tribal Consultation Opportunities (*continued*)

EPA Released Three Draft Chapters of the Water Quality Standard Handbook on Designated Uses, Antidegradation, and WQS Variances

Deadline: March 12, 2025

On December 12, 2024, the EPA released three draft chapters of the WQS Handbook on Designated Uses, Antidegradation, and WQS Variances for a 90-day public comment period. The WQS Handbook provides a plain language discussion of the relevant regulatory and statutory requirements and the EPA's recommendations for how states, authorized Tribes and U.S. territories can develop and implement WQS consistent with both. The EPA has updated Chapter 2 on Designated Uses, Chapter 4 on Antidegradation, and developed a new chapter on WQS Variances to include the EPA's most recent WQS programmatic policy and guidance to implement the regulation at 40 CFR Part 131.

The EPA is holding three informational webinars during the public comment period to provide an overview of the chapters and an opportunity for participants to ask clarifying questions after having read the chapters. Each webinar will cover the same material.

- **General Public Webinar:** February 4, 2025, 12pm ET to 2pm ET
- **States and U.S. Territories Only Webinar:** February 4, 2025, 2:30pm ET to 4:30pm ET
- **Tribes Only Webinar:** February 6, 2025, 12pm ET to 2pm ET

[Registration is now open](#). Registration will close at 5pm ET on Friday, January 31st. The deadline to request translation or interpretation services or other accommodations is January 21st.

The webinars will **not** be an opportunity to provide comments. All comments must be submitted through the Docket. Visit the EPA's [WQS Handbook webpage](#) to review the three draft chapters and for information on how to provide comments.

EVENTS & WEBINARS

EPA Tools and Research Webinar Series

- January 15, 2025: Fifth National Climate Assessment—Resources and Interactive Atlas

To register: <https://www.epa.gov/research-states/epa-tools-and-resources-webinar-series>

EPA Small Drinking Water Systems Webinar Series

- January 28, 2025: Lead Chemistry, Communication, and Local Engagement

To register: <https://www.epa.gov/water-research/small-drinking-water-systems-webinar-series>

Contaminated Site Clean-Up Information Training & Events

- January 16, 2025: Contaminants of Concern Identification Network
- January 28, 2025: ITRC PFAS Introductory Training
- February 6, 2025: 1,4-Dioxane: Science, Characterization & Analysis, and Remediation

To register: <https://clu-in.org/training/>

NTWC WHITE PAPER

NEW! National Tribal Water Council's White Paper on the John M. Asplund Water Pollution Control Facility CWA Section 301(h) Waiver of Secondary Treatment for NPDES Permit Renewal

The National Tribal Water Council produced a white paper regarding the concerns about the Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 301(h) Waiver of the Asplund Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) in Anchorage, Alaska. The NTWC undertook extensive research into EPA's CWA Section 301(h) Waiver to understand the issues and implications of the waiver provided to the Asplund WPCF. The NTWC is convinced that this waiver has far-reaching negative consequences by not renewing the permit according to a 5-year renewal cycle. Further, the NTWC has significant concerns about the inadequate environmental and human health protections in the Cook Inlet area. The white paper includes a list of recommendations for the US EPA and other appropriate agencies to address the issues associated with the Asplund WPCF.

To access the full white paper: <https://www7.nau.edu/itep/main/ntwc/docs/Home/White-Paper-AK-NPDES-Permit-Renewal-12-2024.pdf>

NTWC MEMBERS

For more information on our members, visit [Meet the Council](#).

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