

National Tribal Water Council and EPA Monthly Conference Call
Wednesday, February 12, 2025
2:00 – 3:30 PM (ET)

SUMMARY NOTES

I. Introductions (Elaine Wilson, ITEP)

- **NTWC:** Chauncey Means (R8, Vice Chair); Dan Kusnierz (R1); Brian Patterson (R2); Andria Greene (R3); Raine Tetreault (R4); Nancy Schuldt (R5); Deborah Dotson (R6); Kayla Vondracek (R7); Yolanda Barney (R9, Navajo Nation); Mary Verner (R10); Scott Hauser (R10, At-Large)
- **EPA:** Holly Galavotti, James Ray, Danielle Anderson, Catherine Brady, Andrew Byrne, Erica Fleisig, Rory Hytrek, Gabriella Neusner, Julian Oliver, Grace Persico, Sam Russell, Manjali Vlcán, Amy Weber, Nizanna Bathersfield, Daniel Consigli, Jacob Adler, Matthew Richardson
- **ITEP:** Elaine Wilson, Elaina Doral

II. NTWC Updates (Chauncey Means, NTWC)

Vice Chair Means provided an overview of the topics discussed during the previous NTWC-only call.

- **NTWC Priorities 2025 & 2026**

The NTWC members are currently reviewing and updating its Priorities for 2025 and 2026.

- **2025 NTWC & EPA Spring Meeting**

The NTWC members discussed the initial details about the upcoming spring meeting, such as the hotel accommodations. The first agenda planning call is scheduled on February 18.

- **NCAI's Webinar Series on the Tribal Reserved Rights Rule**

Nancy Schuldt provided a summary of the two-part webinar series (January 23rd and 30th) on the Tribal Reserved Rights Rule hosted by the National Congress of American Indians. In the first webinar, NTWC Chairman Ken Norton served as a moderator and Nancy Schuldt, NTWC Region 5 representative, served as a presenter and panelist. The webinars focused on the rule's key components, tribal-state collaboration, and implementation challenges and opportunities. The webinar series were recorded and are available on NCAI's [website](#).

- **NTWC Website**

Elaine Wilson provided a preview of the updated NTWC website that will be launched soon.

III. EPA Office of Water Discussion

- **NTWC Priorities**

Holly Galavotti highlighted two documents that may assist the NTWC with the development of its priorities. On January 13, 2025, the National Tribal Caucus sent a letter to the current administration outlining its transition priorities. On February 4, 2025, Lee Zeldin, EPA Administrator, announced [Powering the Great American Comeback](#) initiative that consists of five pillars, which include a focus on water infrastructure.

- **2025 NTWC & EPA Spring Meeting Agenda Topics**

NTWC members were asked to identify possible agenda topics for the spring meeting in May. Vice Chair Means requested a demo of the EPA's Enforcement and Compliance History Online

(ECHO) application and tips on how to use it. Further discussion will occur on the first agenda planning call on February 18, 2025. Andria Greene commented on understanding regional differences and teaching different approaches, which would be helpful.

- **Questions/Comments**

Scott Hauser asked about the status of the environmental justice grants and how Tribes may be impacted by the administration's actions on diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI). Holly Galavotti noted she would inquire about the environmental justice grants and will follow up with Scott.

Holly Galavotti shared that Victoria Tran has joined the EPA's Office of International and Tribal Affairs as the Deputy Assistant Administrator. Ms. Tran will be attending the EPA Region 8 and 9 Regional Tribal Operations Committee (RTOC) winter meeting on February 18-20, 2025, in Las Vegas, Nevada. Holly shared that no political appointees have joined the Office of Water yet.

Andy Byrne noted that the Department of the Interior released an internal guidance about DEI. It excludes the work with Tribes and includes the importance of the department's tribal trust responsibilities. Andy mentioned the federal government has received a joint letter from Tribes regarding the United States' trust and treaty obligations. It is noted that Tribes have a unique distinct political status and that is being conveyed to the leadership.

Nancy Schuldt shared that the Region 5 RTOC meeting was canceled. Nancy noted the inconsistency with messaging across the regions. Andy Byrne responded that he would touch base with EPA Region 5 and will follow up with Nancy.

IV. Workgroup updates (if any)

- **Hypoxia Task Force** (Celeste Hockings, R5) *No updates; not in attendance*
- **National Water Quality Monitoring Council** (Nancy Schult, R5; and Rainee Tetreault, R4)
The National Water Quality Monitoring Council's National Monitoring Conference will be held on March 10-14, 2025, in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Rainee Tetreault and Kayla Vondracek plan to attend. Debbie Dotson will attend virtually.
- **Water Quality Standards Management Association** (Yolanda Barney, R9 – Navajo Nation)
The next meeting will be held on March 11th.
- **Tribal PFAS Working Group** (Elaine Wilson, ITEP; Shaun Livermore, R5 - At-Large; Dan Kusnierz, R1)
The working group's meeting on February 13th will feature a presentation on PFAS and Biosolids by Laura Orlando, Just Zero, Inc. The working group is reviewing the information for the EPA's Draft Biosolids Risk Assessment for PFOA & PFOS.

V. Consultation Opportunities/Announcements

VI. Closing (Chauncey Means, NTWC)

VII. The NTWC's next monthly call is scheduled for March 12, 2024

Announcements:

National Tribal Caucus

The [National Tribal Caucus \(NTC\)](#), a Tribal advisory group and EPA partner, has elected a new NTC Executive Committee for 2025. Tabitha Langston, Deputy Environmental Director for the Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma, has been elected as NTC Chair; Scott Clow, Environmental Programs Director for the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, has been elected NTC Vice Chair; and Shavonne Smith, Environmental Director for the Shinnecock Indian Nation, has been elected as NTC Secretary. The NTC is a national body of high-level Tribal representatives who work with the EPA to exchange views, information, and advice on EPA's Tribal programs. Their primary focus is to identify and address Tribal environmental issues that are national in scope, cross-agency or cross-media in nature, or that may be emerging or urgent.

EPA Tools & Resources Training Webinar

Community Water System Service Area Boundaries

February 13, 2025, 3-4 pm ET

Over 80% of the population in the US obtains their water from one of roughly 48,000 community water systems (CWS). Under the Safe Drinking Water Act, CWS must test and treat their water to specific standards and report results to EPA each quarter. EPA recently developed and released a national geospatial dataset of community water system service areas. This dataset allows for the accurate linkage between drinking water providers and their associated consumers, opening a wide range of potential applications by making it possible to link data reported to the Safe Drinking Water Information System to geographic space. This webinar will give a brief overview about the development of the dataset, including data collection, machine learning methods, and evaluation. We will then discuss the [web mapping application](#) and demonstrate how to access the data and how it can be integrated into various areas of research, such as infrastructure mapping and public health. Finally, we will discuss how EPA is working with primacy agencies to strengthen this work going forward and plans to update and expand upon this work in the future. [Register for the Community Water System Service Area Boundaries training webinar.](#)

Multi-Agency Tribal Public Interest BABA (Build America, Buy America) Waiver

The Multi-Agency Tribal Public Interest BABA Waiver has been finalized. This waiver exempts BABA requirements for Tribes whose total prime Federal award or subaward does not exceed \$2.5 million and the Federal award or subaward amount does not exceed \$2.5 million for the life of the award. The waiver will remain in effect for 5 years from the effective date of the waiver. The waiver is applicable to Federal financial assistance obligated on or after the effective date of the final waiver, and before its expiration. For Federal financial assistance issued prior to the effective date of the final waiver, the waiver applies to funds not yet expended. **Manufactured Products:** In addition, for Federal financial assistance to Tribes obligated between the effective date and September 30, 2026, recipients will be permitted to purchase non-compliant manufactured products, regardless of the Federal financial assistance amount. For Federal financial assistance issued prior to the effect date of the waiver, the waiver would apply to funds not yet expended. Agency: Department of Interior; Department of Agriculture; Department of Education; Department of Energy; Department of Housing and Urban Development; Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and Department of Commerce

Multi-Agency Tribal Public Interest Waiver: <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2025-01/multi-agency-tribal-public-interest-waiver-final.pdf>

EPA BABA Approved Waivers: <https://www.epa.gov/cwsrf/build-america-buy-america-baba-approved-waivers>

Consultation and Comment Opportunities:

Tribal Consultation Opportunity: Proposed National Primary Drinking Water Regulation for Perchlorate Comments due 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>. 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 Biosolids Risk Assessment for PFOA & PFOS Comments due March 17, 2025

On January 14, 2025, the EPA [released a draft risk assessment](#), or scientific evaluation, of the potential human health risks associated with the presence of toxic PFAS in biosolids, also known as sewage sludge. The findings of the draft risk assessment show that there may be human health risks associated with exposure to the "forever chemicals" PFOA or PFOS with all three methods of using or disposing of sewage sludge – land application of biosolids, surface disposal in landfills, or incineration. Once finalized, the assessment will help the EPA and its partners understand the public health impact of forever chemicals in biosolids and inform any potential future actions to help reduce the risk of exposure. Public comments on the EPA's draft risk assessment document, *Draft Sewage Sludge Risk Assessment for Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane Sulfonic Acid (PFOS)*, must be received on or before March 17, 2025. Learn more about the EPA's [Draft Sewage Sludge Risk Assessment for PFOA and PFOS](#) and other recent actions to address [PFAS in Biosolids](#).

The FY25 Exchange Network Solicitation Notice published on Grants.gov Applications due at 11:59 PM ET on March 24th, 2025

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Exchange Network (EN) Grant Program Solicitation Notice (SN) has been published to Grants.gov and is available here: [EPA-OMS-25-01, Fiscal Year 2025 National Environmental Information Exchange Network Grant Program Solicitation Notice](#). Applications are due in grants.gov by 11:59 PM Eastern Time, Monday, March 24th, 2025. Additional guidance tools, including optional fillable templates for the cover letter, project narrative (work plan), and budget narrative attachment form, plus a budget calculation tool, are also available through the grants.gov listing and on the [EN website](#).

Applicants are encouraged to carefully review the new FY25 SN, as updates have been made since the FY24 version. Applicants can view a general summary of these changes on the EN website under the '[Solicitation Notice](#)' section. EPA plans to hold applicant webinars in the upcoming weeks; more information will be provided shortly and posted to the EN website in the '[Webinar Series](#)' section.

The purpose of the Exchange Network (EN) grant program is to foster better environmental management and decision-making through increased access to timely, high quality, environmental information. An applicant's proposed project goals and outputs should align with one or more EN Funding Areas as described in Section 3A of the SN and EPA's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan:

<https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/strategicplan>. Applicants are encouraged to read the Solicitation Notice carefully for further information on applicant requirements.

EPA expects to award 30-35 grants of up to \$600,000 each, totaling approximately \$9,500,000 in FY25. The exact number of grants awarded will depend on the number of applications submitted to EPA by the application deadline, the amounts of proposed project budgets, and the quality of proposals. Please be aware: award funding thresholds have increased from prior years by \$100,000. Individual applicants can now request up to \$400,000 and eligible EN partnerships can request up to \$600,000. Please note that there is no mandatory cost match under the EN Grant Program, and the program has a tribal commitment of at least 20% of total awarded funds.

EPA only accepts project proposals for EN grants submitted electronically through Grants.gov, unless applicants have a waiver. Please allow for enough time to successfully submit your application and allow for unexpected errors requiring you to resubmit. EPA anticipates that it will announce selection decisions around July 2025, and tentatively plans to issue awards by October 2025.

For more information, please contact:
Erin McGown
EN Grants Program Manager
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Email: ENGrantProgram@epa.gov