

National Tribal Water Council and EPA Monthly Conference Call
Wednesday, March 12, 2025
2:00 – 3:30 P.M. ET

SUMMARY NOTES

I. Introductions (Elaine Wilson, ITEP)

- **NTWC:** Ken Norton (R9, Chair); Chauncey Means (R8, Vice Chair); Brian Patterson (R2); Andria Greene (R3); Rainee Tetreault (R4); Nancy Schuldt (R5); Deborah Dotson (R6); Yolanda Barney (R9, Navajo Nation); Mary Verner (R10); Scott Hauser (R10, At-Large); Ann Wyatt (R10, Alaska); Eric Morrison (R10, Alaska)
- **EPA:** Holly Galavotti, Jacob Adler, Danielle Anderson, Nizanna Bathersfield, Margot Buckelew, Melissa Dreyfus, Antonio Garcia, Rory Hytrek, Dylan Laird, Kate Meyers, Laura Montoya, Gabriella Neusner, Grace Persico, James Ray, Matthew Richardson, Sam Russell, Amy Weber
- **ITEP:** Elaine Wilson, Elaina Doral

II. NTWC Updates (Ken Norton, NTWC)

Chairman Norton provided an overview of the topics discussed during the previous NTWC-only call.

- **Region 8 and 9 Regional Tribal Operations Committee Winter 2025 Meeting**
Chairman Ken Norton attended the Region 8 and 9 Regional Tribal Operations Committee meeting on February 18-20, 2025, and met the new Office of International and Tribal Affairs Assistant Administrator Victoria Tran. Chairman Norton provided an overview of the NTWC's priorities and current issues under discussion.
- **National Tribal Caucus & Tribal Partnership Groups Meeting**
Chairman Norton will be attending the National Tribal Caucus and Tribal Partnership Groups quarterly meeting on March 13, 2025.

III. EPA Office of Water

- **2025 NTWC & EPA Spring Meeting Agenda Topics**
Holly Galavotti shared the current draft of the spring meeting agenda for May 21-22, 2025.

Summary and NTWC Feedback

The NTWC plans to provide outreach to support the wetlands program and development. The NTWC may collaborate with the National Association of Wetlands Managers that provide education through various forums.

The agenda includes a section on the EPA's Water Quality eXchange (WQX). Feedback was provided to include an overview of how the data is used and what is publicly available. NTWC members would like information about Assessment, Total Maximum Daily Load Tracking and Implementation System (ATTAINS).

The agenda has a placeholder for PFAS; however, it may be replaced with other updates such as the Waters of the U.S. and/or the National Environmental Policy Act.

The agenda includes a placeholder for Alaska water quality issues. NTWC members mentioned potential activity with the Pebble Mine and proposed mining in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

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 14th National Monitoring Conference was held on March 10-14, 2025, in Green Bay, Wisconsin.
- **Water Quality Standards Management Association** (Yolanda Barney, R9 Navajo Nation)
The meeting was held on March 12, 2025. Yolanda Barney may provide an update during next month's NTWC/EPA meeting regarding this WQSMA meeting.
- **Tribal PFAS Working Group** (Elaine Wilson, ITEP; Shaun Livermore, R4, At-Large; and Dan Kusnierz, R1)
The next meeting is scheduled for March 20, 2025. The NTWC and Tribal PFAS Working Group submitted a comment letter on February 20, 2025, in response to the EPA's Draft National Recommended Water Quality Criteria for the Protection of Human Health for PFOA, PFOS, and PFBS. The working group is currently working on drafting a comment letter for the EPA's Draft Sewage Sludge Risk Assessment for PFOA and PFOS, which is due April 16, 2025.

V. Consultation Opportunities/Announcements

VI. Closing (Ken Norton, NTWC)

VII. The NTWC's next monthly call is scheduled for April 9, 2025

Announcements:

Administrator Zeldin's Five Pillars

<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-administrator-lee-zeldin-announces-epas-powering-great-american-comeback>

Administrator Zeldin Addresses the Region 8 & 9 RTOC

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0W8Z7HMrLU>

Consultation and Comment Opportunities:

EPA's Three Draft Water Quality Standards (WQS) Handbook Chapters

Comment period ends April 11, 2025

On December 12, 2024, the EPA released three draft Water Quality Standards (WQS) Handbook chapters for a 90-day public comment period. *The EPA has extended this public comment period an additional 30 days. The comment period will now end on April 11, 2025.* All comments must be submitted through the

[Docket](#). The EPA's [WQS Handbook page](#) includes instructions for providing comments. If you've already submitted comments prior to the public comment period extension, you do not need to resubmit your comments as they are already incorporated into the public record.

EPA's Draft Risk Sewage Sludge Risk Assessment for PFOA & PFOS

Comments due April 16, 2025

On February 21, 2025, the EPA extended the public comment period for the [Draft Sewage Sludge Risk Assessment for Perfluorooctanoic Acid \(PFOA\) and Perfluorooctane Sulfonic Acid \(PFOS\)](#) for an additional 30 days. The agency will accept public comments on the draft risk assessment through April 16, 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. Learn more about the EPA's [Draft Sewage Sludge Risk Assessment for PFOA and PFOS](#) and other recent actions to address [PFAS in Biosolids](#).

EPA Draft National Recommended Ambient Water Quality Criteria for PFAS

Comments due April 25, 2025

On February 21, 2025, the EPA extended the public comment period for the [Draft National Recommended Ambient Water Quality Criteria for the Protection of Human Health for Perfluorooctanoic Acid, Perfluorooctane Sulfonic Acid, and Perfluorobutane Sulfonic Acid](#) for an additional 60 days. The agency will accept written comments from the public on the draft human health criteria through April 25, 2025.

Pre-Publication Notice: Administrator Zeldin Announces EPA Will Revise Waters of the United States Rule

On March 12, 2025, EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin announced that EPA will work with the United States Army Corps of Engineers to deliver on President Trump's promise to review the definition of "waters of the United States." The agencies will move quickly to ensure that a revised definition follows the law, reduces red-tape, cuts overall permitting costs, and lowers the cost of doing business in communities across the country while protecting the nation's navigable waters from pollution. The EPA and Department of the Army announced a joint memorandum issuing guidance to field staff on implementation of "continuous surface connection" consistent with the U.S. Supreme Court's May 25, 2023, decision in the case of *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*.

The agencies announced a *Federal Register* notice publicizing a series of six listening sessions and a 30-day recommendations docket to solicit feedback on key aspects of the definition of "waters of the United States." The six listening sessions will be held in-person with a virtual option for States, Tribes, industry and agricultural stakeholders, environmental and conservation stakeholders, and the general public. The agencies are committed to obtaining targeted input from a full spectrum of co-regulators and stakeholders on key topic areas related to the definition of "waters of the United States" in light of *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*, regarding "continuous surface connection," "relatively permanent," and jurisdictional versus non-jurisdictional ditches. The agencies also seek input on implementation challenges related to those key topic areas. This webpage will be updated with information about the upcoming listening sessions.

For more information: <https://www.epa.gov/wotus>

Grant Opportunity:

The FY25 Exchange Network Solicitation Notice published on Grants.gov

Applications due March 24, 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:

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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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