

NATIONAL TRIBAL WATER COUNCIL

2026-2028 TRIBAL WATER PRIORITIES

ABOUT US

The National Tribal Water Council (NTWC/Council) is a body comprised of members with technical, scientific and traditional cultural knowledge created to assist the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with research and information for decision-making on water quality related concerns that impact Indigenous Peoples throughout Indian Country.

- ≡ Ken Norton, Hoopa Valley Tribe (NTWC Chair)
- ≡ Chauncey Means, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes (NTWC Vice Chair)



INTRODUCTION

The National Tribal Water Council advocates for the interests of federally recognized Indian Tribes on matters related to water quality. Council members bring technical expertise, scientific training, and Indigenous knowledge to support the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in understanding and addressing water quality issues that affect Tribal communities. Although the NTWC is not a policy making body and its work does not replace government to government consultation, it plays a vital role in providing Tribes and federal partners with informed recommendations and perspective.

The NTWC is committed to advancing the health and sustainability of clean and safe water throughout Indian Country. Its work strengthens Tribal sovereignty and cultural, spiritual, and sustenance lifeways, and supports implementation of the **1984 EPA Policy for the Administration of Environmental Programs on Indian Reservations**. The Council's efforts also reinforce the federal government's trust responsibility to Tribes and the protection of rights grounded in the U.S. Constitution, treaties, unratified treaties, executive orders, inherent rights, and aboriginal title.

This document presents NTWC's core priorities for 2026–2028. These priorities guide the Council's engagement with EPA, federal partners, and Tribal governments and reflect NTWC's ongoing commitment to protect water resources and amplify Tribal voices.

NTWC CORE PRIORITIES

1. Trust and Accountability

- ≡ Advocate for consistent adherence to the 1984 [EPA Indian Policy](#) in decisions that affect Tribal Nations.
- ≡ Uphold the federal trust responsibility and ensure that treaty obligations are honored.
- ≡ Promote strong Nation to Nation relationships through meaningful, timely consultation and appropriate timelines for federal rulemaking.
- ≡ Support Tribes in protecting, managing, and stewarding their lands, waters, and natural resources.

2. Tribal Water Quality and Governance

- ≡ Provide technical guidance and share effective models to assist Tribes in developing and strengthening water quality programs and standards.
- ≡ Encourage and support Tribal efforts to establish their own ordinances, standards, and policies to safeguard water quality.
- ≡ Assist Tribes with limited capacity that face health, environmental, or resource-based threats.
- ≡ Address jurisdictional challenges involving state and federal waters that flow through or affect Tribal lands.
- ≡ Share resources that support effective consultation, coordination, and intergovernmental processes.

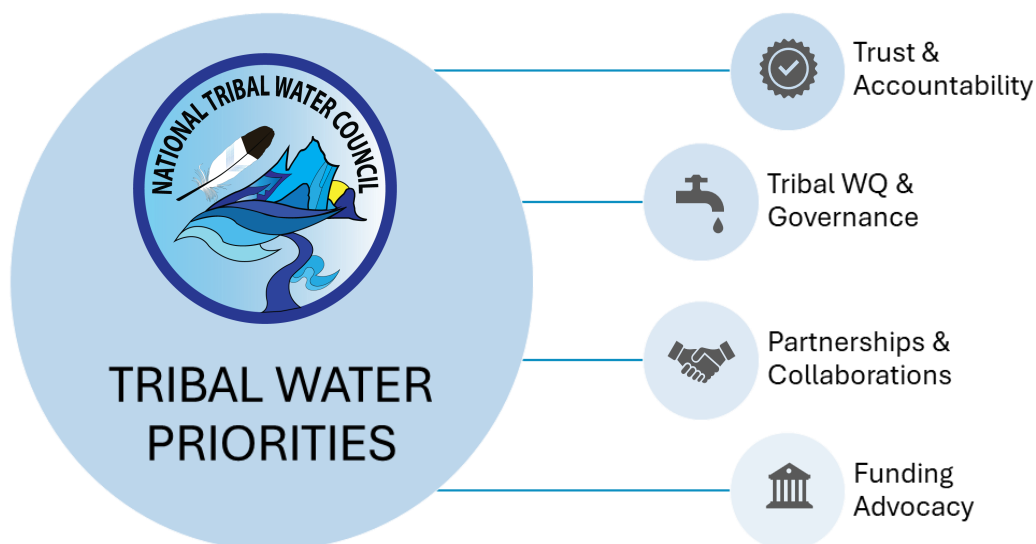


3. Funding Advocacy

- ≡ Advocate for restoring and increasing EPA funding to critical Tribal water programs, including:
 - ◆ **DWIG-TSA** and related drinking water infrastructure improvements.
 - ◆ **DWSRF** operator training, certification, and technical assistance.
 - ◆ **CWISA, CWA Sections 106 and 319**, and Wetland Program Development Grants.
 - ◆ **Tribal General Assistance Program (GAP)**.
 - ◆ Funding to address **emerging contaminants**, including PFAS and lead service line replacement.

4. Partnerships and Collaborations

- ≡ Strengthen partnerships and enhance collaborations across Indian Country and with federal agencies.
- ≡ Encourage Tribes to engage and educate Members of Congress and relevant federal partners.
- ≡ Expand coordination beyond EPA to include agencies such as USGS, BIA, IHS, BOR, NRCS, USFWS, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- ≡ Coordinate with agencies and organizations to make efficient and effective use of shared knowledge, technical expertise, and resources.
- ≡ Maintain outreach and collaboration with intertribal organizations and environmental partners.
- ≡ Align Tribal priorities to amplify collective impact and strengthen advocacy across Indian Country.



CONCLUSION

The priorities outlined in this document reflect the NTWC’s enduring commitment to elevating Tribal voices, protecting water resources, and reinforcing the federal government’s trust responsibility to Tribes. The NTWC looks forward to continued collaboration with Tribal Nations, EPA, Congress, and other federal partners to advance these shared goals.

ACRONYMS

NTWC— National Tribal Water Council

U.S. – United States

EPA – Environmental Protection Agency

DWIG-TSA – Drinking Water Infrastructure Grants Tribal Set-Aside

DWSRF – Drinking Water State Revolving Fund

CWISA – Clean Water Indian Set-Aside

CWA – Clean Water Act

GAP – General Assistance Program

PFAS – Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances

USGS – United States Geological Survey

BIA – Bureau of Indian Affairs

IHS – Indian Health Service

BOR – Bureau of Reclamation

NRCS – Natural Resource Conservation Service

USFWS – United States Fish and Wildlife Service

ACOE – Army Corp of Engineers

CONTACT INFORMATION

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