

National Tribal Water Council and EPA Monthly Conference Call
Wednesday, Oct. 8, 2025
2:00 – 3:30 P.M. (ET)

CALL SUMMARY

I. Introductions (Elaine Wilson, ITEP)

NTWC: Ken Norton (R9, Chair); Chauncey Means (R8, Vice Chair); Dan Kusnierz (R1); Brian Patterson (R2); Kayla Vondracek (R7); Yolanda Barney (R9, Navajo); Scott Hauser (R10, At-Large); Mary Verner (R10)

EPA: Holly Galavotti; Jacob Alder; Danielle Anderson; Nizanna Bathersfield; Daniel Consigli; Matthew Floyd; Kendra Forde; Sara Hisel-McCoy; Susan Holdsworth; Aleah Holt; Erin Partlan; James Ray; Matthew Richardson

ITEP: Elaine Wilson; Elaina Doral

II. NTWC Updates (Ken Norton, NTWC)

- **Guests: Marla Stelk and Donna Downing, National Association of Wetland Managers**
National Association of Wetland Managers (NAWM) staff Marla Stelk and Donna Downing joined the NTWC-only meeting. Marla, current Executive Director of NAWM, will be resigning her post at the end of the year largely due to funding cuts. Discussion topics included funding shortfalls, wetland programs, and opportunities for future collaboration between the NTWC and NAWM.
- **NTWC Fall Meeting**
NTWC discussed the draft agenda for the 2025 NTWC Fall In-person meeting in Sitka, Alaska, occurring next week. Holly Galavotti mentioned that EPA staff plan to participate virtually.

III. EPA Office of Water

- **EPA Staff Confirmations** (Holly Galavotti, OW)
Jessica L Kramer was confirmed as the EPA Office of Water Assistant Administrator. Usha Turner was confirmed as the EPA Office of International and Tribal Affairs Assistant Administrator.
- **Tribal Reserved Rights Rule** (Sara Hisel-McCoy)
An update was provided on the EPA's 2024 Revising the Federal Water Quality Standards Regulation to Protect Tribal Reserved Rights Rule.

The EPA reviewed the 2024 Tribal Reserved Rights Rule in the context of ongoing litigation brought by 12 states in the U.S. District Court for the District of North Dakota to ensure compliance with the law. As a result of this review, the EPA determined that the 2024 Tribal Reserved Rights Rule goes beyond the agency's authority under the Clean Water Act.

On September 16, 2025, the EPA notified the court that it will no longer defend the rule against plaintiffs' argument that the agency lacks statutory authority to require states to consider and protect off-reservation reserved rights asserted by federally recognized Tribes.

The agency remains committed to advancing its strong partnership with tribal governments and implementing the EPA's Indian Policy. EPA has taken multiple actions to support Tribes, such as

funding to reduce lead in tribal communities and grant funding for underground injection control programs.

For more information: <https://www.epa.gov/wqs-tech/revising-federal-water-quality-standards-regulation-protect-tribal-reserved-rights>

Questions/Comments

Chair Ken Norton commented on Tribal Nations and organizations that are intervening in the lawsuit regarding the Tribal Reserved Rights Rule. The interveners are still moving forward and hopefully will be successful. NTWC believes that the rule is defensible. The sustainability of regulatory programs under EPA is challenging in Indian Country. There is uncertainty about the CWA 106 funding. Under the President's proposal, there is uncertainty about STAG funding, which has the potential to eliminate programs if the funding is terminated.

Chair Ken Norton and other NTWC members will be attending the Native American Rights Fund's meeting on the CWA at the end of October. The discussion will include how to move forward and how Tribes can empower themselves under their own jurisdiction. NTWC will be urging Tribes to adopt their own water quality standards and seek the CWA 401 regulatory processes.

National Tribal Caucus (NTC) Chair Tabitha Langston reached out to Chair Norton about collaborating on a joint letter on the Tribal Reserved Rights Rule. NTWC plans to submit a joint letter with the NTC.

Scott Hauser commented that EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin reaffirmed the EPA's Indian Policy in July 2025. He reviewed the policy, which includes the agency's principle to encourage cooperation between Tribes and states. Scott stated that EPA conducted government to government consultation on the rule proposal but did not conduct tribal consultation on the EPA's decision not to defend the rule. Tribes should be engaged at a higher level.

Chair Ken Norton shared that Donna Downing, National Association of Wetland Managers, mentioned a newly introduced House Bill (H.R. 3898) on permitting. NTWC will be tracking this bill.

- **Fall Meeting** (Holly Galavotti)
Due to the U.S. government shut down, EPA staff will be participating in the NTWC Fall meeting virtually. Holly Galavotti urged NTWC members to continue to share their concerns and she will share the feedback to EPA senior officials.

IV. Workgroup updates (if any)

- [Hypoxia Task Force](#) – Deborah Dotson and Kayla Vondracek (interim reps)
- National Water Quality Monitoring Council – Nancy Schuldt and Rainee Tetreault
- Water Quality Standards Management Association – Yolanda Barney
- Tribal PFAS Working Group – Elaine Wilson, Shaun Livermore, Dan Kusnierz

V. Consultation Opportunities/Announcements

VI. **Closing** (Ken Norton, Chauncey Means, NTWC)

VII. **The NTWC's next monthly meeting, November 12, 2025.**

Announcements/Upcoming Meetings

Notice of Consultation Opportunity: Effluent Limitations Guidelines and Standards for the Steam Electric Power Generating Point Source Category (Steam Electric ELG)

Closes Oct. 30, 2025

The EPA initiated Tribal consultation on a proposed rule and companion direct final rule to update the Effluent Limitations Guidelines and Standards for the Steam Electric Power Generating Point Source Category (Steam Electric ELG). The Steam Electric ELG regulations cover wastewater discharges from power plants. The proposed rulemaking specifically focuses on wastewater generated by coal-fired power plants. These limitations on the discharge of pollutants will subsequently be incorporated into National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits, potentially extending pollutant discharges into waters of the United States for a period of several years.

On June 30, 2025, EPA announced its decision to undertake a rulemaking in which the Agency will extend compliance deadlines for many of the zero-discharge requirements in the 2024 Rule. This initial rulemaking, if finalized, would also create a flexibility for facilities to transfer between compliance alternatives and a flexibility for permitting authorities to grant site-specific deadline extensions when unexpected circumstances (e.g., rapid demand growth) arise. Finally, it would extend the deadline for facilities to decide whether to submit a Notice of Planned Participation.

The timeline for the consultation period on this action is expected to extend from October 1 to October 30. This consultation period will occur during the public comment period. Tribes may access the consultation information via the EPA's Tribal Consultation Opportunities Tracking System: <https://tcots.epa.gov>. The Steam Electric ELG proposed rule and companion direct final rule can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/eg/steam-electric-power-generating-effluent-guidelines-deadline-extensions-rule>. Additional information on the Steam Electric ELG can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/eg/steam-electric-power-generating-effluent-guidelines>.

Tribes may submit written comments during the Tribal consultation period via email to benware.richard@epa.gov by **Oct. 30, 2025**. If you would like to request government-to-government consultation with the EPA on this action or if you have any questions, please have your staff contact Richard Benware at benware.richard@epa.gov or 202-566-1369 by **October 20, 2025**.

Free Tribal Training Opportunity: Data Management Plan 101 Training

Thursday, October 16th from 10:00-11:30am PST via Zoom.

Registration Link: <https://nau.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMpf-ysrDgiHdcuGCDGWHoNlvboco-1kjl5#/registration>

On October 16th, the Tribal Exchange Network Group (TXG) will be hosting their monthly Tribal Data Drop-In session via Zoom! This month's session will feature a special EPA-led training breakout room. Whether you are working with other team members or are a team of one, this training aims to give you the tools you need to organize and manage your data. It includes definitions and examples for common terms,

strategies to identify and include all your stakeholders, and example questions to ask and answer. Participants are encouraged to ask questions and share their experiences (good and bad) to build a community of knowledge around this important activity. In addition to the Data Management training, we will bring together experts on all things data to share information, answer questions, and build connections. Whether you are looking to learn more about a specific topic, share your knowledge, or just spend some time getting to know other experts in your field, we would love to have you drop in!

Revised FY25 Exchange Network Solicitation Notice published to Grants.gov

Applications are due at 11:59 PM ET on October 22, 2025

The Exchange Network Grant Program initially published its FY25 Solicitation Notice (SN) in January of 2025; however, this competition was extended and then paused in April 2025, to allow for mandatory Solicitation Notice updates in alignment with new Agency priorities and strategic alignment.

The revised FY25 SN has now been re-published with an application due date of **Wednesday, October 22nd, 2025, by 11:59 PM ET**: see <https://grants.gov/search-results-detail/358164>.

Applicants are encouraged to revise any draft applications to align with the new guidance before submittal. See '[FY25 Exchange Network Solicitation Notice](#)' for more information and a description of the changes reflected in the new published SN. Please note that any applicants who applied during the first open application period may resubmit an application in alignment with the updated guidance; EPA will review the most recent application submitted to grants.gov. New applicants are also welcome.

The optional fillable templates for the cover letter, project narrative (work plan), and budget narrative attachment form, plus the optional budget calculation tool, have also been updated and are available by downloading the full announcement zip file under the 'related documents' tab in the grants.gov listing. This guidance is likewise available under the 'resources' section of the [EN website](#).

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 Pillar 3: 'Permitting Reform, Cooperative Federalism, and Cross-Agency Partnership' from [EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin's "Powering the Great American Comeback"](#); applicants should also address other supported EPA Pillars within their submitted project narrative, if applicable to their proposal. Applicants are encouraged to read the Solicitation Notice carefully for further information on applicant requirements.

EPA expects to award 25-30 grants of up to \$600,000 each, totaling approximately \$9,200,000 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 competition years by \$100,000.** Individual applicants can now request up to \$400,000 and eligible EN partnerships can request up to \$600,000. 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 in early 2026 and plans to issue awards by October 2026.

For more information, please contact:

Erin McGown

EN Grants Program Manager
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Email: ENGrantProgram@epa.gov