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## **Living In Interesting Times**

*Todd Barnell, ITEP's Waste & Response Manager*

The 2025 TLEF was an amazing experience. Nearly 500 of you were there in-person, as well as over 150 virtual attendees. And we were so excited by the amazing local partners we got to work with on field trips (including our first volunteer oriented one), sessions, special plenaries, and our opening cultural night filled with song, dance, and friendship. It was inspiring, educational, and fulfilling to me...and I hope to you as well. Unfortunately, I came home with COVID...which decided to hang around for the next two months, meaning I missed this year's Tribal Superfund Working Group (TSFWG) site visit in Montana.

We are living in "interesting times". I know many of you are going through a lot, and facing serious challenges. I - and my terrific team - are as well. And lately I've been thinking about that TSFWG site visit I missed. This event only happened because of an amazing woman at the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, who attended a previous TSFWG site visit and vowed to host one so she could share with others the stories of her people. She did a smashing job. And my amazing "Number One", Julie, stepped right up and worked with other attendees to make sure the whole event was a success. She called me at the end of every day to tell me funny, and moving, stories from the day. One of the attendees, a dear friend of many years, decided she would have everyone there write a little note to me in a birchbark notebook. And another attendee, who is as much of a "bird nerd" as me, drew pictures of the birds she saw throughout the notebook. I find myself flipping through it quite a bit.

This is what helps me catch my breath. Community. Relationship. Connection. Kindness. Empathy.

Many of us have loved ones, friends, and dear colleagues who are struggling right now. Still, I think of all those people in Montana touring contaminated sites affecting people and our relations - some that have been addressed and some that are still being worked on. I think of them sharing their stories. I think of them strategizing, learning something new, sharing a kind word with someone else. And I breathe a little easier.

It has been the greatest privilege of my life to work alongside you for 23 years, and I find myself constantly inspired by you and your amazing work. So, I just want to say: Keep being kind. Take time to catch your breath. And don't ever forget you are part of a broader community of truly caring and amazing people. I won't. And that helps me find the beauty in tomorrow.

### **The 2026 Tribal Lands & Environment Forum**

We are in the process of contract negotiations for next year's TLEF. We can't yet tell you where it will be yet (soon, we promise!) but it will take place August 17 through 20, 2026. We also need to give you a head's up that the in-person cost will be raised to \$250 per in-person registration. The virtual registration will be \$50. We've worked hard to not raise the registration cost, even though our expenses have really gone up and the cost of other conferences have as well, for many years. But in order to put on this annual homecoming, we had to finally face facts. We can't wait to gather again with all of you, and share and learn (and have fun!) We look forward to seeing you in August!

### **Virtual Discussion on Restoration at the Bunker Hill Superfund Site & Our Superfund Research**

On **December 10** we will be holding a Tribal Superfund Working Group (TSFWG) virtual presentation and discussion - but all are welcome! For this 90 minute gathering we will start off with a presentation by Rebecca Stevens at the Coeur d'Alene Tribe (and the chair of our TWAR Steering Committee) about some exciting updates on restoration work happening at the Bunker Hill Superfund site. Todd Barnell will then talk about some potential research topics our team will tackle in the next few years to help Tribal staff working on contaminated sites. In the past we've developed events and resources on a variety of topics, ranging from finding and working effectively with contractors to dealing with the loss of institutional knowledge, among many other issues. (All of these resources can be found on our [Tribal Lands Assistance Center website](#).) We want to share some ideas for topics we've received from colleagues, as well as get your ideas. Be sure to add the this Zoom link and details to your calendar!

- Time: December 10, 2025 10AM (Alaska); 11AM (Pacific); 12PM Mountain; 1PM (Central); 2PM Eastern
- Join Link:  
<https://nau.zoom.us/j/87671045787?pwd=fPSmEvtPsfDbdCaUhqONZud23HJhWO.1>
- Meeting ID: 876 7104 5787; Password: 862033

Also, if you missed our recent presentation and discussion on building research relationships during Superfund remediation, you can find it on TLAC here:

<https://triballands.org/tlac/building-relationships/tribal-superfund-working-group/>

### **New Grant Resource from Native Americans in Philanthropy**

Our friends at Native Americans in Philanthropy have a new resource you may be interested called GrantWatch. You will find it at this link: <https://nativephilanthropy.org/grantwatch>. NAP said, "We're excited to announce the launch of GrantWatch, a new resource from Native Americans in Philanthropy dedicated to connecting Tribal Nations and Native communities with funding opportunities. GrantWatch is a database of resources where you can share and discover grants, fellowships, and awards relevant to Native communities. Submitted by members and open to the public, these opportunities are expanding our collective impact and building a shared network of resources that strengthen Tribal Nations and Indigenous-led initiatives."

### **Tribal PFAS Working Group Webinar**

On **December 11**, the Tribal PFAS Working Group is holding a webinar with Dr. Hans Peter H. Arp from the Norwegian University on his current research into Trifluoroacetic Acid, a short chain PFAS that is becoming more prevalent than any other PFAS. Please see the attached flyer for more information and how to join.

### **Tribal TAB Can Help If You Are Considering an FY26 Brownfield Grant**

If you are considering the FY26 US EPA Multipurpose, Assessment, and Cleanup (MAC) Brownfields Grants, keep in mind that the Tribal TAB is available to assist you with guidance, templates, and reviewing assistance. You can reach out to them on the [Tribal TAB website](#). Our team is very gratified to be part of the Tribal TAB collaboration, alongside our friends at Kansas State University and Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. Tribal TAB exists in order to support you and your Tribe, Nation, or Native Village in protecting and restoring sacred lands and accomplishing revitalization goals through the reuse, restoration, or redevelopment of brownfields. If you are interested in receiving the Tribal

TAB newsletter and other information, or being contacted by Tribal TAB staff, please [click here](#).

## Webinar on Lead and Arsenic Conversion

There is an upcoming webinar that those dealing with lead and arsenic contamination may be interested in on December 11. Soil lead and arsenic are the two highest priority contaminants on the ATSDR-EPA Substance Priority List, representing significant toxicity and occurrence at Superfund sites. In this webinar, researchers will share their work on a potential in situ solution: conversion of soil lead and arsenic to jarosite family minerals. To learn more and how to join this presentation please visit <https://trainex.org/offeringlist.cfm?courseid=2059>.

## Check Out ITEP's New Website



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TRIBAL RESOURCE  
HAS A  
NEW HOME!  
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ITEP'S NEW  
WEBSITE AT  
[ITEP.NAU.EDU](https://itep.nau.edu)**

This website is not just a digital upgrade—it's a renewed commitment to empowering Tribal communities with the tools and knowledge they need to protect their lands, cultures, and futures.

– ITEP Director,  
Nikki Cooley, Diné