



National Tribal Water Council Outreach and Engagement

National Tribal Water Council (NTWC) members Ken Norton, NTWC Chair (Region 9), and Brian Patterson, NTWC Region 2 Representative, respectively participated in two simultaneous webinars as panelists in December.

On December 9, 2025, the National Tribal Air Association and NTWC co-hosted a [webinar](#) on EPA's Tribal Reserved Rights Rule. The webinar provided information about the status of the Tribal Reserved Rights Rule that directs states to consider the impact of state water quality standards on tribal reserved rights, such as fishing, hunting, and gathering on ceded traditional tribal lands. Currently, there are legal challenges to the rule by twelve states, and the EPA is no longer defending the rule in the legal action.



Brian Patterson

NTWC collaborated with the National Tribal Caucus to submit a joint [comment letter](#) regarding the EPA's decision not to defend the 2024 Tribal Reserved Rights Rule. The letter was sent to EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin on November 21, 2025. During the December 9th webinar, Brian Patterson provided an overview of NTWC's work and support of the rule. Brian also highlighted key points outlined in the comment letter.

On December 9, 2025, the National Congress of American Indians and Native American Rights Fund hosted a webinar on "Protecting Tribal Waters and Sovereignty: Navigating the New WOTUS Proposed Rule." The EPA and Army Corps of Engineers proposed rulemaking to revise the definition of the "Waters of the United States." The webinar discussed implications of reduced Clean Water Act protections for streams and wetlands that are essential to Tribal reserved rights, including hunting, fishing, and gathering. This webinar reviewed the proposed rule, its relationship to the *Sackett v. EPA* decision, and what it could mean for Tribal Nations.



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NEWSLETTER

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NTWC Outreach & Engagement (*continued*)

NTWC submitted a comment letter to the EPA on the proposed WOTUS rule on December 19, 2025. Additionally, NTWC collaborated with the National Tribal Caucus to request a 30-days deadline extension for the proposed rulemaking, which was due January 5, 2026. NTWC Chair Ken Norton shared key points of the comment letter during the webinar. Chairman Norton expressed how the rollback of the CWA protections would put a strain on tribal environmental and water programs, especially with an already limited staffing and reduced program funding.

Tribal environmental professionals may find more information on the Tribal Reserved Rights Rule at <https://www.epa.gov/wqs-tech/revising-federal-water-quality-standards-regulation-protect-tribal-reserved-rights>. Additional information on the “Waters of the United States” is available at <https://www.epa.gov/wotus>.

UPDATES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Recording Now Available: Tribal PFAS Working Group’s Winter Webinar on Trifluoroacetic Acid (TFA)

On December 12, 2025, the Tribal PFAS Working Group hosted a webinar titled “Trifluoroacetic Acid: A Planetary Boundary Threat” by Dr. Hans Peter H. Arp, Norwegian Geotechnical Institute and Norwegian University of Science and Technology. The webinar discussed trifluoroacetic acid (TFA), a small PFAS compound, and its increasing presence in the environment. The webinar recording is available at NTWC’s MediaSpace page https://mediaspace.nau.edu/media/Tribal+PFAS+Working+Group+Winter+Webinar+2025/1_qvl13awz/116196612

Summer 2026 ITEP Water Resource and Land Management Internship, Now Accepting Applications

The Water Resource and Land Management Internship Program provides the opportunity for students to gain hands-on skills with tribal environmental offices or other organizations managing water and land resources. The application deadline is January 31, 2026. For more information: https://itep.nau.edu/internships/wls_internship/

EPA Announces \$60 Million in Lead Service Line Replacement Funding Through the Drinking Water Infrastructure Grants – Tribal Set-Aside

EPA announced the availability of \$60 million in fiscal year (FY) 2025 Drinking Water Infrastructure Grants – Tribal Set-Aside (DWIG-TSA) Lead Service Line Replacement funding provided through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). These funds will enable American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Villages to reduce exposure to lead in drinking water through investments in water system infrastructure improvements. These funds can be used for lead service line replacement and associated activities, including identification, planning, design, and construction.

Please see the [memorandum](#) for more details. Please note, the EPA released a separate [funding memorandum](#) on June 12, 2025, that provided information on FY25 funding availability and Regional allotments under the DWIG-TSA base, IIJA General Supplemental, and IIJA Emerging Contaminants appropriations as well as the Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities Tribal Grant program and the Small, Underserved, and Disadvantaged Communities (SUDC) Tribal Grant Program.

Updates & Announcements *(continued)*

NASA Online Training Series: Monitoring Water Quality in Lakes and Coastal Regions Using STREAM

NASA has developed the Satellite-based Tool for Rapid Evaluation of Aquatic Environments ([STREAM](#)) — an interactive web tool that enables high-resolution (20–30 meter) monitoring of water quality in inland lakes and coastal waters across the U.S. and selected other countries.

This two-part training led by NASA's Applied Remote Sensing Training Program ([ARSET](#)) introduces the STREAM web tool to visualize maps of water quality parameters over lakes and coastal areas and how to use STREAM application programming interface (API) to discover and download satellite images and water quality data for a selected water body. The training demonstrates how to assess changes in water quality in each lake using QGIS. The training also demonstrates the application of an MDN model to estimate water quality parameters from satellite images.

There are two session dates on February 10 and February 17, 2026. Part 1 will include an introduction and demonstration of STREAM. Part 2 will include an introduction to a machine learning model to estimate water quality parameters based on satellite observations. For more information: https://www.earthdata.nasa.gov/learn/trainings/monitoring-water-quality-lakes-coastal-regions-using-stream?utm_source=announcement&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=STREAM2026

Native American Fish and Wildlife Society 2026 Annual National Conference

The 2026 Native American Fish and Wildlife Society Annual National Conference, hosted by the Oneida Indian Nation of New York, will be held from May 4 to 7, 2026 at the Turning Stone Resort Casino in Verona, NY. The deadline for abstracts, student travel scholarships, and travel funding assistance is March 6, 2026. For more information: <https://www.nafws.org/product/2026-annual-national-conference/>

EVENTS & WEBINARS

Tribal Exchange Network Group - Monthly Tribal Data Drop-in Sessions

Held the third Thursday of every month from 10:00-11:30 AM (Pacific)

<https://www.tribalexchangenetwork.org/trainings-events>

Upcoming webinar:

- January 8, 2026: An Introduction to the Tribal Exchange Network Group; To register: <https://nau.zoom.us/meeting/register/Vz90AFDyQHKauZzIYu5eoA#/registration>

Webinar on Emerging Research on PFAS in Biosolids, January 23, 2026

Dr. Ian Pepper, environmental microbiologist and Regents Professor of Environmental Science at the University of Arizona, will present key conclusions from the National Collaborative PFAS Project, a national field study of biosolids land application. His research addresses critical questions around PFAS occurrence, mobility in soils, and movement into associated groundwater at long-term application sites. To register: <https://bloomsoil.com/webinar-pfas-biosolids-research/>

EPA Tools and Resources Webinar Series

To register: <https://www.epa.gov/research-states/epa-tools-and-resources-webinar-series>

- January 21, 2026: Lead Overview and Data Mapping

Events & Webinars *(continued)*

Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. – National Tribal Water & Wastewater Operator Training & Certification Program

The Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc. National Tribal Water and Wastewater Operator Training and Certification Program is providing online, in-person, and blended trainings. To register or to view the 2025 training schedule, please visit: <https://itcaonline.com/programs/environmental-quality-programs/tws-tmap/tws-training-events/>

Upcoming training courses:

- Water Treatment Level 1: March 2-6, 2026 (online); March 9-13, 2026 (Billings, MT)
- Water Distribution Level 1: March 30-April 3, 2026 (online); April 6-10, 2026 (Flagstaff, AZ)

Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC) Trainings

RCAC partners with underserved rural and Indigenous communities to achieve their vision and well-being through technical assistance, training, financial resources, and advocacy. To learn more about RCAC trainings, please visit: <https://www.events.rcac.org/rcac/Calendar.asp>

Upcoming training opportunities:

- January 22, 2026: Tribal Drinking Water Overview, West Wendover, NV; Register [HERE](#)
- January 27, 2026: Developing, Implementing & Updating an Operations Plan for a Tribal Water System (online); Register [HERE](#)
- February 10, 2026: Planning for the Future – Tribal Wastewater System Blueprint for Longevity (online); Register [HERE](#)

Environmental Finance Center Network

To register: <https://efcnetwork.org/training-events/>

- January 15, 2026: Pipes, Pressure, and a Precious Resource – The Engineering Challenge of Aging Water Infrastructure
- January 27, 2026: Finding a Unicorn! Small Wastewater System Funding Series – State Revolving Funds: Navigating CWSRF for Your Project
- February 10, 2026: Finding a Unicorn! Small Wastewater System Funding Series – State Revolving Funds: Federal Grants and SRF

Contaminated Site Clean-up Information Webinars

To register: <https://clu-in.org/training/>

- January 27, 2026: PFAS Chemistry Explained
- February 12, 2026: Microplastics
- February 26, 2026: PFAS & Biosolids – Sources, Occurrence, Transport, and Treatment

2026 Tribal Community Resilience Webinar Series

To register: <https://arizona.zoom.us/meeting/register/MMmC31wDSSevL6pVaQQhuw#/registration>

- February 5, 2026: Data Protection & Security
- March 5, 2026: Fire

Eurofins Environmental Testing 2026 PFAS Webinar Series

To register: <https://www.eurofinsus.com/environment-testing/resources/webinars/>

- January 20, 2026: PFAS Basics Part 1
- January 27, 2026: PFAS Sample Collection - State of the Science Part 2
- February 17, 2026: PFAS State of the Union - 2026 Year in Review and 2026 Outlook



Membership Recruitment for Region 3, Region 5, & At-Large Representatives

Applications Accepted until Filled



The National Tribal Water Council is a technical and scientific body established to advocate for the best interests of federally-recognized Indian and Alaska Native Tribes in matters pertaining to water quality. The Council is currently accepting applications from tribal water professionals to fill three (3) openings.

Tribal water professionals with knowledge in the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act are encouraged to apply. Also, an applicant with a background in water infrastructure, drinking water, wastewater, and operations and maintenance, is strongly encouraged.

Region 3 Representative

Open to tribal water professionals employed by a federally recognized Tribe or tribally authorized organization in Region 3 (Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, & West Virginia).

Region 5 Representative

Open to tribal water professionals employed by a federally recognized Tribe or tribally authorized organization in Region 5 (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin).

At-Large Representative

Open to tribal water professionals employed by a federally recognized Tribe or tribally authorized organization in the United States (Regions 1 through 10).

Member duties include, but not limited, to:

- Participating in monthly virtual calls;
- Attending two in-person meetings annually; and
- Creating and participating in crafting response documents to policy and/or rulemaking actions.

Interested applicants must submit the following: application form, letter of interest, and professional resumé. Please refer to the Council's membership application information packet for additional details.

To express your interest, please contact Elaine Wilson at elaine.wilson@nau.edu.
More information may be found on the NTWC website <https://itep.nau.edu/ntwc/>.

NTWC MEMBERS

For more information on our members, visit [Meet the Council](#).

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For more information: <https://www.worldwetlandsday.org/>