

Tribal Waste and Response Steering Committee



2026-2027 Priority Document
January 2026

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**All photos are courtesy of TWAR Steering Committee members and reflect activities on their lands.
Title page photo, Shu-fa-thu bien (White Eagle Mountain), Isleta Pueblo**

The Tribal Waste and Response Steering Committee (TWAR SC) is a US EPA Tribal Partnership Group comprised of subject matter experts from federally recognized Tribal Nations and Alaska Native Villages from various EPA regions. The views expressed by the TWAR SC are those of the SC members and not of individual Tribes and/or Alaska Native Villages. Furthermore, interaction with the TWAR SC is not a substitute for, or constitutes government-to-government consultation, which can only be achieved through direct, early and meaningful consultation between the Federal government and individual Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Villages.

This is a living document that will be updated as the TWAR Steering Committee sees necessary. Its intention is to communicate the needs of Tribes, influence policy, and determine useful actions for the protection of health, culture, and natural resources in respect to OLEM-related issues.



Tribal Waste and Response Steering Committee Members



TWAR SC members at the 2025 meeting with US EPA OLEM in Washington DC.

Member	Tribe	Current Term
Joy Britt	Chignik Bay (Alaska)	2026-2028
Richard Chiolero	Chickaloon (Alaska)	2024-2027
Augusta Edmund	Alakanuk (Alaska)	2024-2027
Victoria Flowers	Oneida Nation (Wisconsin)	2026-2028
Tracy Horst	Choctaw Nation (Oklahoma)	2026-2028
Loren Jojola	Pueblo of Isleta	2024-2027
Osh LeClere	Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation (Kansas & Illinois)	2024-2027
Rob Roy	La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians (California)	2024-2027
Rebecca Stevens, Chair	Coeur d'Alene Tribe (Idaho)	2026-2028

TWAR SC Overview

The Tribal Waste and Response Steering Committee (TWAR SC) is a Tribal Partnership Group (TPG), composed of Tribal professionals working in waste, emergency response, Superfund, Brownfields, and Underground Storage Tanks (USTs). They were established in 2009 as part of a cooperative agreement with EPA's Office of Land and Emergency Management (OLEM) and the Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals (ITEP). The TWAR SC meets at least six times a year to provide input to EPA and other federal agencies, as well as to cooperate with ITEP and other TPGs. They strive to provide two-way communication between Tribal professionals and staff at the EPA. Utilizing this Priority Document is one tool that is used to ensure Tribal concerns and suggestions are considered by OLEM personnel and others at EPA.

Mission

The TWAR SC maintains a reciprocal exchange of information between Tribal Nations and Alaska Native Villages, EPA OLEM, and other federal partners and organizations to assess, understand, prevent, or mitigate environmental impacts that adversely affect health, culture, and natural resources. The TWAR SC also coordinates with other Tribal Partnership Groups (TPGs) when and where appropriate. They work closely with ITEP to plan and coordinate the annual Tribal Lands and Environment Forum (TLEF) which brings together Tribal professionals, TPG members, EPA OLEM staff, and others to discuss case studies and strategies on implementing OLEM Programs in Indian Country and Alaska Native Villages.

TWAR SC Goals

Goal 1: Protect human health and the environment while recognizing the cultural values and unique needs of American Indian Tribes, Nations, and Alaska Native Villages.

Goal 2: Improve communication and foster interagency collaboration between Tribes, Tribal Nations, and Alaska Native Villages, federal agencies, and other partners.

Goal 3: Increase Tribal opportunities to guide OLEM in developing policies and programs related to the evolving needs and priorities of Native environmental programs.

Introduction

The TWAR SC expresses their appreciation to EPA OLEM for their dedication to our mutual goals of protecting our people, lands, and all our relations. We appreciate their ongoing work with Tribes and Alaska Native Villages on integrating Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge, considering Tribal beneficial use, addressing Tribal needs, and ensuring Tribal data is utilized and Tribal perspectives are included in decisions and actions taken by OLEM offices. We encourage them to continue making opportunities available for their leaders and staff to visit Tribes, Nations, and Alaska Native Villages so they can walk our lands with us, as well as attend Tribal events and conferences such as the Tribal Lands & Environment Forum. The members of the TWAR SC are committed to sharing our stories and experiences in implementing our work in our Tribes, Nations, and Villages.

Program Specific Priorities

Office of Resource Conservation & Recovery (Solid/Hazardous Waste; Oil and Chemical Accidents)

- Promote the successes of the Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) Grants for Tribes/ Intertribal Consortia and continue funding this flexible and necessary grant opportunity.
- Continue to work with other federal agencies, and leverage existing resources, to fill the gap in funding for solid waste infrastructure in order to support municipal and household hazardous waste operations.
- Create educational opportunities and additional resources on medical waste safety and proper disposal (e.g. sharps in the waste stream).
- Release the Operations and Management Assessment report and facilitate discussions between federal agencies and Tribal environmental professionals, in order to protect the assets created under SWIFR and other federal infrastructure projects.
- Continue to support the Backhaul Alaska Program, the only not for profit backhaul service in Alaska, and share successes from Alaska Native Villages involved in the program to encourage participation and expand markets.
- Provide outreach to Tribal environmental staff about 6PPD-quinone and used tire management.
- Complete and disseminate data from EPA led research projects/initiatives to inform Tribes of project status and conclusions, which will encourage transparency and Tribal participation. An example would be the assessment of potential environmental impacts from unlined landfills in Alaska which was highlighted in EPA's response to the 2024-2025 Priorities Document.
- Foster new recyclables markets, end-use recyclables businesses, and extended producer responsibility.
- Provide educational resources to assist solid waste professionals in educating their communities on proper collection and disposal of Universal Waste.
- Prioritize inspecting Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) facilities in Indian country and Alaska.

- Continue to support and encourage Tribal environmental emergency response programs to be involved with their regional and local response agencies through Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) and/or in forming their own TERCs.
- Develop and deliver trainings, in collaboration with Tribal colleagues, focused on:
 - a. Solid waste management subjects, including strategies to increase recycling, waste diversion (e.g. composting, organics, Construction & Demolition (C&D), etc.), sharing of Tribal solid waste program efficiencies and cost savings, and reducing contamination in the waste stream.
 - b. Emergency response subjects such as Tribal Emergency Response Committees (TERCs), lithium batteries, Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC), Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act (EPCRA).
 - c. Above Ground Storage Tanks (AST) subjects that empower Tribal staff to conduct compliance assistance (including example outreach materials).
 - d. These trainings should take place in different locations of the country and be recorded (or available virtually) to increase accessibility.
 - e. Provide metrics of attendance and interaction at trainings.

Office of Brownfields & Land Revitalization

- All EPA Regions need to be consistent in providing guidance (e.g. reporting requirements, QAPP templates, site eligibility) to 128(a) Program cooperative agreement grantees and available resources (e.g. TAB programs).
- Provide sections for 104(k) and 128(a) grant management resources (e.g. quarterly report templates, site eligibility forms, success story templates, etc.) on the main EPA brownfields website or consistent across each Region's website .
- Require that EPA staff and contractors, overseeing Targeted Brownfield Assessments (TBA) or supporting Tribal Brownfield programs, ensure that mechanisms and resources to provide meaningful opportunities for public participation include Tribal Councils or governing bodies and other Tribal Departments. This ensures the direction and technical assistance provided aligns with Tribal priorities and redevelopment needs.
- Affirm in a memo to the Secretary of the Interior, that the liability protections described in Section 101(20)(D) extend to the federal government for mandatory trust acquisitions as defined in Chapter 25 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 151. Real or perceived threats of environmental contamination and subsequent liabilities prevent land from being taken into Trust.
- Create a roadmap/guidance for 128(a) grantees to develop multi-year workplans.
- Create a Tribal set-aside for 104(k) grants and allow flexibility between assessment and cleanup funds.
- Utilize EPA's authority under CERCLA to enhance Tribal Environmental Self-Determination by assisting Tribes in establishing Memorandum of Agreements (MOAs).
- OBLR staff should work with GAP project officers regarding CERCLA deliverables in GAP workplans and inform GAP grantees of available brownfield resources.

- Decrease the time between the selection of brownfield awardees and the awarding of brownfield grants/cooperative agreements.
- Streamline the QAPP review/approval process.
- EPA should create a Tribal-specific drawdown timeline of ten business days or provide waiver authority that allows individual Tribes to request a longer disbursement period based on demonstrated administrative realities.

Office of Underground Storage Tanks

- Include an equipment manufacturers component in the Facility Specific Compliance Plan (FASCOMP) tool, and present training and updates on involvement at the 2026 and 2027 TLEFs. This should include resources and handouts.
- Demonstrate the FASCOMP tool at the regional level for Tribal environmental staff, so they are able to ensure compliance at their facilities.
- Work with the Tribal Convenience Store Association and the National Association of Convenience Stores to roll out the on-line A/B Operator Training.
- Target education to Tribal environmental professionals to understand how to work with owner/operators to establish roles and responsibilities in order to improve compliance with UST closure and removal plans.
- Continue to provide outreach materials and training to the service industry highlighting the difference between State and Tribal (i.e. Federal) processes for UST operations.
- Continue providing training for Tribes about state-funded financial responsibility, which includes the topic of how Indian Country UST facilities may participate in some state-funded programs.
- Work with OBLR to create resources and opportunities for collaboration to address UST related issues through the 128(a) Program.
- Provide education related to emerging fuels to Tribal professionals.

Office of Superfund & Emergency Management and Office of Mountains, Deserts, and Plains (Superfund, Federal Facilities, Emergency Management, Legacy Hard Rock Mines)

- Continue to provide updates on EPA's work with other federal agencies on critical minerals and recovery pilot sites, and how they are involving Tribal Nations and Alaska Native Villages.
- Communicate with other EPA offices and divisions, as well as other federal agencies, to ensure that Tribal priorities are being addressed when re-mining for critical minerals are considered.
- Optimization studies at contaminated sites involving Tribal Nations or Alaska Native Villages should ensure Tribal data is utilized and Tribal perspectives and involvement are included at the start of and throughout the process.
- Continue to ensure Tribal Research Permits are obtained (when required) well in advance when data is being collected in Indian country, while ensuring Tribal data sovereignty is respected and approval granted before data is released.

- Keep Tribes informed when reuse and redevelopment plans are developed on or near lands with Native American Interests.
- Continue working on adaptive capacity and resilience to extreme weather and natural disasters as well as risk reduction, including risks to contaminated sites, from extreme weather and natural disasters.
- Continue to engage Tribes and Alaskan Native Villages through Consultation during changes to PFAS rules and policies.
- Include remedy resiliency when designing and implementing Records of Decision.
- Implement the Residential Lead Policy and provide support to Tribes to utilize the Tribal Lead Curriculum in Indian country and Alaska.
- Continue to support Tribes leading the effort in cultural resource assessment, data collection, and monitoring on all sites in Indian country and Alaska Native Villages with OSEM Programs.
- Continue to support EPA's engagement with both the Office of Water and OSEM with Tribes at the national and regional levels during the development of Remedial Investigation/Feasibility studies, remedial design, and implementation phases.
- Recognize that Tribal standards and tools utilized by Tribal Superfund programs are critically important in protecting downstream waters, lands, and Traditional Lifeways.
- Support Tribes in the development of their own Tribal Superfund cleanup programs as well as their capacity to administer Tribal Remedial Response Cooperative Agreements.
- Continue to coordinate with Tribes as part of the Good Samaritan pilot project.
- Ensure that Tribal Consultation is conducted when future mining on public lands is proposed.
- Prioritize Tribal input during Superfund redevelopment.
- Continue to train new EPA Regional Program Managers (RPMs) on working with Tribes on Superfund Sites.
- Provide educational opportunities and resources on emergency management topics, including dealing with Lithium-ion battery fires, spill response strategies, ensuring safety when dealing with alternative fuels, and tabletop style trainings that provide real world examples of emergency scenarios.
- Provide guidance to Tribal professionals on accessing Local Government Reimbursement funds and US Coast Guard dollars as part of their emergency management work.

Summary

The TWAR SC priorities are shared regularly with the National and Regional Tribal Operations Committee, EPA OLEM, Tribal Nations, and others. The TWAR SC meets each year with various offices in EPA OLEM to discuss these priorities, as well as other issues of concern to Tribes. The TWAR SC also requests reports from these offices on any progress made in addressing the priorities detailed in this document, so this information can be shared with other Tribal professionals around the country. More information, including meeting notes and the committee's charter, are available at the TWAR SC website (<http://www7.nau.edu/itep/main/twarsc/Home/Index>).

Contact Information

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