

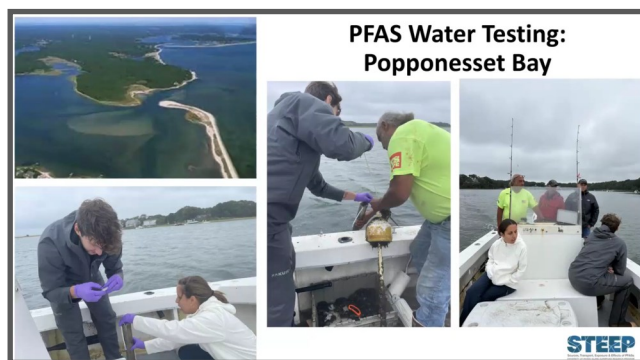


March 2026
Volume 8, Issue 3

PFAS Research Highlights the Intersection of Environmental Health and Tribal Identity

On March 12, 2026, the Tribal PFAS Working Group hosted a presentation exploring PFAS contamination and its impacts on tribal fishing, food sovereignty, and cultural identity. Researchers Emily Diamond (University of Rhode Island), Laurel Schaider (Silent Spring Institute), and Jason Steiding (Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe) shared insights from their collaborative work with the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, focusing on PFAS levels in local fish, shellfish, and water sources.

Presenters emphasized the importance of community-driven research and culturally respectful communication. Fishing and shellfish harvesting were identified as central to tribal identity, underscoring the need to balance health risk information with the preservation of cultural practices. The team highlighted that trusted messengers—such as tribal fishermen, elders, and tribal leadership—are essential for effective communication, particularly when addressing invisible contaminants like PFAS. Ongoing outreach efforts have included environmental sampling, surveys, youth science programs, and engagement at community events.



Screenshot of the presentation

The discussion also touched on broader policy considerations, including tribal water quality standards, fish consumption rates, and Treatment as a State (TAS) authority. Participants shared lessons learned from other Tribal Nations working to establish or influence water quality standards and stressed the value of intertribal collaboration. Looking ahead, the group plans to continue PFAS testing guided by tribal priorities, expand GIS mapping efforts, and host community talking circles to co-develop culturally grounded communication strategies.

This presentation was recorded and is available on the NTWC’s MediaSpace page at: <https://mediaspace.nau.edu/media/Tribal+PFAS+Working+Group%3A+Communicating+Pollutants+that+Threaten+Tribal+Identities+->



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UPDATES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

EPA Seeking Nominations for the National Drinking Water Advisory Council

On March 9, 2026, EPA published a [notice in the Federal Register](#) seeking nominations of qualified candidates to be considered for an appointment to the National Drinking Water Advisory Council (NDWAC). EPA is seeking nominations of candidates from the general public; states and local governments concerned with water hygiene and public water supply; and representatives of private organizations or groups demonstrating an active interest in the field of water hygiene and public water supply. EPA may also consider nominations received through this solicitation to fill any additional or anticipated vacancies on the Council through the end of 2026. The notice is open through April 8, 2026. Visit the [Federal Register](#) to submit a nomination. Learn more about NDWAC at <https://www.epa.gov/ndwac>.

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 4-7, 2026 at the Turning Stone Resort Casino in Verona, NY. For more information, please visit: <https://www.nafws.org/product/2026-annual-national-conference/>

A Meeting of Sacred Waters: A Global Gathering of Indigenous Voices

A Meeting of Sacred Waters 2026 is a global gathering to highlight Indigenous-led solutions in support of our ancestral waters and lands. Through the collective experiences of Indigenous Peoples from the US and abroad, this global exchange explores solutions to restore balance for the wellbeing of humanity and the environment. The conference will be held June 22-25, 2026, at the Isleta Resort & Casino Hotel in Albuquerque, NM. For more information, please visit: <https://web.cvent.com/event/b6db810b-9687-4105-a4fb-6a68908cb4c6/websitePage:7c571964-6c1f-4b25-a856-6cf3b4ce38c6>

Tribal Lands & Environment Forum 2026

The Tribal Lands & Environment Forum website is now active. The forum will be held August 17-20, 2026, at the OKANA Resort in Oklahoma City, OK. Participants may register as an attendee, sign up to be a sponsor or exhibitor, or submit a session or training proposal. For more information, please visit: <https://sites.google.com/view/tlef2026>

GRANT OPPORTUNITY

EPA Fiscal Year 2025 Wetland Program Development Grants (Regions 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10)

Deadline: April 2026 (Date varies for each region)

Wetland Program Development Grants (WPDGs) assist state, Tribal, territory (Insular Areas), local government agencies, and interstate or intertribal entities in developing or refining state, Tribal, territory, or local programs that protect, manage, and restore wetlands. The goals of the EPA's wetland program include increasing the quantity and quality of wetlands in the U.S. by conserving and restoring wetland acreage and improving wetland condition. For more information, please visit: <https://www.grants.gov/>



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/>.

TRIBAL CONSULTATION

EPA Upcoming Proposal to Rescind the 2024 Water Quality Standards Regulatory Revisions to Protect Tribal Reserved Rights

Deadline: April 21, 2026

EPA is initiating consultation with federally recognized Indian Tribes on the agency's intention to propose to rescind the 2024 *Water Quality Standards Regulatory Revisions to Protect Tribal Reserved Rights* ("2024 Rule"). The 2024 Rule revised the EPA's regulation at 40 C.F.R. Part 131 to explicitly require that states consider reserved rights to CWA-protected aquatic and/or aquatic-dependent resources when a federally recognized Tribe holds such rights through federal treaties, statutes, or executive orders and asserts them for consideration in the WQS context. The agency reviewed the 2024 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 Rule goes beyond the agency's authority under the CWA. The EPA intends to propose to revise the federal water quality standards (WQS) regulation at 40 C.F.R. Part 131 to rescind the agency's 2024 Water Quality Standards Regulatory Revisions To Protect Tribal Reserved Rights. These regulatory provisions are relevant to situations where Tribes assert reserved rights to aquatic or aquatic-dependent resources in waters where states have jurisdiction to establish WQS. The EPA's actions have no bearing on the existence or meaning of any specific Tribal reserved right. The EPA is interested in hearing about Tribes' experiences with the 2024 Rule. The agency intends to use the input received through the Tribal consultation process to inform the proposed rule.

EPA is hosting a Tribal Consultation Kick-Off Session:



March 31, 2026, 1:00-3:00 PM (ET)

To register: <https://tetrattech.zoom.us/meeting/register/59UZ4obDS4eTDozvb3jRpQ#/registration>

The deadline to submit comments is April 21, 2026. Tribes may submit written consultation comments via email to Brundage.Jennifer@epa.gov. Tribal consultation materials may be found at <https://tcots.epa.gov>. For more information please visit: <https://www.epa.gov/wqs-tech/revising-federal-water-quality-standards-regulation-protect-tribal-reserved-rights>

EVENTS & WEBINARS

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: May 4-8, 2026 (online); May 11-15, 2026 (Yuma, AZ)
- Wastewater Treatment Level 1: May 11-15, 2026 (online); May 18-22, 2026 (Camp Verde, AZ)
- Water Treatment – Levels 2 & 3 (blended): Entire Course (Parts 1 & 2), June 15-26, 2026; In person Part 2 (Billings, MT)

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>

Events & Webinars *(continued)*

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>

Eurofins Environmental Testing

- March 24, 2026: PFAS Forensic Tools – TOP, BLT, Non-Target Analysis (NTA) & TOF, Part 4
- March 31, 2026: PFAS in Source and Ambient Air, Part 5

To register: register.gotowebinar.com/#register/5345882061415498581

Environmental Finance Center Network

- April 7, 2026: Tribal Training (In-person: Havre, MT) Introductory Wastewater Math and Operations

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

2026 Tribal Community Resilience Webinar Series

- April 2, 2026: Resilient Infrastructure
- May 14, 2026: Water

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

Contaminated Site Clean-up Information Webinars

- March 26, 2026: PFAS Practical Approaches for PFAS Fate & Transport Evaluation
- April 7, 2026: PFAS Sorption Based Technologies for Separation & Concentration of PFAS from Water

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

EPA Water Utility Resilience Events

- April 1, 2026: Cybersecurity 102
- April 8, 2026: Cybersecurity 103
- April 15, 2026: Cybersecurity Refresher

To register: <https://www.epa.gov/waterresilience/register-epa-water-utility-resilience-events>

EPA Technical Assistance Webinar Series

- May 21, 2026: Going through a Wastewater Plant Upgrade

To register: <https://www.epa.gov/compliance/technical-assistance-webinar-series-strengthening-cwa-npdes-permit-compliance-protect>



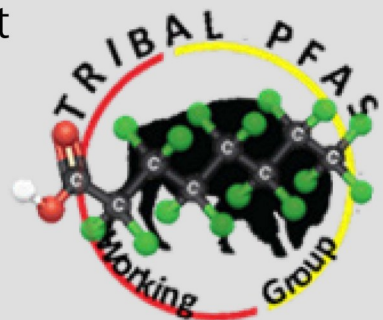
Join the Conversation:



How has PFAS Affected Your Tribe?

The Tribal PFAS Working Group holds monthly calls and would like to invite tribal representatives and researchers to hear testimonials and presentations on how PFAS and other emerging contaminants have impacted tribal lands and resources.

If you are interested in sharing your story at one of our monthly calls, we'd love to hear from you. Please reach out to Elaine Wilson, NTWC Project Manager, at elaine.wilson@nau.edu to join our call.



For more information:

<https://itep.nau.edu/ntwc/pfas-working-group/>

NTWC MEMBERS

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

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