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Executive Committee Spotlight



How's It Going, Indian Country?! I am Billie Toledo, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, Region 7's Primary Rep, and NTAA Secretary. I've been an "airhead" for over 10 years with a long list of stories of accomplishments, failures, and life-changing encounters with fellow airheads.

Some of my accomplishments include transitioning Prairie Band's Air Program from 103 to 105 to a Performance Partnership Grant (PPG); presenting on Hoonah Indian Association's Wood Stove Change Out Program at a residential wood smoke workshop; advocating for State and Tribal Indoor Radon Grants for Region 7 Tribes; and most recently, presenting on emission inventory at our Regional Tribal Operations Committee. I have also failed when fear overwhelmed my voice for myself, my Tribe, and Indian Country during important moments, a big-time lesson learned on courage and strength.

Environmental work has always been important to me, but to be among passionate and knowledgeable individuals in the arena of air, who trust me to tell their story, is an honor. My goal is to continue maturing Prairie Band's Air Program, but to also serve Indian Country to my fullest capacity. I am proud of this community, the strength shown from Tribes and Villages, and the work we do for the health of our people and community members. Thank you for all your hard work! Please reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns.

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Newsletter:

The NTAA Monthly Update is a monthly e-newsletter providing updates and resources to Tribes regarding air policy, grants, and resources. To advertise an announcement, please email Miranda O'Neill Miranda.O'Neill@nau.edu
To subscribe or unsubscribe from our newsletter, click [here](#).

Find us at:
www.ntaatribalair.org

Feature Articles

Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians Tribal Community Air Monitoring Collaborative

Loren Estrada

Across the country, Native American Tribes are taking proactive steps to monitor air quality, recognizing the critical link between clean air and public health. As environmental challenges increase, from industrial pollution to climate driven wildfires, many Tribal Nations are embracing air quality monitoring as both a protective measure and an assertion of their sovereignty. For many Tribal communities, the air they breathe directly impacts their way of life. For these reasons, the Soboba Tribal Environmental Department (STED) began monitoring air quality on the Soboba Reservation



by establishing an air monitoring program under the EPA General Assistance Program. Through this program, STED was able to rent the Aeroqual 500 handheld air monitor from the University of Northern Arizona's Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals. In the summer of 2021, STED began collecting data on PM 2.5 and PM 10. This marked the first of many efforts to begin monitoring air on the Soboba Reservation. While this endeavor was a great introduction to collecting air data, the Aeroqual 500 was only able to capture a small window of data per month as STED staff needed to be in field manually operating the device. As a result, STED began to explore alternative approaches to air monitoring.

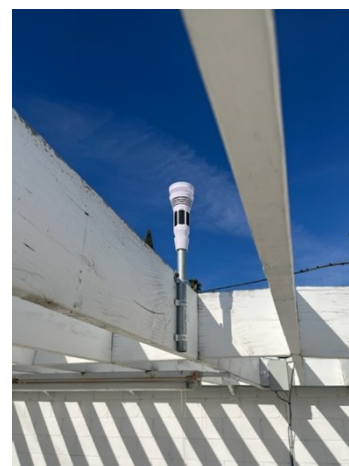


In 2021, STED pursued Cycle 3 Community Air Grant funding from the California Air Resources Board. The project objective was to obtain baseline data, training for staff, and provide educational outreach to the Tribal community to protect public health and establish a Tribal Air Monitoring Program. In late 2022, the grant was awarded and four low-cost air quality monitors were deployed across the Soboba Reservation to collect air pollutant concentration data. These pollutants include nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), ozone (O₃), particulate matter (PM) 2.5, and PM₁₀. Ambient air is sampled continuously throughout the day, and hourly averaged data is displayed on SobobaAir.com, a public-facing website intended to be an easily accessible resource for the Tribal community. This achievement marked the establishment of Soboba's Tribal Community Air Monitoring Collaborative.

Preliminary data gathered by the monitors revealed several concerning trends in air quality on the Soboba Reservation. The extreme heat of Southern California summers caused ozone levels to frequently exceed the federal health standard; cold, dark winters contributed to intense temperature inversions, which caused PM 2.5 levels to spike regularly; seasonal Santa Ana wind events lend themselves to windblown dust storms, creating hazy conditions and elevated levels of particulate matter. The identification of these pollutants of concern is critical in supplementing future applications for grant funding. Once data was obtained regarding pollutant concentration, STED began pursuing funding for identifying sources of air pollution on the Reservation.

In 2024, STED was successful in securing Cycle 4 Community Air Grant funding through CARB. This grant would allow Soboba to develop a comprehensive emissions inventory and collaborate with internal stakeholders to create a Local-Community Emissions Reduction Plan. The grant also funded the installation of three weather stations across the Reservation, which allows Environmental staff to monitor weather conditions and forecast adverse air quality conditions. Currently, STED is pursuing a CARB Cycle 5 Community Air Grant to improve monitoring technology and ability to educate the Tribal community on air quality concerns. As the Tribal Community Air Monitoring Collaborative expands, STED is eager to continue building staff knowledge and capacity,

engaging the Tribal community, and pursuing both State and federal funds to achieve a healthy airshed.



Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Air Quality Program continued

Katie Tiger, EBCI Air Quality Program Supervisor



The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) initiated ambient air monitoring in 1999 as an environmental protection effort in response to growing concerns about air quality in relation to human health, culturally significant natural resources, and loss of visibility. The primary objective of the EBCI Air Quality Program (AQP) is to protect human health and natural resources by identifying any violations of the criteria pollutants (ozone and PM_{2.5}) National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) within the EBCI boundary. Over the years the AQP has grown into much more than the standard ambient air monitoring program. The EBCI AQP strives to implement renewable energy and fuel solutions to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions in the region. EBCI AQP staff are leading ongoing efforts with federal, state, and university partners to create long-term climate resilience plans and strategies for the EBCI community. In last month's newsletter, we highlighted the EBCI AQP's Climate Change Partnership. In this newsletter, we will highlight the Native Electric School Bus Initiative.

Native Electric:

The Native Electric project is a four phased approach to an electric school bus (ESB) initiative with a focus on environmentally sustainable transportation. This vision was created from the first partnership between EBCI Air Quality Program (Katie Tiger) and the Cherokee Boys Club (CBC) (Donnie Owle), which was the biodiesel production facility in 2012. The CBC has been a regional leader in the renewable fuels sector, using biodiesel in their school buses since 2008. The CBC runs their diesel school buses on a B20 blend with biodiesel made by the CBC biodiesel production facility utilizing local used cooking oil.

The first phase of Native Electric was established from the NC Department of Environmental Quality's VW Settlement grant as a "Pilot Project" because the ESBs were not being tested in mountainous terrain like Western North Carolina. EBCI AQP applied in 2019 and received notification of funding in late 2020 to purchase an electric school bus and the associated charging infrastructure. This is how EBCI and CBC became the first school district (Cherokee Central Schools) in North Carolina to have an electric school bus.



For the EBCI AQP, the ESB transition made sense because reducing diesel emissions reduces both criteria pollutants that EBCI AQP monitors for, PM2.5 and Ozone. Transitioning from diesel school buses to ESBs bring both environmental and community health benefits. It also provides a healthier riding environment for the children by reducing exposure to PM and NOx, which are both linked to asthma. This is important because, like many tribal communities, asthma rates with EBCI children are higher than the national average.

The first ESB arrived on March 15th, 2022. Phase 2 of Native Electric replaced 5 old diesels with 4 electric school buses. The diesels that were replaced were a 1991, a 1992 and 3 1998's. This phase was financed with funds from several different sources: the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) grant, Duke Energy, CBC, the Cherokee Preservation Foundation (CPF), and the EBCI.

The funding from Duke Energy was secured through their vehicle to grid (V2G) pilot project, which required CBC to install bidirectional chargers for the 4 new ESBs. Because this is a newer technology, these chargers were separated and put on their own transformer. To date, there has been issues with the V2G portion of this phase, but that is what a pilot project is, test something new, work out the issues and make it better for everyone else.

The CPF funding allowed the CBC to install a 50 kW DC solar canopy bus charging depot to charge the 6 ESBs operating daily to transport children to and from school.

NTAA Announcements

Office Hours with the Policy Advisory Committee

Thursday, May 14th 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. MTN

Join Zoom Meeting [Link](#)

Meeting ID: 896 5415 2145

Password: 791811

Alaska Tribal Air Workgroup

Wednesday, May 28th 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. MTN

Join Zoom Meeting [Link](#)

Meeting ID: 831 9240 6272

Password: 932825

Wildfire Smoke Working Group

Thursday, June 5th 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. MTN

Join Zoom Meeting [Link](#)

Meeting ID: 879 9794 4373

Password: 300095



National Tribal Forum on Air Quality (NTFAQ) Eco Cafe

Please join us at this year's Eco Cafe at NTFAQ. The EcoCafe session of the NTFAQ is a prime opportunity for individuals, project teams, organizations, and businesses to share information and interact with Forum attendees in an informal, exhibit-style atmosphere.



National Tribal Forum on Air Quality (NTFAQ) NTFAQ is just around the corner!
Click [here](#) to register



National Tribal Forum on Air Quality (NTFAQ) 3rd Annual Film Festival and Fun Run



ITEP and TAMS Announcements

ITEP Listservs and Newsletters

Want to be in the know about all things pertaining to Tribes and the environment? Join our listservs/and or newsletters! Click [here](#) to view the various listservs, then click on the specific listserv to join.

2025 ITEP Office Hours

Each month ITEP partners with EPA, Tribes, and other content experts to have a lively discussion on a specific topic. Please join us via Zoom. Each month participants will hear a short presentation and have the opportunity to ask questions of the host and audience. Hope to see you at an upcoming Grants, Indoor Air Quality, or TAMS Center office hour.

Zoom Meeting ID is 659 096 3943; Password: AIAQTP

For more information please contact:

Christal Black Christal.Black@nau.edu

Upcoming Trainings

[Air Quality Data Management](#)

June, TBD

Online Take at Your Own Pace Workshops

Click [here](#) for more information



2025 ITEP OFFICE HOURS

Topic	Frequency	Time	Dates
TAMS Office Hours	Second Tuesday	11:00AM Pacific	January 14, March 11, May 13
TAMS Steering Committee Air Monitoring Workgroup	11:00 AM Pacific	February 11, April 8th, June 10	
Indoor Air Quality Office Hours	Third Thursday	11:00 AM Pacific	January 23, February 20, March 20, April 17, May 15, June 18
Grants Office Hours	First Wednesday	10AM Pacific	January 8, February 5, March 5, April 9, May 7, June 4
Outreach & Education Office Hours	Third Thursday	12:00 PM Pacific	January 23, February 20, March 20, April 17, May 15, June 18

ZOOM MEETING ID: 659-096-3943
PASSWORD: AIAQTP



Tribal Air Monitoring Support Center (TAMS) [Services](#)

- Tribal Data Tools
- Online Resources
- Publications and Documents
- Equipment Loan Program

EPA Announcements



Asthma Awareness Month

May is [Asthma Awareness Month](#)

Check out EPA's updated AAM Event Planning Kit, which includes tools to help plan and execute local events and gain media coverage.

EPA Indoor Air Cleaning Resources

With wildfire season upon us, we want to remind folks of the great EPA [resources](#) available for indoor air cleaning. Check them out here, to learn everything about different types of filters.

EPA Smoke-Ready Toolbox for Wildfires

Preparation is key to effective response to wildfire smoke events. Wildfires can start and spread rapidly, and a smoke event may impact a community in a matter of hours. Smoke can travel hundreds of miles and can impact the air quality and public health of communities far from the fire.

Communities should assess vulnerabilities in advance, plan for appropriate responses, and take action during a smoke event. This [toolbox](#) includes resources and information that communities can use to help them prepare for smoke events.



EPA IAQ (Indoor Air Quality) Webinars, Meetings, and Resources

View the [calendar of events](#) for upcoming webinars, meetings, and other important dates. See a list of free, IAQ-related on-demand webinar recordings and additional IAQ-related resources.

EPA's Air, Climate, & Energy Research Webinar Series

The next topic covered will be Wildfires with speakers Amara Holder and Sarah Coefield who will give a final update on the Wildfire ASPIRE Study: Advancing Science Partnerships for Indoor Reductions of Smoke.

Wednesday May 21, 2025

Click [here](#) to register

Wildfire Smoke Air Monitoring Response Technology & AirNow Fire and Smoke Map

Wildfires are a major source of poor air quality across the U.S. This webinar will showcase two tools to help state, local, and tribal air quality and public health agencies in assisting the public in getting and interpreting near real-time air quality information during wildfires and smoke events and steps they can take to protect their health.

Thursday, June 5, 2025, at 3-4 pm ET

Click here to [register](#)

Other Announcements

Association for Air Pollution Control Agencies (AAPCA) 2025 Best Practices in Air Pollution Control

Do you know of innovative practices or exemplary operations in the field of air pollution control?

The Association of Air Pollution Control Agencies (AAPCA) is seeking nominations from public agencies, private entities, and individuals to identify groundbreaking technology, innovative practices, and exemplary operations in the field of air pollution control. Of particular interest are activities that are directly transferable to the operation of an air pollution control agency.

How to Nominate?

Anyone can identify and recommend that a certain organization, control technology, or operation be identified as a "Best Practice." To apply, [fill out the nomination form](#) to provide the required information for the best practice nomination. Application instructions are included in the form and the deadline to submit nominations is 11:59 PM Eastern on Friday, May 30, 2025.



ASHRAE Annual Conference

Saturday, June 21 to Wednesday, 25, 2025

Phoenix, AZ

Click [here](#) to register

50th Annual Natural Hazards Research and Applications Workshop

Sunday, July 13 to Wednesday, July 16, 2025

Broomfield, CO

Click [here](#) to register



National Lead and Healthy Housing Conference

Monday, August 4 to Wednesday, August 6, 2025

Kansas, MO

Click [here](#) for more information



U.S. Department of Interior Indian Affairs Tribal Consultation Sessions

Indian Affairs -which includes the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), the Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BTFA), and the Office of the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs seeks to engage directly with federally recognized Tribes to receive formal input on critical needs as they develop plans to implement operational improvements. Click [here](#) to learn more and to register for a Tribal Consultation Session.

National Association of Clean Air Agencies (NACAA)

Click [here](#) for the Week in Review *Washington Update* and more information on any of the items below.

1. EPA tells its staff that the Office of Air will be restructured; OAP and OAQPS to be dissolved; new office of State Air Partnerships to be formed.

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin has announced that the reorganization of EPA's structure would begin with impacts to the Office of Research and Development (ORD), Office of Air and Radiation (OAR), Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention (OCSPP), and Office of Water (OW). Slides provided internally show that OAR would continue its Office of Transportation and Air Quality (OTAQ) and Office of Radiation and Indoor Air, but would dissolve the Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS) and Office of Atmospheric Programs (OAP) and transfer some of their regulatory functions to the new OCAP and OSAP offices.

2. ECOS Letter Opposes Administration's "Skinny Budget" Proposed Cuts, Which Would Eliminate Federal Funding For State and Local Clean Air Programs.

The Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) has written a letter voicing concern about the President's Budget preliminary request for U.S. EPA's discretionary funding for Fiscal Year 2026. The president's proposed Budget preliminary request – nicknamed the "skinny budget" – proposes to cut \$1.006 billion from categorical grants in FY 2026 to around \$100 million by eliminating 16 of 21 programs, including Section 103 and Section 105 grants, as well as DERA, Targeted Airshed, and other air grants.

3. Assistant Administrator for OECA Nominated

Jeffery Hall has been nominated to be Assistant Administrator of the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA). Hall is an attorney and was previously a partner at Burke Law Group, where he litigated against EPA air regulations.

4. EPW Democrats Object to Proposed Elimination of GHGRP

Democrats in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, led by Ranking Member Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) sent a letter Wednesday to EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin objecting to the proposed elimination of the Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program (GHGRP). The letter highlights the importance of the emissions data collected and distributed by the program for policymakers, investors, scientists, and the public, and argues that the program helps U.S.-based companies compete on the global market.

5. EPW Democrats object to proposed elimination of GHGRP

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6. CRA Joint Resolution of Disapproval of Rubber Tire Manufacturing NESHAP Rule Adopted by Senate; Awaits Presidential Signature

The U.S. Senate voted under the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to disapprove EPA's November 2024 amendments to the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) for Rubber Tire Manufacturing.