



National Tribal  
AIR ASSOCIATION

# NTAA MONTHLY UPDATE

FEBRUARY 2026

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## ITEP STAFF SPOTLIGHT

I am Johnathan Oxendine, Environmental Technician and Beekeeper for the Upper Mattaponi Tribe. I've worked for the tribe for almost 4 years now, though I started off as a fish hatchery technician. I've been working as the Environmental tech for around two years now, and in that time, I've learned a lot about air quality monitoring and continue to be floored by how complex and deep the topic of 'Air Quality' gets.

When I started this work, I often thought to myself 'Why does this matter?' 'I can SEE things like smoke and SMELL things like sulfur, why do we need these complicated, expensive machines to monitor air quality?' These basic curiosities shaped my approach to air quality monitoring in a way that has made me understand the depth and importance of monitoring. I like to run and be outdoors a lot and coming to understand that good air not only sustains but helps improve my respiratory system means a lot to me personally. In the two years I've been learning about air quality, I've been more conscious of where I spend my time outdoors, I would rather jog on the Tribal grounds where development is typically low than in the city where construction, vehicles, and people are bustling at the seams, making the air there more polluted.

The amount I have learned could be described as both my biggest obstacle and best success. I have learned enough now to explain in coherent terms just why it matters to watch the air we all breathe. Another thing I'm proud of in this position is that the Upper Mattaponi Tribe is the forerunner in tribal monitoring efforts in EPA's region 3, and I've even mentored other Tribal entities on their air quality efforts in the short two years I've been working on ours! This seems to have naturally led to me becoming the primary representative for our region in the NTAA and knowing I now have a network of capable air quality scientists at my disposal makes the daunting task of being the forerunner of my region a lot less intimidating. I'm grateful for everyone I have had the pleasure to learn from and everyone I will meet and learn from, so I hope to give back in a way that makes them grateful for me as well!



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### Newsletter:

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

Follow up on [Facebook](#)  Find us at: [www.ntaatribalair.org](http://www.ntaatribalair.org)



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## FEATURE ARTICLE

### The Undermining of Science in Protecting Public Health and Welfare Written by NTAA Staff

#### EPA to Ignore Lives Saved in Air Pollution Decisions, Raising Tribal Health Concerns

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) plans to stop counting the lives saved and health benefits—such as fewer asthma attacks and reduced premature deaths—when writing or rolling back air pollution rules. Internal documents reviewed by The New York Times show the agency will no longer assign any monetary value to reducing lethal pollutants like fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and ozone. [[msn.com](#)]

Former EPA scientists warn that this shift “abandons EPA’s mission to protect human health,” making it easier to weaken clean air standards that protect vulnerable communities, including many Tribal Nations living near major pollution sources. [[msn.com](#)]

This change is part of a broader move to prioritize industry costs over public health science. EPA has stated it will no longer monetize the public health benefits of reducing deadly air pollutants, a decision experts have called “dangerous” and likely to increase exposure to pollution linked to asthma, heart disease, and early death. [[ap-news.com](#)], [[cleantechnica.com](#)]

For Tribal communities—many already facing elevated pollution burdens—EPA’s new approach means fewer protections and greater risk to elders, children, and people with chronic health conditions. Ignoring the value of lives saved makes it harder to justify strong clean air standards, even when scientific evidence shows that these protections prevent illness and save lives.

#### NEPA Rollback Raises Concerns for Tribal Health, Science, and Sovereignty

On January 8, 2026, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) issued a Final Rule removing all NEPA Implementing Regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500–1508) from federal law. This action eliminates the unified framework that guided environmental review for nearly five decades.

CEQ took this step after concluding it “may lack authority” to issue binding NEPA regulations once Executive Order 11991 was rescinded in early 2025. Agencies are now left to rely solely on their individual NEPA procedures, many of which vary widely in quality, clarity, and scientific rigor.

CEQ acknowledges agencies “may voluntarily continue” using past regulations—but they are not required to. For Tribal communities already facing disproportionate environmental burdens, weakened review processes heighten risks to air and water quality, ecosystem health, and community well-being.

#### Implications for Tribal Nations

Many Tribes and Tribal organizations warned that removing CEQ regulations could:

- erode consultation pathways,
- create inconsistent agency standards,
- increase administrative burdens, and
- undermine protection of cultural and natural resources.

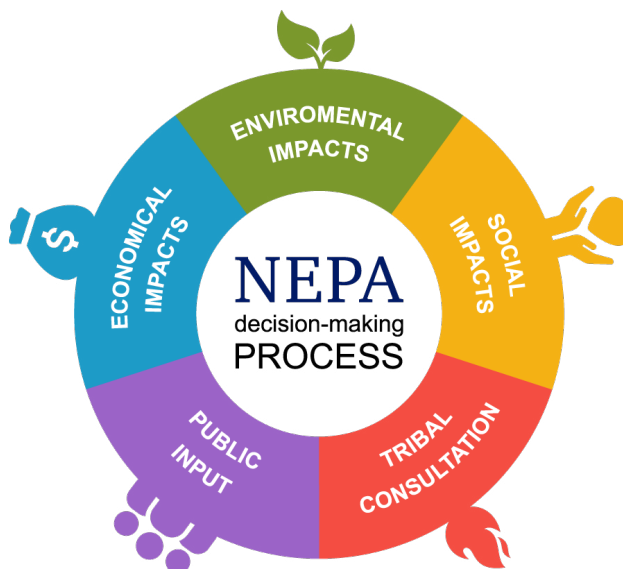
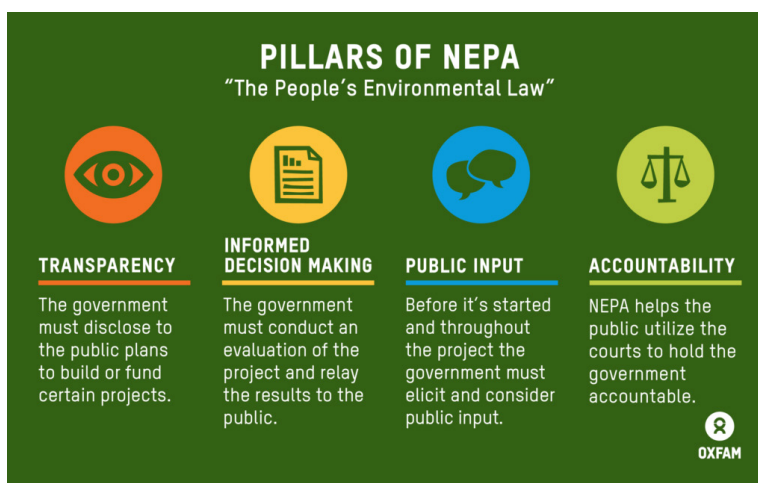
CEQ dismissed these concerns as speculative, even as it recognized that agencies will now make their own NEPA rules. [\[2026-01-08...026-00178 | PDF\]](#)

### What Comes Next

NEPA itself still exists—but without CEQ regulations, Tribal Nations must navigate a fragmented landscape of agency-specific procedures. Tribes can continue to:

- assert statutory rights within NEPA reviews,
- push agencies for early and meaningful engagement,
- strengthen Tribal environmental policies, and
- advocate for science-based decision making.

However, the removal of NEPA’s implementing regulations marks a significant shift away from standardized, science-based environmental protection—placing greater importance on Tribal advocacy and vigilance to safeguard health, lands, waters, and future generations.



## NTAA ANNOUNCEMENTS

### NTFAQ



### NTAA Workgroups

#### Office Hours with the PAC

Wednesday, February 11th, 2026 from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. MST  
Zoom [Link](#)

#### Alaska Tribal Air Workgroup

Wednesday, February 25th, 2026 from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. MST  
Zoom [Link](#)

#### EPA Air Policy Call

Thursday, February 26th 2026 from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. MST  
Zoom [Link](#)

### NTAA Has a New Website

NTAA has a new website with NTAA's new logo and updated branding. NTAA staff updated content so that all the information is the most accurate and up to date. Check it out [here](#).

### State of Tribal Air Report (STAR)

#### Case Studies

We are looking for case studies and photos of Tribal Air Programs to highlight. Please email [Marty.Johnson@nau.edu](mailto:Marty.Johnson@nau.edu) if you are interested in submitting for the report.

#### Funding Questionnaire

If your Tribal Air Program has been impacted by the uncertainty and/or cuts to funding over the past year, we want to hear from you! We are writing a section in the STAR about these impacts and we need anecdotal information. Neither your name nor your Tribe will be mentioned.

## ITEP/TAMS UPDATES

### PFAS and Tribal Communities

Has PFAS impacted your Tribe? If so, the National Tribal Water Council would like to hear from you! Please contact Elaine Wilson at [elaine.wilson@nau.edu](mailto:elaine.wilson@nau.edu)

### Caring for Our Relatives

#### Office Hours

The Caring for Our Relatives Program is excited to announce a new way to connect. Quick, informal, monthly, 1-hour sessions to support all aspects of ecological resilience projects - drop in with your questions and ideas.

We'll have staff on-hand for guidance on funding opportunities, proposal writing, and more. Every 4th Wednesday of the month at (7:30 AM HST/9:30 AM AKDT/10:30 AM PDT/11:30 AM MDT/12:30 CDT/1:30.

#### Free Technical Assistance and Trainings

Click [here](#) to apply for free technical assistance for climate change resilience projects.

### Air Monitoring Project Planning & Development

Course Dates: February 24-26, 2026

In-Person Course: TAMS Center, Las Vegas, NV

Application Due Date: Friday, January 20th, 2026

Click [here](#) for more information and to apply.

### AIAQTP & TAMS Office Hours:

Click [here](#) to join AIAQTP & TAMS office hours. Each month ITEP, EPA, and Tribes will host a rotating schedule of office hours. Please join a lively discussion and ask questions about Grants, Indoor Air Quality, and the TAMS Center. Click the link above to see the Office Hours Schedule.



**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](mailto:elaine.wilson@nau.edu) to join our call.

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



**ITEP'S CARING FOR OUR RELATIVES PROGRAM**

**JOIN US FOR:**

- **One-on-One Technical Assistance is Back**
  - Click the link below to sign up
    - <https://forms.gle/M7wtjScV3JIVbxPA>
  - Our program offers free, technical assistance for individual Tribes who may be facing barriers to starting or completing climate change-related species and/or ecological resilience projects
- **OFFICE HOUR TRAININGS** (11am-12pm MT) via Zoom
  - Register here: <http://bit.ly/4ppxwdk>
  - January 28, 2026 - SADE Framework
  - February 25, 2026 - RFP Support & Tools
  - March 25, 2026 - Project Scoping
  - April 22, 2026 - Community Engagement
  - May 27, 2026 - Risk Assessments
- **In-Person Ecological Resilience Trainings**
  - Stay tuned for announcements

**Contact us with questions:**  
[ashley.gries@nau.edu](mailto:ashley.gries@nau.edu) or  
[kieren.daley-larsen@nau.edu](mailto:kieren.daley-larsen@nau.edu)



### Tribal Air Monitoring Support Center (TAMS)

#### Oh QAPP Office Hours

TAMS Staff will be live EACH Thursday to discuss issues related to QAPPS, QREST and Data Management.

Every Thursday 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. EST

[Link](#) Meeting ID: 865 1626 9184

## EPA ANNOUNCEMENTS

### [Removal of National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Regulations](#)

Effective January 8, 2026, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) adopted the interim final rule, published on February 25, 2025, as final. The final rule addresses public comments and adopts as final the interim final rule, without changes, removing all iterations of CEQ's regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) from the Code of Federal Regulations.

### [Extension of the State Implementation Plan: Due Date for the Regional Haze Third Implementation Period](#)

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is finalizing revisions to the Regional Haze Rule (RHR) under the Clean Air Act (CAA) to change the due date for the next round of State Implementation Plans (SIPs) for the third implementation period from July 31, 2028, to July 31, 2031. Under the RHR, States must submit plans to protect visibility in mandatory Class I Federal areas to make reasonable progress towards the national goal of preventing any future, and remedying any existing, impairment of visibility in Class I areas. This final rule is effective on March 9, 2026.

### **Interstate Transport for the 2015 Ozone NAAQS**

On January 27, 2026 EPA signed a proposal to approve State Implementation Plan (SIP) submissions from Alabama, Arizona, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, and Tennessee addressing the Clean Air Act's "interstate transport" requirements for the 2015 ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). This proposed action is the first step in following through on EPA's March 12, 2025, announcements to work with states on SIPs to improve air quality and reconsider the "Good Neighbor Plan." This is the first action taken as part of the Agency's reconsideration of the Good Neighbor Plan and its associated SIP actions. EPA intends to take additional steps to further reconsider the Good Neighbor Plan and additional states impacted by that rule. Click [here](#) for more information. Click [here](#) to make a comment. **Comment period ends March 2, 2026.**

### **EPA Proposes to Remove Butoxyethyle Benzoate (2-BEB) from Clean Air Act List of Hazardous Air Pollutants**

EPA has made an initial determination that there is adequate data on the health and environmental effects of 2-BEB to determine that emissions, ambient concentrations, bioaccumulation, or deposition of 2-BEB may not reasonably be anticipated to cause adverse human health or environmental effects. This action includes a detailed rationale for granting the petition to delete 2-BEB from the glycol ethers category of HAP under section 112(b)(1) list of HAP. If, after opportunity for public comment and review of those comments, EPA makes the final determination to grant the petition, then 2-BEB will be deleted from the list of HAP in the same action. [Proposed Rule](#). Comments must be received on or before February 20, 2026.

### **EPA Tools and Resources Webinar America's Children and the Environment**

Wednesday, February 28, 2026 from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. ET

Click [here](#) to register

Free webinars typically held the third Wednesday of every month from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. ET

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **EPA Environmental Education Grants**

Under the Environmental Education Grants Program, EPA seeks grant applications through a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) from eligible applicants to support environmental education projects that promote environmental awareness and stewardship and help provide people with the skills to take responsible actions to protect the environment. Grant applications are due **March 3, 2026**. Click [here](#) for more information.

### **Wildfire Smoke Preparedness in Community Buildings Notice of Funding**

Wildfire Smoke Preparedness in Community Buildings is a federal grant program to enhance community wildfire smoke preparedness. The program can provide grants to states, federally recognized Tribes, public pre-schools, local educational agencies, and non-profit organizations for the assessment, prevention, control, and/or abatement of wildfire smoke hazards in community buildings and related activities.

Deadline to apply is April 15, 2026. Click [here](#) for more information.

### **Go Green Initiative Grant Opportunity**

The mission of Go Green is to protect children's health from environmental toxins and conserve natural resources for future generations. Funds will go to improving indoor air quality in schools and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in low-income and Tribal school districts throughout all fifty states and U.S. Territories. Up to \$45,000 in grant funding and IAQ monitors to enact IAQ Management Plans. Cohort 2 Applications are due **February 27, 2026**.

Click [here](#) to apply.

### **Youth Climate Justice Fund**

The Youth Climate Justice Fund provides funding to emerging youth-led climate justice and socio-environmental groups through a participatory decision-making process. Deadline is **March 1, 2026**. Click [here](#) to apply.

### **AARP Community Challenge**

A grant program to make communities more livable for people of all ages with tangible improvements that jump-start long-term change. Grant deadline is **March 4, 2026**. Click [here](#) to learn more.

### **The Climate Smart Communities Initiative (CSCI)**

CSCI is pleased to announce the launch of the 2026 CSCI grants competition. CSCI awards provide funding and technical assistance to advance community-based climate resilience in communities or regions that are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Deadline to apply is **March 12, 2026**. Click [here](#) to learn more.

### **Thriving in an Age of Disasters: How to build emotional resilience and take action**

Webinar from the Climate Mental Health Network and Partners

February 5, 2026 6:00 p.m. ET

Click [here](#) to register

### **National Indian Health Board Webinar**

#### **Public Health Authority: Sovereignty in Action**

This session will take participants deeper into the heart of Tribal public health by focusing on public health authority as an expression of sovereignty in action. Tribal Nations hold the inherent authority to protect the health and well-being of their people, and this webinar will walk through what that means in practice.

Friday, February 13, 2026 3:00 p.m. ET

Click [here](#) to register

## OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS cont.

### NOAA's Satellite Applications Symposium Series: Fire

Improving wildfire detection and monitoring capabilities through new satellite technology

Wednesday, February 18, 2026 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. MST

Click [here](#) to register

### Tribal Exchange Network Group (TXG)

Tribal Exchange Network Group (TXG)

Monthly Tribal Data Drop-In Session

Thursday, February 19, 2026 from 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Pacific

Click [here](#) to register



### California Forest Science Symposium

Thursday, February 19 - Friday, February 20, 2026

Click [here](#) to register

### Reframing the Ecology of Fire in the Eastern United States 'Old Growth' Forest Ecosystems

A panel of researchers and land managers will critically examine the role of fire—past, present, and future—in shaping eastern United States mature and old-growth forest ecosystems.

Friday, February 19, 2026 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. PT Click [here](#) to register

### 2026 Our Planet, Our Health Convention

Convenes health professionals, researchers, community leaders, and policy experts to tackle the growing impact of climate change on health. Hosted by the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health. Arlington, VA and online. February 28 - March 3, 2026. Click [here](#) to register.

### NACCA

[Washington Update](#)



### Environmental Law Institute

Click [here](#) to view ELI's Calendar of seminars, courses & special events

### Understanding and Addressing Energy Affordability in the United States

The National Academies will host a workshop to identify key factors contributing to rising energy costs and discuss potential policy and technology solutions to energy affordability challenges. Two Events: Trends in

Electricity Prices held on February 4, 2026 and a workshop held on February 25, 2026. Click [here](#) to learn more.

