



INTERTRIBAL TIMBER COUNCIL

TIMBER NOTES

Winter ~ 2026



Cody Desautel

ITC'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY!!

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Intertribal Timber Council (ITC), a landmark milestone for an organization that has redefined the relationship between Indigenous nations and their natural resources. Since 1976, the ITC has stood as a guardian of tribal sovereignty, ensuring that the management of forestlands remains firmly in the hands of the people who have stewarded them since time immemorial.

The last few months of 2025 were very eventful, including a 43-day federal government shutdown and the hiring of Brian Fennessy as the first Chief of the new Wildland Fire Service within Department of Interior (DOI). We also welcomed ITC's first Executive Director aboard and look forward to the continued growth of ITC. With a Con-

tinuing Resolution (CR) in place through January 30, 2026, we hope Congress can return its attention back to several tribal forest management bills ITC continues to work on throughout the remainder of this year.

First I want to officially welcome Cal Mukumoto as our first Executive Director. I reported his selection in my prior newsletter, but now we have him onboard and are wasting no time inundating him with work. His experience and connections in the forest management community were immediately apparent once he started on October 1, 2025. We continue to brief him on ITC priorities, and you should expect to be hearing from him in the near future if you haven't already.

The 43-day government shutdown, which ended on November 12, 2025, was the longest shutdown in the U.S. government's history. The impacts to Indian Country are still being determined, however we know the lapse in appropriations had impacts on tribes and tribal members. This has also created a backlog of work within the federal government, which could be compounded by reorganization and a reduced federal workforce. ITC will continue to track those impacts and also monitor progress on a CR or omnibus for the remainder of fiscal year 2026.



Photo of President Cody Desautel and USDA Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz, pictured with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation flag.

The DOI fire consolidation continues. The Department held four total consultation sessions in November, with two being virtual and two being in person. I participated in the NCIA in person consultation and found the presentation informative regarding the proposed structure for the U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS). There are unan-

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President's Message

by Cody Desautel

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swered questions, and we hope tribes had the opportunity to engage in a consultation session and provide comments that help shape the organization. ITC made a point of sharing its comment letter in advance of December 19, 2025, deadline in case the information and perspectives were useful for our member tribes. With implementation scheduled for January 12, 2026, it is likely the change will have occurred prior to reading this article. ITC is committed to working with Chief Fennessy and the USWFS staff to ensure the organizational structure and operations recognize the unique relationship and obligation the federal government has to tribes. Based on the feedback we have received so far that will be a priority, but we have some work to do on what that looks like. Particularly as it pertains to the use of P.L. 93-638 within this new agency.

During our December board meeting we also had the oppor-

tunity to meet with USDA Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz. This is the first time the Chief of the Forest Service has attended an ITC board meeting, and we are grateful that Chief Schultz's made time to engage with us. He shared many of the priorities for the Forest Service. This included a priority on partnerships with tribes and utilizing the many mechanisms we have available, including TFPAs, GNA, shared stewardship agreements, and stewardship contracting. One of the more important messages from Chief Schultz was the need for action. He does not view talking as success unless it leads to collaborative work happening on the ground. This is a priority ITC shares with the Chief. I also mentioned in my last newsletter that ITC and the Forest Service finalized an agreement just before the end of the fiscal year, which provides funding to host a series of workshops to ensure both tribes and Forest Service are aware of these opportunities. The intent of these work-

shops is to increase awareness and use those authorities to benefit both tribes and the Forest Service.

ITC also continues to track the reorganization of U.S. Department of Agriculture and DOI, rescinding of the 2001 Roadless Rule, Northwest Forest Plan Revision, and several bills that Matt Hill will include in his update. Those bills include the Tribal co-management, the FORESTS Act, Fix Our Forest Act, and ITARA Amendment. Our next virtual board meeting is scheduled for the second week in February, and our April in-person meeting will be held in Boise to meet with the new Wildland Fire Service leadership. I encourage our member tribes, and any others interested in tribal forest and fire policy and management to attend. Your perspectives and insights are important to shaping ITC's priorities.



BIA Division of Wildland Fire Management

by Aaron Baldwin



Aaron Baldwin

EXPANDING TRIBAL CAPACITY IN FUELS MONITORING THROUGH TLS

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) hosted a multi-day Terrestrial Laser Scanning (TLS) training October 28-31, 2025, in Albuquerque and Jemez Pueblo, NM advancing Tribal Nations' capacity to collect, interpret,

and apply high-resolution fuels information through modern, science-based monitoring approaches. The course supported Tribal Nations in building strong, repeatable workflows that enhance fuels planning, monitoring, and communication. The event brought together more than 30 participants from Tribal Nations across the United States, alongside federal and academic partners. The training strengthened techni-

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cal skills, reinforced principles of Tribal Data Sovereignty, and demonstrated how TLS can support planning, risk reduction, and stewardship across Tribal landscapes.

Opening Remarks and Jemez Pueblo Welcome: The training began with opening remarks from Trina Locke, Director of Environmental and Natural Resources at the BIA Office of Trust Services, whose continued support has been central to advancing this initiative. Following her remarks, Jemez Pueblo leadership offered a prayer and blessing, grounding participants in cultural respect and the responsibility of working on ancestral lands.

Classroom sessions at the University of New Mexico (UNM) built on this foundation, providing instruction in TLS concepts, fuels-related applications, Tribal data governance, and field workflows. Training was delivered by a multi-agency cadre that included the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the New Mexico Consortium (NMC), the Ecological Restoration Institute at Northern Arizona University (ERI), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Jemez Pueblo then welcomed the group into their community and hosted the field components, offering access to areas with both ongoing and proposed Reserved Treaty Rights Lands (RTRL) fuels projects. The sites provided ideal conditions for hands-on TLS practice.

Hands-On Field Instruction on Jemez Pueblo



Photo of Participants of the TLS training gather for a group photo in the field. Jemez Pueblo, NM – October 2025.

Lands: Over two days in Jemez Pueblo, participants deployed TLS units, installed plots, collected fuels and structural data, and practiced field troubleshooting. The field sessions covered a range of typical Southwestern vegetation conditions representative of Tribal fuels projects, allowing participants to apply the full workflow:

- TLS scanner setup and alignment
- Plot establishment and layout
- Tier 1 and Tier 2 fuels data collection
- Overstory and understory vegetation measurements
- File naming conventions and data management

Throughout the field component, the cadre ensured consistent application of the TLS protocol and mentored participants on adapting workflows to their home units.

Science and Tribal Partnerships Advance Fuels Monitoring: The training aligned with the BIA Fuels Branch priority of strengthening Tribal capacity to generate

reliable, repeatable fuels information that supports decision-making and Tribal sovereignty. It was delivered through strong interagency and academic partnerships, with each partner contributing essential expertise including:

BIA Division of Wildland Fire Management: Led coordination and delivery of the training, provided instructional support, and reinforced the agency's commitment to advancing Tribal capacity in fuels monitoring.

New Mexico Consortium: Provided the TLS field protocol, served as the technical support for instruction, and leads all TLS data processing and product generation for Tribal partners.

Ecological Restoration Institute at Northern Arizona University: Offered context on fuels-relevant structural and statistical concepts and demonstrated how TLS data supports restoration and monitoring.

U.S. Geological Survey: Supported TLS workflows, introduced data processing principles, and reinforced quality assurance concepts.

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Provided supplemental field support and participated in classroom sessions, reflecting the agency's continued interest in TLS development across federal programs.

The New Mexico Consortium's leading role ensures consistent technical standards, reliable data products, and alignment with the long-term direction of TLS implementation across Indian Country.

A Growing National TLS Network

The Jemez Pueblo-Albuquerque training marked a key step in expanding a national TLS practitioner network across Indian Country. Participants strengthened their field competencies, enhanced their understanding of TLS applications, and built relationships with federal, Tribal, and academic partners that will support long-term program growth.

The success of this training reflects the collaborative leadership of Jemez Pueblo; the Bureau of Indian Affairs; the New Mexico Consortium; the Ecological Restoration Institute at Northern Arizona University; the U.S. Geological Survey; and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Together, these partners are advancing Tribal capacity, improving fuels documentation across diverse ecosystems, and ensuring TLS technologies are implemented in alignment with Tribal sovereignty, cultural values, and long-term stewardship goals.

BREAD SPRINGS CHAPTER COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION PROJECT

The Bureau of Indian Affairs Navajo Regional Office is helping the community of Bread Springs on the Navajo Nation Reservation in New Mexico, strengthen wildfire mitigation and implement prevention outreach activities. These activities foster partnerships with collaborators and public awareness on wildfire prevention.

In spring of 2025, Gloria Skeets, Bread Springs Chapter program manager for the Navajo Nation, shared an observation with Darryl Wilson, the Navajo Regional Wildland Fire Prevention Specialist, who could help improve wildfire mitigation within Bread Springs.

With support from the Navajo Regional Office, Forest Stewards Guild, McKinley County Fire Department, McKinley County and Navajo Nation Emergency Management, neighboring Navajo

Tribal Chapters, community members, elected officials, and local schools, Skeets is leading a collaborative effort to strengthen wildfire mitigation in Bread Springs. This joint initiative brings together diverse partners to improve preparedness, reduce wildfire risk, and protect the community through coordinated action.

It was clear that Skeets wanted to implement the following goals moving forward:

- Develop outreach events to promote wildfire prevention
- Create an awareness of Firewise and Home Ignition Zone for home assessments
- Provide informative presentations on wildfire prevention and seasonal updates to tribal officials.
- Evaluate roads for access to emergency vehicles access.
- Providing school presentations on fire prevention
- Assist homeowners to create defensible space around homes.



Photo of Participants of the TLS training gather for a group photo in the field. Jemez Pueblo, NM – October 2025.

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BIA Division of Wildland Fire Management

by Aaron Baldwin

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Photo of Darryl Wilson, Navajo Regional Wildland Fire Prevention Specialist at an outdoor fire prevention event. April 2026.

In the summer more proactive steps were taken to strengthen wildfire prevention efforts across the Bread Springs community. Skeets and Wilson teamed together at two major outreach events, hosting information booths that featured resources on wildfire prevention, the WETIP Arson Hotline, Ready Set Go preparedness, Navajo Nation EPA debris burning registration, and Firewise safety tips. These events successfully raised awareness and encouraged residents to act. Firewise materials were distributed to boost interest in home ignition zone assessments, and eight homes are now scheduled for defensible space evaluations. Plans for cutting and chipping treatments are already underway, which is a crucial step toward reducing wildfire risk.

Their outreach extended to local schools, where two engag-

ing presentations introduced students to wildfire prevention, fire ecology, and careers in wildfire management. Held at Bread Springs Elementary and the Bread Springs Chapter Building, these sessions inspired curiosity and even sparked interest among summer students in becoming wildland firefighters. Beyond education, Skeets encouraged the assessment of community roads for emergency access and evacuation readiness, ensuring safety remains a priority.

The overall goal for Bread Springs is to create an awareness of wildfire potential, educate people about wildfire prevention, promote Firewise concepts to protect their homes and prepare the community for emergency situations.

The collaboration has just begun with a few tasks already

completed and is ongoing. With the continued help from the Bureau of Indian Affairs Navajo Regional Office and other collaborators, Skeets believes the Bread Springs community wildfire mitigation will be improved.

With ongoing development, Wilson will deliver future presentations to tribal officials and regional partners to integrate wildfire mitigation strategies into emergency plans. These collaborative efforts mark considerable progress toward a safer, more resilient community.

EMPOWERING NATIVE YOUTH THROUGH WILDLAND FIRE CAREER PATHWAYS

The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Division of Wildland Fire Management (DWFM) have launched an innovative partnership that is transforming opportunities for Native students. Through the Basic Fire School Model (BFSM), high school and college students gain hands-on training in wildland fire management while earning industry-recognized certifications such as NWCG S-130/L-180. This program not only equips students with essential firefighting skills but also promotes leadership, career readiness, and community resilience.

Why It Matters: Wildland fire careers offer well-paying, adventurous opportunities that strengthen Tribal capacity and protect communities. By integrating culturally relevant education with technical training, this initiative creates a direct recruitment pipeline into the

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BIA Division of Wildland Fire Management

by Aaron Baldwin

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BIA workforce and other federal fire agencies. Students can even earn dual college credits through partnerships with institutions like Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI), opening doors to advanced education and long-term career success.

Impact Highlights:

Pilot Success: The program is already underway at several BIE-operated high schools, with plans to expand to all 55 BIE-operated high schools and engage Tribal-controlled schools within five years.

Workforce Development: Over

50 graduates annually are projected to enter BIA DWFM workforce pathways, including internships and apprenticeships.

Long-Term Vision: Within 10 years, the program aims to serve all 183 BIE-funded secondary schools, creating a robust pipeline of Native professionals in federal fire leadership roles.

This initiative supports Section 7 of Executive Order 14191 by expanding career and technical education and enhancing Tribal control over education. With minimal cost and maximum impact, the program is poised to become one of the most effective recruitment tools managed by the Department of the Interior.

or Fire.

Looking Ahead: By combining education, cultural relevance, and career pathways, BIE and BIA are building a future for Native youth to lead in safeguarding lands and communities. Together, we are not just fighting fires, we are igniting opportunities.

2025 BIA-BIE Wildland Fire Career Pathways Executive Summary: Download online at www.itcnet.org/issues_projects/issues_2/workforce-development/workforce-development.html



BIA Division of Forestry

by Caleb Cain



Caleb Cain

HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE DIVISION OF FORESTRY!

As we welcome 2026, the Division of Forestry is energized and optimistic about the opportunities ahead. This year is shaping up to be both productive and

eventful, and we're excited to build on the momentum of past achievements while embracing new challenges.

Here are a few key initiatives we're looking forward to:

Timber Team: Our dedicated Timber Team is preparing for a busy season, with new projects and collaborative efforts aimed at advancing sustainable forest management across the nation.

Training: We're investing in professional development through targeted training sessions focused on TAAMS, timber sales, compliance, and best practices. The first forestry field training of the year will be held in the Western Region.

Strategic Planning & Innovation: In 2026, we'll continue to prioritize strategic planning

and innovation, with a focus on forest inventory & planning and deeper engagement with our partners and communities.

Artificial Intelligent (AI): From mapping and forest inventories to planning, writing, and research—AI is transforming how we work. These innovations will be monumental in shaping the future of forestry.

EO-14225 Immediate Expansion of American Timber Production: We are also preparing for EO-14225, which will play a significant role in shaping our operations and priorities this year. More details and guidance will be shared as implementation progresses.

Stay tuned for updates throughout the year as we share pro-

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gress, celebrate milestones, and continue working toward a resilient and thriving forest landscape.

Budget / Funding for Forestry Projects: BIA Forestry is currently operating under a Continuing Resolution that expires January 30, 2026. If you have an urgent need for Forestry Projects funding, please contact your Regional Forester.

TAAMS Training Updates: Reminder of the below planned and approved TAAMS Forestry Training schedule through April 2026. The plan is subject to change. All classes should be posted to DOI Talent at least 60 days prior to the event.

Timber Team: Prior to the onset of the federal government shutdown, the Timber Team successfully concluded fiscal year 2025 by supporting Yakama Agency Forestry with timber marking operations on the Old Reservation Boundary Timber Sale. Over the course of two weeks, the team completed internal leave tree marking across 654.8 acres, contributing to the agency's forest management objectives.

Following the Yakama assignment, the Timber Team continued its interagency support by assisting the Crow Reservation in Montana with timber sale preparation for the Sioux Pass Timber Sale. Responsibilities included delineating allotment boundaries and applying boundary paint, conducting road layout and design, and implementing internal leave tree marking in accordance with

TAAMS Class	Location	Start	End	CGI/In-House
Forestry Pre-Sale	MS Teams	1/21/26	1/21/26	In-House
Introductory Forestry	Ft. Vancouver	1/27/26	1/29/26	CGI
Forestry Pre-Sale	MS Teams	2/18/26	2/18/26	In-House
Introductory Forestry	TBD	3/10/26	3/12/26	CGI
Forestry Pre-Sale	MS Teams	3/18/26	3/18/26	In-House
Advanced Forestry	Ft. Vancouver	4/07/26	4/09/26	In-House
Forestry Pre-Sale	MS Teams	4/21/26	4/21/26	In-House
Forestry Pre-Sale	MS Teams	4/29/26	4/29/26	In-House

variable density thinning and shelterwood silvicultural prescriptions.

Between upcoming travel assignments, the Timber Team remains committed to providing ongoing support for timber sale preparation activities as needed.

The Timber Team's tentative schedule and openings for the remaining calendar year Date/Tribe/Region:

- Open Continuous between travel: Crow Reservation Sale/Prep, MT; RMR
- January 12 - 23, 2026: Possible dates for Quinault/Fond Du Lac Reschedule from Shutdown
- February 2 - 13, 2026: Possible dates for Quinault/Fond Du Lac Reschedule from Shutdown
- February 23 – March 6, 2026: Karuk Tribe of California CFI, CA; PR
- March 16 - 27, 2026: Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Sale/Prep, NC; ER
- April 6 - 17, 2026: Ute Mountain Ute CFI, CO; SWR
- May 4 - 15, 2026: Tentative

Warm Springs Reservation Sale/Prep, OR; NWR

- June 1 - 12, 2025: ITC Symposium and project assistance for the Menominee Reservation of Wisconsin
- June 21 - 27, 2026: OPEN DATES
- July 1 - 25, 2026: Tentative Warm Springs Reservation Sale/Prep, OR; NWR
- August 3 - 14, 2026: OPEN DATES
- August 24 – September 4, 2026: OPEN DATES
- September 14 - 25, 2026: OPEN DATES

We are seeking proposals starting in January of 2026 and beyond and any federal/tribal staff that would like to work with the Timber Team on any upcoming assignment.

To find the project request form and more information about the Timber Team please go to <https://www.bia.gov/service/timber-team>.

Portable Milling Infrastructure: The BIA Division of Forestry received 20 proposals

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from seven different regions. The total amount requested was \$3,030,000.33. Twelve proposals were selected for funding utilizing regional rankings and central office review. Seven regions are represented in the selection and \$1,983,254 was distributed to the Regional Offices and the Office of Self Governance.

BRANCH OF FOREST INVENTORY AND PLANNING (FIP)

FIP Project Update: FIP is currently managing or finalizing six CFI initiation projects, along with four projects in the processing and analysis phase. Of all active projects, 26% are being managed directly by FIP, while the remaining 74% are managed at the regional, agency, or tribal level.

The FIP Team successfully concluded fiscal year 2025 by advancing key initiatives across multiple regions. The team continued to support ongoing data collection for 11 Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) projects in the Southwest, Western, and Navajo Regions; developed CFI materials to support the initiation of 10 upcoming projects in the Eastern, Eastern Oklahoma, Northwest, and Western Regions; and provided ongoing assistance to tribes and regional staff for Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) efforts across 14 projects in the Pacific, Northwest, Midwest, Southwest, Western, and Southern Plains Regions.

In November, FIP foresters delivered on-the-ground training to support the Navajo Nation's

reinitiation of CFI field data collection, including the transition to tablet-based data collection. To date, the tribe has successfully measured 63 plots and continues to make steady progress in the field.

National Advanced Silviculture Program (NASP) - December 2025 Update:

Four BIA and Tribal students from NASP Class 19 successfully completed Module 2 at Oregon State University. Module 3 titled, "Advanced Silviculture Topics" will be located at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA and is scheduled for April 26 - May 9, 2026. The instructor will be John Munsell.

NASP Class 20, application period closed on December 12, 2025, successful applicants will be notified in late January.

Nominations for NASP Class 21 will open next fall. Applicants will need to submit an "Accountability Plan," including a resume detailing experience in seven foundational silvicultural tasks, a letter of intent, and letters of support.

NASP MODULE 2: OREGON'S COAST RANGE

BY CASEY SIGG

Oregon State University's College of Forestry hosts the second module of the National Advanced Silviculture Program, Titled Inventory/Monitoring and Decision Support. The focus is on the quantitative side of forestry. Concepts taught include inventory, mensuration, sampling, statistics, monitoring, economics, and forest regulation. The influence of federal laws on forest management and



Photo of Timber Team foresters building timber cruising maps for the Crow Reservation's Sioux Pass Timber Sale.

legal policy is also covered. OSU has a rich tradition as a forestry college, and I was excited to learn from professors whose research papers I had read and to explore the university's new forestry building, made from cross-laminated timber.

Each day there was a mix of classroom lectures and field site visits. Yes, plenty of equations were stared at, frustration expressed and eventually worked through. If you haven't thought about the power of interest rates for a while, this module is for you. Examples were given on the economic returns of certain management actions, such as rotations of Douglas-fir plantations. Different scenarios were explored: What is the difference in harvest timing if the interest rate used is 4% versus 6%? These economic metrics are balanced with forest biology concepts, such as determining when your stand will attain the culmination of mean annual increment, the point of highest average growth rate. Foresters will remember from college that this is central to sustained-yield

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management, which is mandated by the National Indian Forest Resource Management Act of 1990 for trust lands.

The most meaningful experiences came from field trips. As fog from the coast rolled through the hills, some mornings were spent examining silvicultural treatments on BLM land and in the Siuslaw National Forest. During a weekend excursion to Newport, we visited several sites on the Central Coast Ranger District of Siuslaw with their silviculturist. I marveled at remnant stumps of massive western redcedar cut during the 1920s, with the 'springboard' notches still visible at our first stop which was a thinning treatment of Sitka spruce. Other stands we visited were thinning treatments designed to accelerate the development of old-growth structure, intended to provide



Photo of Artificial regeneration on an intensively managed coast range forest.

habitat for species such as the marbled murrelet.

Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) are a strong interest of mine, and I started a good

discussion about their management on Siuslaw. It turns out an herbaceous plant called salal is harvested commercially for floral arrangements popular in Europe, and chanterelle mushrooms are also picked commercially.

As a forester, it just wouldn't be a complete trip to Oregon's coast without visiting some big trees. After our field trip to the Siuslaw, we had the afternoon to explore Cape Perpetua Scenic Area, where we hiked the "Big Tree Trail." The big tree at the end of the trail is a ten-foot-diameter Sitka spruce! On our final field trip during the second week, we hiked through a stand of old-growth Douglas-fir and western hemlock while discussing different forest inventory techniques. Walking among 300-year-old Douglas Fir and watching the morning light shine through the hemlock nee-



Photo of Brute 23 Firewood Processor that will be utilized by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

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dles is an uplifting experience.

My favorite section of this module was density management. Stand Density Index (SDI) is taught in every college silviculture course, but in NASP, you revisit it in depth. SDI—or the “ $3/2$ law”—is as close as foresters have to a biological law when managing forest growth. A researcher named Reineke observed that in fully stocked, even-aged stands, there is a log-linear relationship between the number of trees per acre and the quadratic mean diameter (QMD) of those trees. When graphed, this relationship creates a line with a negative $3/2$ slope, which represents the maximum number of live trees a site can support. Determining where your stand lies on this slope allows you to assess whether it is growing optimally or if competition-induced mortality is beginning. It's fascinating how this discovery, made nearly 100 years ago, is still widely true. This law can even be seen in other vegetation, such as cornfields or your tomato garden, as our professor quipped!

The module concludes with a group project that all students work on throughout the two weeks. In small groups, you write what is essentially a mini NEPA document with different silvicultural alternatives. Each student writes a different alternative and is expected to model the results in the Forest Vegetation Simulator. Along with writing an analysis of the model results and the implications of each alternative, group presentations are given on the



Photo of the writer with a 400-year-old Douglas-Fir.

final morning before everyone departs. Watching everyone's demanding work culminate and hearing about silviculture from across the nation was a high note to end the course.

Oregon's Coast Range gives you a lot to think about as a forester. Driving along Highway 20, viewing the different age classes of Douglas-fir—from industry land managed on a 40-year rotation to late-successional

reserves likely never to be harvested again in my lifetime—the different values forests hold for us come to mind. Determining how to manage these lands is often complex and controversial, as the 1990s showed us. Thankfully, opportunities like NASP exist to give foresters the quantitative tools to navigate these challenges—and to be inspired by some big trees.



Education Committee

by Shawn de France



Shawn de France

The Education Committee met in person on December 11, 2025. Tamara Birdsbill gave an update on SKC TREES Program. They currently have 13 students in the program and 8 students on the waiting list. The SKC TREES Director position is currently being advertised, and they hope to have that person onboard soon. Tia Beavert gave an update on

the Project Learning Tree Tribal Forestry & Wildland Fire Voices: A Career Guide with Sustainable Forestry Initiative. This is a recruitment tool to promote tribal Forestry & Fire Programs. There were 25 nominations for interviews for the career guide, and we have online meetings scheduled to review the nominations.

The 2026 Truman Picard Scholarship deadline is March 20, 2026, and the online application is available at <https://app.ezfile-drop.com/546117/picard-2026>. The award for college and graduate students studying Forestry or Fire is \$4,000, college and graduate students studying Natural Resources is \$3,000, and graduating senior high school students studying Natural Resources, Forestry or Fire is \$2,000. Descendants from a federally recognized tribe are eligi-

ble to apply. Each student that receives the Picard scholarship will also receive a complementary membership to The Society of American Foresters.

Funding for the Picard Scholarship each year is generated in part through the raffle held at the Annual Timber Symposium. Next year it will be held in June 2026. The scholarship announcement is available at www.itcnet.org/about_us/scholarships.html. This page also contains FAQs and Checklist for assistance with the Picard Scholarship application process. As always please help spread the word on these funding sources to students in your networks.



Wildland Fire Technical Specialist

by Jim Durglo



Jim Durglo

During the December 2025 Fire Subcommittee meeting, key leaders in federal wildland fire management convened with the Intertribal Timber Council in Temecula, CA. The meeting was

attended by Joe Majewski, Acting Director of the Department of the Interior Office (DOI) of Wildland Fire; Aaron Baldwin, Branch Chief of BIA Wildland Fire; and Juliett Jeanne, Branch Chief, Administration and Support, BIA Wildland Fire. Their participation underscored the importance of collaboration and communication as they continued discussions regarding the implementation of Executive Order (EO) 14308, which centers on the Federal Fire Unification process.

In addition to those present in the room, the regular committee was joined by a sizable num-

ber of online participants representing Tribal fire programs from across the nation. This broad participation highlighted the national scope of the initiative and the commitment to inclusive engagement as the unification process moves forward.

EO 14308 titled “Empowering Commonsense Wildfire Prevention and Response” contains direction to consolidate, within 90 days, the wildland fire programs of the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture “to the maximum degree practicable and consistent with applicable law.” Joe

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Wildland Fire Technical Specialist

by Jim Durglo

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Majewski provided an update on unification, focusing on DOI Bureaus and the blueprint for implementation, and described the diagnostic process for merging organizations. He also noted that the new fire chief is onboarding.

Aaron discussed shifting the midlevel organization into the Geographic Area Centers, adding Awarding Officials to the National Org budget team, and including a Health and Safety role. He stressed the importance of systems and assessed work streams necessary for establishing a new organization.

It was mentioned that the creation of a new organization could create a shortage of awarding and contracting personnel, as well as other professional staff within BIA. This is attributable to the transition of these employees into the new organization, resulting in their temporary absence from agency-specific responsibilities. Joe indicated that agency affiliations would be preserved throughout this process.

Juliette summarized the four consultation sessions that occurred in November, stating that over 80 tribes and 240 participants engaged. The deadline for submitting formal letters was December 19, 2025. Key themes mentioned during consultation were processing suppression reimbursement payments, direct funding access, support for 638 organizations, ongoing engagement during service development, and backing for co-stewardship and co-management.

Tribal FMO's have been meeting virtually, under the leadership of Trey Leonard, the Warm Springs Fire Management Officer to discuss potential impacts to programs managed under PL-93-638 and have open discussions about questions and concerns moving through the unification process. I have been fortunate to join the frequent virtual meetings and provide information on the ongoing Federal Fire Service Unification process. The meetings are an open forum format where both Tribal and BIA fire staff can discuss issues and challenges. Most raise questions about how Federal Fire Unification will impact the day-to-day operations of Tribal programs under Coop Agreements authorized under PL-93-638. Meetings and information sharing will continue as we implement unification. Over 20 FMOs and BIA fire staff regularly attend, and I hope this organization continues to grow.

Another important topic of the Fire Subcommittee meeting was the implementation of Tribal Pay Reform. As you may already know, in September 2025, the Bureau Director issued guidance for Tribal Wildland Firefighter Pay Reform, transitioning from semi-annual pay supplements to the federal Wildland Firefighter Pay Scale under FY2025 appropriations. The memo states that beginning in FY2026, the BIA Division of Wildland Fire Management will coordinate with Regional Offices to align Tribal pay with federal standards, providing advance supplemental payments to qualifying programs. The memorandum outlines eligibility criteria and reporting requirements,

proposing a 25% increase to base Preparedness and Fuels Management Tribal programs to parallel federal wage increases. However, implementation of this increase is delayed until tribal acceptance, causing tension due to longstanding static funding for base preparedness, additional administrative duties, and disagreement over whether the increase truly matches federal funding levels. This discussion again reflects what has been challenging over the past 30 years and is documented in the IFMAT reports.

IFMAT IV again finds chronic underfunding, lack of inflation adjustments, and delays in appropriated funds, all of which undermine long-term forest management and self-governance. And again, after 30 years in four decadal reports, IFMAT IV recommends revising federal funding models to support basic land stewardship costs, active management, and increased base funding to ensure stable staffing and support for tribal self-governance.

Winter is a season when many fire organizations focus on recovery, training and pile burning, and it also marks an important period for Tribal winter ceremonies. It's a time to reflect on the year gone by and look forward with hope to the year ahead. I wish you abundance and continued success in the coming one.



National Native Conservation Network Coordinator

by Kathy Ferge



Kathy Ferge

One of my goals, as NNCN Coordinator is to ensure ITC member tribes and affiliates understand and utilize USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service programming and opportunities. For those tribes already well connected with NRCS, we hope to learn from you, and celebrate your successes to encourage other tribes to explore USDA programs for themselves. We started this effort with an NNCN Informal Customer Survey Needs Survey conducted in conjunction with the 2025 Symposium. The two most common barriers mentioned in the Survey were complexity of programming and lack of tribal funding for cost shares. Programming over the next several months is aimed at addressing those challenges.

ITC NRCS Workshop in CA on January 29, 2026: Even as the government remained closed, planning for the ITC USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service workshop for northern California tribes moved forward. ITC is excited

to host the event in conjunction with the Mooretown Rancheria. Board member, Dawn Blake, will be one of the tribal presenters, sharing how the Hoopa tribe uses NRCS funding. Pit River will also share their NRCS projects. We're also bringing in several entities that may be able to help close the funding gap for the NRCS cost share requirement. Funding partners include Forest Business Alliance, CalFire, and Blue Forest.

E-Blasts: To help you stay updated on NRCS and Farm Service Programs, ITC member tribes are receiving e-Blasts as pertinent news is made available. To address the funding piece, I'm also scanning for potential grants and sharing that information too.

Individual Tribal Assistance: In addition to these general outreach and information efforts, I am available to work with individual tribes or tribal consortiums to explore how they may specifically engage with NRCS. NRCS has a wealth of technical assistance it can provide, from soil scientist to foresters, engineers to watershed planners. Tapping into that expertise may be a way to help expand your tribe's project capacity.

Web and Social Media Presence: We're working with Ecotrust to develop a web presence for this project. It will be essentially a repository of information aimed at both celebrating and learning from tribal/NRCS collaborative projects, cataloging materials to help our partners better understand and utilize NRCS programming, and highlighting the various events

and activities of benefit to our tribes.

This program is just getting started and these efforts will morph as I spend more time with you exploring your forestry world and potential needs. I'm looking forward to hearing from you. You can reach me at 541-571-3815 or kathy.ferge@icloud.com.



Awards Committee

by Robin Harkins



Robin Harkins

NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN FOR THE 2026 EARLE R. WILCOX MEMORIAL AWARDS

I hope you all had a joyous holiday season creating memories with family and friends. As we all get back to work in the new year, the ITC Awards Committee is looking forward to reviewing the accomplishments of those in Indian Forestry as you prepare and submit your nominations for the Earle R. Wilcox Memorial

Awards. Please remember there are opportunities to recognize your employees and peers at both the regional and national level.

A tremendous amount of important and valuable work continues to be completed across Indian Country. Please consider recognizing your employees, peers, and others who have made significant contributions to Indian forestry, fire, or related natural resource programs through their contributions in our industry. Nominations will be considered for both the regional and national awards based on level of contribution and effort and must be submitted online to the ITC Office by March 13, 2026, at 5:00 PM Pacific Time. Details on how to nominate someone for the Wilcox Award will be mailed to Tribes on January 12, 2026. Information can be found on the ITC website at https://www.itcnet.org/about_us/awards.html.

ITC staff have worked hard to make the nomination process smoother for all of you and have moved to an online nomination

form at <https://forms.gle/iss-wwKd7nPyFHuYy5>. Remember, nominations require two (2) letters of reference addressing the personal and professional contributions of the nominee, on letterhead and signed. It is never too early to reach out to those who will support your nomination to get this process started. Award selections will be made during the April ITC Board meeting and presented during the 2026 Symposium in Keshena, WI.

If you have any questions about eligibility, the nomination packet itself, or the new on-line process please do not hesitate to reach out to me at robinharkins@coquilletribe.org or 541-294-7968 or contact the ITC office at 503-282-4296. We are happy to help.



Legislative Update

by Matt Hill



Matt Hill

APPROPRIATIONS STATUS UPDATE

As of December 1, 2025, the federal government is operating under a full-year continuing resolution (CR) for FY2025, which runs from October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2025. This CR was signed into law by President Trump on March 15, 2025. It extends funding for most fed-

eral agencies and programs at FY 2024 levels, with limited adjustments: a modest increase in defense spending and targeted reductions in certain non-defense areas.

This marks the first full-year CR since FY 2013, reflecting ongoing partisan disagreements over topline spending levels that prevented the passage of

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Legislative Update

by Matt Hill

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the usual 12 individual appropriations bills. However, it includes approximately \$34.5 billion in emergency supplemental funding (\$21 billion defense, \$13.5 billion non-defense) for priorities like disaster relief. The House Appropriations Committee advanced all 12 bills out of committee by July 2025, and the Senate marked up several, but only five bills passed the House floor by December. Bipartisan negotiations in early 2025 failed to resolve differences, leading to the CR.

Congressional leaders are actively working to pass the remaining nine bills as the January 30, 2026, deadline approaches. If these bills are not passed by the deadline, another partial government shutdown could occur.

Fiscal Year 2027 Budget: Federal agencies are working on their FY2027 budget proposals, which are due to Congress in early February 2026. OMB is seeking significant cuts to several federal agencies, but cuts likely to focus on “fish and wildlife” type agencies like the Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

ITARA REAUTHORIZATION

On November 19, 2025, the House Subcommittee on Indian & Insular Affairs held a legislative hearing on H.R. 5515, which would make the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act demonstration project permanent (sponsored by Subcommittee Chairman Hurd with cosponsors Reps. Marie Kirkpatrick Randall, D-WA,

and Val Hoyle, D-OR).

In the hearing, both Republican and Democratic members noted the bill’s importance to reducing barriers to tribal forest management. There was no witness representing the Administration. Tim Vredenburg (Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians) testified in favor of H.R. 5515, noting only three approved plans nationwide due to barriers like lack of awareness. The Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, one of the first adopters, has achieved fuel breaks, wildfire risk reduction, fish returns, cost efficiencies, and faster project implementation. ITARA shifts trust relationships to support, enabling local decisions; expiration in 2026 risks progress.

The ITC submitted a written statement of support into the hearing record, highlighting the key provisions of H.R.5515 including:

Permanent authority: the bill would amend ITARA to make the demonstration project permanent;

Updated Definitions: Revises the definition of “Indian tribe” to align with the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act and adds a definition for “tribal organization,” allowing such organizations to participate in trust asset management on behalf of tribes, provided they obtain tribal approval and comply with submission requirements;

Indian Trust Asset Management Project: Requires the Secretary of the Interior to continue the project, enabling tribes or authorized tribal organizations to

submit management plans supported by tribal resolutions;

Management Plans: Streamlines plan requirements by removing certain elements, allows for amendments to approved plans (reviewed under existing criteria), and ensures tribes with approved plans remain eligible for federal funding without disqualification;

Trust Asset Management Authority: Broadens tribal discretion to manage assets without further Secretary approval, including surface leasing, adopting, or amending forest management plans, and other activities, as long as they align with the approved plan.

Trust Asset definition: Broadens the definition of Trust Asset to include “(B) any resource that is, or has previously been, included in an integrated resources management plan or other management plan approved by the Secretary.”

OTHER PENDING FOREST MANAGEMENT LEGISLATION

FORESTS Act: The “Fostering Opportunities to Restore Ecosystems through Sound Tribal Stewardship” Act was introduced by **Rep. Jeff Hurd** (R-CO-3). The bill aims to enhance tribal stewardship and management opportunities for forest ecosystems on federal lands, focusing on restoration through tribal involvement. A legislative hearing was held by the House Subcommittee on Federal Lands, where Rep. Hurd, U.S. Forest Service officials, and tribal representatives

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Legislative Update

by Matt Hill

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provided testimony.

The bill is awaiting mark-up by the committee, followed by passage in the House and Senate. There is no companion legislation in the Senate.

Tribal Self-Determination and Co-Management in Forestry Act of 2025: This bill was introduced on May 15, 2025, by Rep. Huffman (D-CA). It directs federal land management agencies within the Department of the Interior to establish Tribal Co-Management Plans and authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to enter into agreements with Indian Tribes for certain Forest Service activities. The goal is to elevate Tribal leadership in managing federal public lands and forests, incorporating Indigenous Knowledge while affirming Tribal sovereignty and reducing administrative burdens.

A subcommittee hearing occurred in June 2025, where it received support from Tribal representatives (and the ITC) and some agency input on technical aspects, but no further actions—such as markup, committee approval, or floor votes—have been reported. Huffman is making some changes to the bill and hopes to move it out of committee next year.

Fix Our Forests Act (“FOFA”): This legislation (S. 1462 in the Senate; companion bill H.R. 471 in the House) is pending action in the Senate. The House of Representatives passed its version with bipartisan support on January 23, 2025. The Senate version was

introduced in April 2025 by Senators John Curtis (R-UT), Alex Padilla (D-CA), John Hickenlooper (D-CO), and Tim Sheehy (R-MT). On October 21, 2025, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry advanced the bill out of committee on a bipartisan 18-5 vote, clearing it for potential consideration by the full Senate.

The bill is now eligible for a floor vote in the Senate but has not been scheduled or voted on. If passed by the Senate, the two chambers would need to reconcile differences before sending it to the President.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE UPDATES

USDA Reorganization: On August 1, 2025, the USDA announced opened a 30-day public comment period for stakeholders to provide feedback on the Department’s reorganization plan. On August 26, 2025, the ITC submitted comments on the proposal, urging robust consultation with tribes.

In September, a tribal consultation series was initiated, and written comments were accepted through November 15, 2025. USDA continues to accept post-September feedback informally, with focus shifting to implementation phases.

Key elements of the proposed reorganization:

- Relocating over 2,600 employees from the National Capital Region (reducing D.C.-area staff from ~4,600 to no more than 2,000);
- Establishing five regional hubs: Raleigh, NC; Kansas City,

MO; Indianapolis, IN; Fort Collins, CO; and Salt Lake City, UT;

- Consolidating or closing certain offices;
- Further workforce reductions following earlier voluntary retirements/deferred resignations of over 15,000 employees.

USDA Deputy Secretary Stephen Vaden stated in early December 2025 that the reorganization is expected to be completed by the end of 2026, with employee relocations already underway and more announcements imminent.

A recent appropriations bill (passed by one chamber in November 2025) includes provisions requiring congressional approval for certain relocations, office closures, or program eliminations, which could slow or complicate implementation. However, no major halts have been reported as of now.

Northwest Forest Plan: The U.S. Forest Service is working to revise the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Northwest Forest Plan Amendment. In November, the ITC sent a letter to the Forest Service urging:

- Revision or elimination of the Survey & Manage protocol;
- Cooperation with ITC in using tribal working groups to further explore specific issues areas;
- Alignment of land use allocations and management direction with future desired conditions across the landscape.

At this point, the Forest Service is expecting to release (for

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Legislative Update

by Matt Hill

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public comment) a revised DEIS in Fall 2026 and finalization in Spring 2028.

Roadless Rule Rescission: The ITC has provided formal comments in response to the U.S. Forest Service's proposal to rescind the 2001 Roadless Rule which governs management in approximately 44.7 million acres of National Forest System lands. The Roadless Rule's provisions supersede the plan components for inventoried roadless areas applied through individual land management plans. The proposed rescission of the Roadless Rule would not authorize any specific ground-disturbing activities or projects, nor does it propose any increase in the overall amount of timber harvested or roads constructed.

We can expect to see a Draft Environmental Impact Statement in Spring 2026.

HOUSE PASSES NEPA BILL

On December 18, the House of Representatives passed broad permitting legislation, focusing largely on the NEPA process. The House voted 221-196 for Rep. Bruce Westerman's (R-Ark.) "Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development (SPEED) Act," H.R. 4776.

Westerman's amendment included new language addressing NEPA review of projects on tribal trust land. These provisions which were adopted would:

- establish a presumption that the effects of taking "no action"

for a proposed agency action on, or directly affecting, tribal trust resources of a Tribe will be negative for the federally recognized Indian Tribe;

- establish that there will be no administrative or judicial review of final agency actions for projects that authorize or affect the use of lands, minerals, or other resources held in trust by the United States for the benefit of a federally recognized Indian Tribe.

Otherwise, the bill would tighten timelines for National Environmental Policy Act reviews and reduce the potential for litigation.

HOUSE PASSES WOLF DELISTING BILL

On December 16, the House voted along party lines to delist gray wolves from the Endangered Species Act. The "Pet and Livestock Protection Act" requires the Interior secretary "to reissue regulations removing the gray wolf from the list of endangered and threatened wildlife under the Endangered Species Act of 1973." Under the legislation, the Interior secretary would have no more than 60 days from the enactment of the law to reissue the rule removing the gray wolf from the list of endangered and threatened Wildlife.

ESA REVISION PUBLISHED

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service has proposed four rules to help guide the implementation of the ESA. Two of the rules are jointly published by the Services and deal

with the ESA Section 7 permitting process and the criteria used for listing, reclassifying, and delisting species under ESA Section 4. Of the remaining two rules published solely by the USFWS, the first restores science-based, species-specific regulations for threatened species under ESA Section 4(d), and the second clarifies the process for excluding and precluding areas from critical habitat designations under ESA Section 4(b) (2).

The proposed regulatory changes include:

- eliminate the "blanket" protections for threatened species so that the regulations permit only species-specific prohibitions;
- revise the species classification regulations to allow for economic and other considerations and limit the near future analysis for threatened species determinations;
- provide a process for exclusions of areas from critical habitat designations, allowing consideration of economic, national security and other relevant impacts;
- prioritize designation of critical habitat in areas actually occupied by the species and impose a higher standard for critical habitat designation of unoccupied areas;
- revise the Section 7 consultation process to clarify the scope of review, applying principles from the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County*, and eliminate offset

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Legislative Update

by Matt Hill

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provisions for reasonable and prudent measures.

NEW BLM DIRECTOR NOMINATED

On November 5, 2025, President Donald Trump nominated former New Mexico Congressman Steve Pearce to serve as the Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The nomination comes amid Republican priorities to expand fossil fuel extraction on federal lands, reversing some Biden-era restrictions on oil, gas, and coal leasing. Pearce's confirmation

requires Senate approval, and the agency has been without a Senate-confirmed director for extended periods in recent administrations—four years during Trump's first term and nearly a year under his second.

Views on Public Lands: Pearce has long emphasized balancing economic development with environmental stewardship. He has pushed for greater access to federal lands for oil, gas, and mining operations, arguing it boosts jobs and energy independence.

Opposition to Land Sales: Despite past involvement in

discussions around privatizing some public lands, Pearce has explicitly stated he does not support broad sell-offs, focusing instead on “wise stewardship” of resources.

No nomination hearing has been scheduled by the Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee, so the BLM continues to be overseen by acting directors.



Operations Committee

by Jason Robison



Jason Robison

It is hard to believe another year has already come and gone. I hope you all had a joyful holiday season and a happy New Year. The ITC Operations Committee met on December 10, 2025, at the Pechanga Resort and Casino in Temecula for a productive meeting focused on the many issues shaping the future of Tribal forestry. What follows is a summary of the key topics and dis-

cussions from that meeting.

IFMAT-IV Implementation Self-governance Workshop: A major focus of the Committee meeting was continued implementation of IFMAT-IV recommendations, particularly those related to Tribal Self-Governance and expanded management authority. As interest in self-governance continues to grow, the need for consistent guidance, shared learning, and agency accountability remains critical.

To support this effort, the Committee discussed plans for a Tribal Self-Governance and Self-Determination Workshop at the 2026 National Indian Timber Symposium. The workshop will focus on the legal and policy foundations of self-governance, ITARA implementation, emerging legislative pathways, and real-world Tribal case studies. This effort directly aligns

with IFMAT-IV's call to strengthen Tribal capacity and ensure that self-governance tools are effectively implemented across federal agencies.

American Bar Association Collaboration: ITC staff reported out that they met with representatives from the American Bar Association's Forest Resources and Indigenous Committees to explore opportunities for collaborative content development focused on Tribal Forest management and self-governance. The discussion centered on creating educational programming that could reach both legal and forestry audiences through multiple formats.

Potential efforts include podcast episodes and CLE or webinar programming, recognizing that each format serves differ-

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ent audiences and follows distinct approval processes. Proposed topic areas include Tribal legal frameworks, trust responsibility, Indian law, and the evolution of relevant case law.

Legislative & Policy Update: Legislation and policy continue at a rapid pace, with several proposals carrying significant implications for Tribal forestry. The Committee discussed ongoing engagement by the legislative and policy work group around the Fix Our Forests Act (FOFA) and the Forests Act, both of which aim to accelerate forest restoration and wildfire risk reduction on federal lands.

The work group is also working on Congressman Huffman's co-management legislation, which proposes to formally recognize Tribes as co-managers of federal lands. If enacted, this bill could represent a meaningful shift toward shared governance and long-term stewardship partnerships. In addition, discussion focused on ITARA reform and implementation, particularly the need for clearer guidance, consistency across agencies, and accountability in honoring Tribal self-governance agreements. ITC will continue coordinating Tribal input and advocating for policies that strengthen sovereignty and support forest health.

NAFO Update: Kate Gatto, Chief Strategy Officer for the National Alliance of Forest Owners (NAFO), provided an update on shared priorities and ongoing advocacy efforts. She highlighted areas of alignment between

NAFO and ITC, including renewable fuels policy and FOFA, fire agreements, and broader forest policy initiatives. NAFO is also actively engaged in international advocacy, particularly in Brussels, related to the European Union's Deforestation-Free Regulation (EUDR). Additional discussion addressed ongoing challenges in pulpwood markets and wood-product economics, as well as NAFO's MOUs with the U.S. Forest Service supporting active fire suppression and cross-boundary fuel treatments.

Kate outlined NAFO's strategy on EUDR, which is intended to reduce global deforestation but has been delayed and is expected to advance next year. NAFO is advocating for a more flexible and simplified compliance approach, especially related to geolocation requirements and impacts on small landowners. The current engagement window runs through April 30, with mid-February identified as a key milestone. The discussion also touched on the growing role of nature markets and Natural Capital Accounting, with more than 100 pilot projects underway in the U.S. Tribal knowledge was identified as critical to shaping appropriate standards. ITC will consider opportunities for coordinated engagement with NAFO.

USDA Forest Service Office of Tribal Relations (OTR): Reed Robinson, Director of OTR provided an update on agency priorities, consultation activities, and organizational changes affecting Tribal engagement. A major focus of the report was the ongoing USDA

reorganization, which proposes consolidating operations into five regional hubs and phasing out regional offices. These changes have resulted in significant attrition within the Forest Service, particularly in Tribal Relations positions, including the loss of Regional Tribal Relations Program Managers in multiple regions and a substantial reduction in Washington Office staffing. OTR acknowledged the challenges these changes pose for consultation and emphasized the importance of continued coordination with Tribes during the transition.

OTR highlighted several active and upcoming national Tribal consultations, including revisions to the 2001 Roadless Rule, geospatial data policies, post-fire recovery environmental assessments tied to recent Executive Orders, and implementation of the EXPLORE Act, which includes expanded Good Neighbor Authority provisions. OTR also discussed ongoing work to support Tribal shared stewardship, including agreements with ITC to provide technical assistance for TFPA, GNA, and stewardship projects, and collaboration with the National Tribal Geographic Information Support Center to strengthen Tribal data sovereignty and geospatial capacity. The Office reiterated its commitment to supporting meaningful consultation and encouraged Tribes to remain engaged in national policy processes as these initiatives move forward.

Tribal Wood Brand & Market Study: Steve Rigdon and Paul Vanderford from Sustain-

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able Northwest presented findings from the Tribal Wood Brand and Market Study. The work produced two key deliverables: a Tribal Wood Market Study and a Permatex Technical Wood Market Report. The study was created by 258 survey responses, along with interviews and broader market assessments, providing one of the most comprehensive snapshots to date of opportunities and challenges facing Tribal wood products.

A central finding of the study was that information gaps significantly limit market performance, despite strong interest in tribally sourced wood products. Survey results indicated a willingness among consumers to pay a premium for Tribal wood, and non-Indian mills expressed interest in supporting Tribal wood markets. The presenters outlined recommendations for establishing a distinct Tribal wood market, emphasizing the importance of storytelling, Tribal capacity development, innovation, and improved resource utilization, and addressing supply-chain bottlenecks through a principles-first approach.

Markets Matter & Biomass: Creating Value from Low-Value Wood: The Committee received updates from Executive Director, Cal Mukumoto, on the Markets Matter Biomass initiative, which seeks to restore and expand markets for low-value wood in support of forest health and community resilience. Discussions focused on biomass utilization, bioenergy, co-generation, biochar,

and emerging wood product technologies such as cross-laminated timber. These strategies are increasingly important as Tribes work to reduce hazardous fuels while supporting local economies.

Members noted growing interest from federal agencies, industry partners, and philanthropic organizations in advancing this work. ITC will continue evaluating how best to engage in national planning and steering efforts to ensure Tribal priorities, regional needs, and sovereignty considerations are reflected in future biomass and wood utilization strategies.

Tribal Homelands Initiative: Defining ITC's Role: The Committee reviewed updates from the Tribal Homelands Coalition convening and discussed how ITC can support Tribes working to reclaim, restore, and steward ancestral lands. Topics included land transfer authorities, management frameworks, policy development, and the importance of documenting Tribal land-back case studies to inform future efforts.

Members agreed that ITC has a key role to play in elevating these conversations, supporting policy analysis, and helping coordinate Tribal engagement with federal partners. This work will continue to evolve as Tribes identify shared priorities and opportunities moving into the next year.

National Native Conservation Network (NNCN) NRCS Grant Update: The Committee received an update on the National Native Conser-

vation Network (NNCN) and the NRCS grant supporting its development. The purpose of the NNCN initiative is to strengthen coordination among Tribes, Tribal organizations, and conservation partners while improving Tribal access to NRCS programs, funding opportunities, and technical assistance. The grant is designed to build a national framework that centers Tribal sovereignty, conservation priorities, and culturally informed stewardship practices.

Key deliverables under the NRCS grant include the establishment of a national network of Tribal conservation practitioners; development of outreach and communication materials to improve awareness of NRCS programs; and creation of tools to support Tribal participation in conservation planning and implementation. Additional deliverables include identifying and documenting barriers to Tribal access to NRCS programs, producing policy and program recommendations for NRCS, and hosting convenings or listening sessions to gather Tribal input.

Wildfire Technical Specialist Update: The Committee received an update from the Wildfire Technical Specialist, Jim Durglo, highlighting ongoing national changes in wildfire governance, training, and Tribal engagement. The report emphasized the evolving structure of federal wildfire management, including continued reorganization efforts and increased coordination through national bodies such as the Wildfire Leadership Council

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Operations Committee

by Jason Robison

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and the National Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (NWCG). These changes are shaping how wildfire response, mitigation, and preparedness efforts are planned and implemented across jurisdictions.

Key updates included progress on Incident Position and Training Modernization (IPTM), which aims to modernize wildfire qualifications, training pathways, and performance standards. This work includes updated position standards, new performance support packages, and development of next-generation task books. The report also highlighted the importance of maintaining Tribal representation within NWCG committees and leadership roles to ensure Tribal perspectives are reflected as national fire policy and training systems evolve.

The report further emphasized growing recognition of Indigenous fire stewardship, including cultural fire practices and

Tribal leadership in prescribed fire and fuels management. Ongoing efforts include cultural fire workshops, intertribal collaboration, and expanded partnerships to integrate traditional knowledge with contemporary fire science. Workforce development remains a critical priority, with discussions focused on recruitment, training, firefighter health and wellness, and strategies to build sustainable Tribal fire programs. Collectively, these efforts reinforce the essential role Tribes play in wildfire resilience, landscape restoration, and community protection.

Workforce Development:

The Committee continues to prioritize workforce development and is forming a new workgroup to review the strategic plan and bring renewed focus to these efforts. This work will be conducted in partnership with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and SKC TREES, with the goal of strengthening coordination, expanding opportunities,

and supporting the next generation of Tribal forestry and fire professionals.

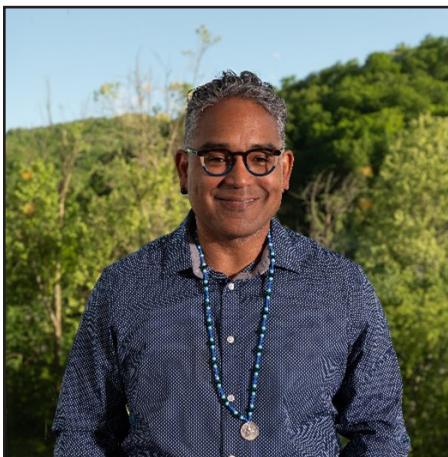
Closing Thoughts: As the work summarized here demonstrates, the Operations Committee is engaged across a wide and growing range of issues, including self-governance, federal policy, markets, wildfire, and workforce development. None of this work happens in isolation. It depends on the experience, knowledge, and perspectives of ITC members from across the country.

I encourage members to stay connected and engaged with the Operations Committee's work. Whether through participation in subcommittees, sharing on the ground experiences, contributing ideas, or simply staying informed, your involvement strengthens ITC's collective voice.



Symposium Committee

by Howard Teasley, Jr.



Howard Teasley, Jr.

2026 ITC SYMPOSIUM

Hautnin awas. Nimiipuu timpt. Happy New Year and Blessing to you in our Nez Perce Language.

Our Symposium Committee and the Executive Board are honored to introduce our hosts **Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and Stockbridge-Munsee Community**. We would like to invite our Intertribal Timber Council fam-

ily to the 49th Annual Nation Indian Timber Symposium, June 8-11, 2026, being held in Kesheena, WI. This year's theme **“Forestry in a Changing Environment.”**

“The Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and Stockbridge-Munsee Community would like to welcome relatives, friends, and honored guests, to the homelands of the Menominee and Stockbridge-Munsee

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Symposium Committee

by Howard Teasley, Jr.

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people. These forested lands have long sustained our people, and they remain the heart of our culture, spirit, and identity.

We come together at a time of great change for our environment. The forests remind us that life is a balance of renewal and responsibility, and that stewardship must guide every choice we make. Just as our ancestors tended this land, it is our responsibility to ensure its health and abundance for the generations yet to come.

May our time here be rooted in respect, like the deep roots of the pine, may our dialogue branch outward in strength, like the hardwoods, and may the wisdom shared among us bear fruit that nourishes all our Nations.

On behalf of the Menominee Nation and Stockbridge-Munsee Community, we extend our warmest welcome. May this gathering honor the forest, strengthen our bonds, and guide us together on the path of caretaking in a changing world.”

ITC will be finalizing the agenda in spring 2026. Members and previous attendees will be notified once registration goes live. Check the ITC website periodically at www.itcnet.org for updates.

Take Care and God Bless you.
Qe'ciyw'yew Godnim Hautnin awas.

Good day, Friends! Tác léeheyen,
Láwtiwaaw



Photo of the Land of the Menominee Marker at Veterans Park in Keshena, WI



Earle R. Wilcox Memorial National and Individual Achievement Awards

Submit Online



APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Deadline: Friday, March 13, 2026, 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time

STEP # 1 COMPLETE THE APPLICATION

- Submit the form online at** <https://forms.gle/RjY6xgbqtH5ETb7S6>. No account is required. The form will not save your progress; therefore, you must have all required information prior to starting the application.
- Award Category**
 - National Award
 - Individual Achievement Award
 - National or Individual Award
- Employee Category**
 - Tribal
 - BIA or another Federal Agency
 - Other
- Nominee Information**
 - name, job title, organization, work address, city, state, zip, work phone, cell, email
- Nominator Information**
 - name, job title, organization, work address, city, state, zip, work phone, cell, email
- Nominee Supervisor Information** (if applicable)
 - name, job title, organization, work address, city, state, zip, work phone, cell, email
- Background Information** including achievements and the impacts/results of the nominee's accomplishments in Indian forestry, fire, and/or natural resources, be as specific as possible in all eight (8) categories:
 - Category 1: Tribal Involvement**
 - Category 2: Improvement of Indian Forestry, Fire or Other Related Natural Resources Programs**
 - Category 3: Individual Effort**
 - Category 4: Can Be Used as a Model**
 - Category 5: Technical Achievement and Application**
 - Category 6: Other Government Agencies or Funds**
 - Category 7: Originality**

STEP # 2 EMAIL REFERENCES

- Required references** must be emailed to laura@itcnet.org before the deadline.
 - Category 8: References.** Provide a minimum of two (2) letters of reference on letterhead and signed (not from the nominator), addressing the personal and professional contributions of the nominee.
- Complete the online application and email references before the close of business (5:00 p.m. Pacific Time) **March 13, 2026**. Incomplete applications received after that date will not be considered.

FOR MORE INFORMATION / QUESTIONS

Visit the ITC website at www.itcnet.org/about_us/awards.html.

Contact the ITC office by email laura@itcnet.org or by phone (503) 282-4296.



INTERTRIBAL TIMBER COUNCIL
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