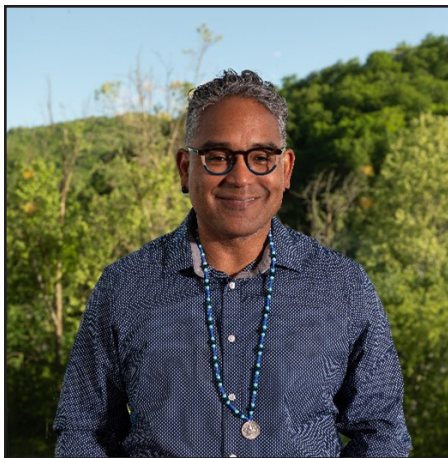




INTERTRIBAL TIMBER COUNCIL TIMBER NOTES

Spring ~ 2026



Howard Teasley, Jr.

SIGN UP NOW FOR THE 2026 ITC SYMPOSIUM!!

Ta'ci le'e'heyn! Lawt'iwaa. Good day to my friends! We have prepared an amazing week for folks in coming to northeastern Wisconsin. The Intertribal Timber Council (ITC) family would like to welcome relatives, friends, and honored guests, to the homelands of the Menominee and Stockbridge-Munsee people. The name "Keshena" is derived from the Menominee language meaning "Swift Flying" and is named after Chief Keshena. We are extremely excited to have the 49th Annual National Indian Timber Symposium to be held **June 8-11, 2026**, at Menominee Casino Resort and College of Menominee Nation, hosted by ITC, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin (MITW)



Photo of the Pre-Symposium Workshop: Basket Weaving hosted by Menominee Indian Tribe in 2013.

& Stockbridge-Munsee Community (SMC) in Keshena, WI. The theme of this year's symposium is **"Forestry in a Changing Environment."**

Online registration closes May 29. Visit the event website for details: <https://www.eventsquid.com/event/31367>. Early bird prices increase on April 18. Register now to reserve your space! There is an option to pay later by May 29. Purchase guest tickets for the Tuesday Luncheon and Thursday Awards Banquet online by May 29. No onsite sales will be available. ITC must provide counts in advance.

Come early and join the Pre-Symposium Activity: Shake the Timbers Golf Tourney on Sunday, June 7, 2026, at 1:00 pm. Visit the

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Executive Director's Message

by Cal Mukumoto



Cal Mukumoto

SIX MONTHS AT ITC: BUSY, GRATIFYING, AND LOOKING AHEAD

It's hard to believe it has already been six months since I stepped into the role of the Intertribal Timber Council's (ITC) first Executive Director on October 1, 2025. Looking back on my 46 years of involvement with this organization, I can confidently say that the ITC remains just as dedicated to its mission today as it was in the beginning.

Our Roots and Reach: The ITC was built in 1976 on a foundation of collective effort—heavily driven by the Quinault and Warm Springs—to champion Indigenous Forest management and Tribal Self-Determination. We were guided by incredible leaders, to name a few, like Dr. Gary Morishima and Joe De La Cruz of the Quinault, George Bowe chop of the Makah, Ken Smith of Warm Springs, and Keith Little of the Navajo. None of it would have been possible without JoAnn Reynolds, our ITC Manager, who served as the backbone that got the organization off the ground. I learned

so much from all of them, and those lessons continue to motivate me today.

Nearly fifty years later, we have new faces, but the dedication to the Tribes remains just as strong. The biggest shift I see today is how rapidly our world is changing, making it more critical than ever to track information and global events. Back in the late 1980s, our Information Specialist, Mark Phillips, expertly found a “smoking-gun” memo that helped the Tribes win a controversy over administration fees. I even wrote a grad school paper on the ITC's impressive information retrieval skills, which impressed my professor.

Today, our reach extends even further. For instance, Cody and Phil recently traveled to the European Union to advocate for Tribal Rights and educate their leaders on Tribal Forest Stewardship. Because our world is increasingly interconnected, European markets directly impact the economic health of Tribes here in the US, making this kind of global advocacy essential.

Shared Stewardship and Growing Recognition: I am thrilled to see a growing, genuine desire from outside groups to integrate millennia-old Indigenous forestry knowledge into the management of broader landscapes. People are recognizing that these lands were well-managed long before colonization.

We are currently partnering with the US Forest Service to host workshops on Shared Stewardship, the Good Neighbor Au-

thority (GNA), and the Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA). This is a huge step toward ensuring Tribes have more influence over their ancestral lands. We will be hosting our first workshop on these contracting opportunities on June 8th, just before the Symposium kicks off. I hope to see you there.

The Northwest Forest Plan: Much of our current work is rooted in past efforts. Right now, the ITC is helping the US Forest Service facilitate working sessions with Tribes to provide input on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the revised Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP).

This is a full-circle moment for me, as I was the coordinator for the first Indian Forest Management Assessment Team (IFMAT), where we did, on occasion, discuss the NWFP. Three of the four original “Gang of Four” scientists who laid the groundwork for the 1994 NWFP were members of the first IFMAT. This group included:

Dr. Jerry Franklin, a University of Washington professor known as the “father of new forestry”.

Dr. Norm Johnson, an Oregon State University forest policy professor.

Dr. John Gordon, the former dean of the Yale School of Forestry.

Dr. Jack Ward Thomas, former USFS Chief Researcher, we consulted him, though he wasn't officially on IFMAT I.

Navigating Federal Changes and Looking Ahead: We

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President's Message

by Cody Desautel



Cody Desautel

2026 is off to a fast start as usual. In the months since my last report ITC has testified for fiscal year 2027 appropriations, met with House Natural Resource committee staff on the FORESTS Act, met with leadership for the Department of Interior Wildland Fire Service, and traveled to Brussels to meet with members of the European Union and European Commission about the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). We also continue to track the reorganization of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, federal government agencies overall, and continue the work to build out ITC staffing to help support all this work.

I testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee for the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies on March 18, 2026. The testimony focused on the continued discrepancies between the funding appropriated to BIA for forest and fire management compared to other land management agencies within the federal government. The testimony noted the findings in the 2023 IFMAT report and requested that funding for BIA be increased by \$100 million for forestry, and \$42 million for



Photo of ITC President Cody Desautel and Vice President Phil Rigdon in Brussels, Belgium.

fire management. The testimony also noted that when considering inflation and increasing tribal trust forestry acres that BIA forestry funding has been reduced by 36% over the last thirty years, resulting in harvest levels that are half of what is approved in tribal forest management plans. There were many underfunded programs noted during the two days of tribal testimony, so competition for limited BIA funding will be difficult. Chairman Simpson noted at the end to the hearing that concerns about the lack of law enforcement in Indian Country has never been more apparent from these hearings. We will continue to advocate for forestry and fire funding but realize there are many unmet needs in Indian country to compete with.

On March 6, 2026, we and ITC contingent traveled to Boise to meet with the new Wildland Fire Service (Service) Chief Brian Fennessy, and Deputies in the

Service. Chief Fennessy shared an update about the progress achieved on filling staff positions, which included many of the deputies, the Geographic Area Fire Chiefs, and appointment of Aaron Baldwin to lead the Office of Tribal Trust. Chief Fennessy, and the deputies were very open to discussions about how tribal 638 programs and tribal trust responsibility will be built into the Service. We are grateful that Aaron Baldwin was selected to lead the office of Tribal Trust and look forward to working with that office as they fill the remaining positions. Chief Fennessy also noted that the transition would maintain some relationship with the land management bureaus in the near term, which will include contracts being maintained by BIA for the remainder of FY 2026. We look forward to continuing work with the Service to ensure tribal challenges and

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President's Message

by Cody Desautel

(Continued from page 3)

perspectives are considerations in the buildout of the Service.

There are several tribal forestry bills working their way through Congress, although progress recently has been slow. Matt Hill's report will cover most of this information, so I won't elaborate much. However, on the FORESTS Act, we continue to work with committee and Forest Service staff on bill language to expand tribal authorities while addressing the policy and statutory concerns of the Forest Service. We also realize that the ITARA demonstration timeline is set to expire this year and have been working diligently to get that authority extended.

ITC has started to address a new challenge that extends beyond the U.S. but has presented challenges to U.S. tribes and Canadian First Nations. The European Union (EU) passed a deforestation regulation (EUDR) in 2023, which was intended to slow

deforestation by restricting forest products linked to deforestation from being sold into the EU. While this law helps protect areas like the Amazon and Indonesia, the requirements have created challenges around capacity and data sovereignty for U.S. tribes. The regulation requires geolocations for the harvest location of forest products being sold into the EU. Although it does not appear that many tribal forest products are being sold directly to the EU, the global supply chain has started to implement the requirements to ensure they can sell their products into the EU if a market presents itself. We know that the Cow Creek tribe in Western Oregon recently canceled a contract because it wasn't willing to share that information with an international customer in Asia. We continue to share information about the regulatory framework in the US, and why tribal forests in low-risk countries should have other reporting options to be compliant. A

report from the European Commission is due on April 30, 2026, and we will keep you posted on progress we make in coordination with NAFO and Canadian First Nations.

While there has not been much information shared, we continue to track the reorganization of the Department of the Interior. We do understand that some staff are moving to new duty stations and positions, and hiring freezes remain in BIA. We will continue to encourage the administration to share information and consult with Tribes on the reorganization.

In closing, I want to thank our dedicated staff. Cal Mukumoto has been a great addition along with our long-term staff Laura and Monica. The work these three contribute is amazing, but more help is needed as the challenges facing Indian country continue to grow.



Executive Director's Message

by Cal Mukumoto

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have a lot of other plates spinning, too, thanks to the hard work of Jim Durglo (Wildland Fire Technical Specialist), Matt Hill (Information Specialist), Stephanie Lucero (Shared Stewardship, TFPA, GNA consultant), Shawn DeFrance (Education Committee Chair), and Kathy Ferge (NNCN coordinator).

A major underlying factor in all of this is the massive transition happening with our federal partners. My tenure started

right when the federal government shut down from October 1 to November 12, 2025. Now that they are back, they are adjusting to a new reality of fewer resources, fewer staff members, and new mandates.

Fortunately, the fantastic communication tools and internal structures set up by Laura and Monica have kept the ITC strong through these disruptions. Without their management, our outlook wouldn't be nearly as bright. To fully capitalize on

the new opportunities ahead, we need to use this time to strengthen our administrative foundation so we can focus on the work that moves the needle.

It is an incredible time to work in Indian Country, just as it has been for my entire 46-year career. I wish you all well, and I look forward to celebrating 50 amazing years together at the annual Symposium in Menominee this June 2026.



Symposium Committee

by Howard Teasley, Jr.

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golf tournament page on the event website for details. Register with the link: <https://forms.gle/rXHCXskHZf35c8Pa9>.

There are record-breaking (8) Pre-Symposium Workshops on Monday, June 8, 2026. Additional fees for workshops directly fund the Truman D. Picard Scholarship, dedicated to Native American students pursuing an education in Forestry, Fire, and Natural Resources. The host are really pulling out all the stops for attendees!

Events begin on Monday, June 8 at 4:00 pm. All attendees check in at the ITC registration desk located at the Menominee Casino Resort and pick up name tags and registration materials from 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm. Then head to the Host Icebreaker from 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm.



Photo of Tribal Tour Stop: White Pine Shelterwood in WI.

Tuesday, June 9: Starts at 8:00 am with the **Opening Ceremony** – Invocation, Posting of the Colors, and Welcomes. **Keynote** by Chris Caldwell, PhD, President, College of Menominee Nation. The morning panel

will present **Changing Environment: Extreme Weather Events and Treats, Tribal Adaptation.** Followed by ITC **Luncheon** and the second panel **Strategic Initiatives in Tribal Forestry.** Ending with the **Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and Stockbridge-Munsee Community Host Presentation.** This will conclude the afternoon sessions, and the evening events will start at 6:00 pm with the **Host Tribe Welcome Dinner** at the Woodland Bowl. Guest Welcome. Parking Available. No registration required.

Wednesday, June 4 MCR and SMC Tribal Tour: Bus loading from 7:45 am - 8:00 am at MCR and North Star Mohican Casino Resort. Transportation leaves promptly at 8:00 am. Reserve a spot for yourself and guests (complimentary) during registration. Please contact ITC

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Photo of Pre-Symposium WS 6 Inventory & Silviculture Field Trip: An Old Growth Hemlock stand, training in WI.

Symposium Committee

by Howard Teasley, Jr.

(Continued from page 5)



Photo of Pre-Symposium WS 6 Inventory & Silviculture Field Trip: An Old Growth Hemlock stand, training in WI.

in advance with any questions. I After the tour, there will be a **General Membership Meeting** at MCR, which will be an open forum with topics of discussion given later. This will also give member Tribes the opportunity to communicate with the ITC Board of Directors about their concerns.

Thursday, June 5: The day's activities will start at 8:00 am with the **ITC President's Report**, then we will hear from U.S. Wildland Fire Service, U.S. Department of Interior Update, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Division of Forestry, Legislative, and U.S. Forest Service Office of Tribal Relations. Immediately following the Updates our ITC

Workshops will start simultaneously at 10:45 am and end at 4:15 pm. Reserve a spot for one of the four workshops during registration.

Following the workshops there will be the **Annual ITC Business Meeting** at the MCR.

The 49th Annual National Intertribal Timber Symposium will conclude with our **Annual Awards Banquet** to honor and recognize the recipients of any regional or national Earle Wilcox Awards, and the recipients of the Truman D. Picard Scholarship. And finally, the winners of the various Education Committee Raffle prizes will be presented at this time.

Airports and Car Rentals: Green Bay Austin Straubel International Airport (GRB) is in Green Bay, WI: www.flygrb.com. Appleton International Airport (ATW) is in Appleton, WI: <https://atwairport.com>. All attendees will require a vehicle to get to the Symposium and scheduled events. The Menominee Casino Resort (MCR) is approximately a 10-minute walk from the College of Menominee Nation (CMN). Transportation will be provided for those who need assistance travelling from MCR to CMN.

Host Hotels: Four hotels have negotiated group rates for the Symposium. The reduced group rate is for Symposium attendees only. ITC reserves the right to review the hotel rooming list and remove reservations that do not have a corresponding conference registration. There is no shuttle service between hotels.

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Symposium Committee

by Howard Teasley, Jr.

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Please visit Wisconsin! We hope to see you in June. Qe'ci'yew'yew! (Thank you)

Here are the future National Indian Timber Symposium dates for planning purposes:

April 5-8, 2027 – 50th Annual hosted by the **San Carlos Apache Tribe**, San Carlos, AZ.

2028 – 51st Annual hosted by

the **Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation**, WA

2029 – 52nd Annual hosted by **Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**, Durant, OK

2030 – 53rd Annual hosted by the **Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation**, WA

Searching for a Host Tribe: Each year, the member tribes of

Intertribal Timber Council vote by ballot and choose a future site for a tribe wanting to host the event. This occurs during the Annual Business Meeting on Thursday, June 11 after the Symposium workshops. During the meeting, there is an **Election of Board Members** and a decision on the next location.



BIA Division of Forestry

by Caleb Cain



Caleb Cain

HAPPY SPRING FROM THE DIVISION OF FORESTRY!

As winter gives way to longer days and thawing ground, spring has officially arrived.

With the start of 2026, the Division of Forestry is enthusiastic and optimistic about the opportunities ahead. This year promises to be both productive and eventful as we build on past achievements and prepare for the work ahead.

Spring breakup is now underway across the regions. As the ground softens and roads begin to muddy, please plan field operations accordingly. This seasonal transition also marks the beginning of preparations for our upcoming reforestation season. Now is the ideal time to coordinate planting dates, double check equipment is in working order, finalize site prep, and make sure everything is in place for successful planting once conditions allow.

Did you know? Over the last five years, Indian Country has planted more than thirty-five million trees across 112,000 acres—an incredible achievement that reflects our shared commitment to healthy, resilient forests.

Training: We are committed to investing in professional development through targeted training sessions that focus on TAAMS, timber sales, compliance, and best practices. The Division of Forestry has recently hosted two forestry presale

TAAMS training courses, as well as two introductory TAAMS training courses. The Northwest Region just concluded its Timber Sales Workshop, while the Western Region is preparing to host theirs soon. Additional TAAMS and timber sales training sessions are scheduled for 2026. Please stay tuned for upcoming announcements regarding new training opportunities.

2026 Forestry Budget: The Department of Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs budget passed on January 23, 2026. BIA Forestry funded at FY 2024 levels:

- Forestry Projects - \$28,259,000
- Forestry Program (TPA) - \$34,628,000

Timber Team: The Timber Team began the year by assisting the Quinault Indian Nation in Taholah, Washington, where they measured sixty timber cruise plots and collected detailed data needed to calculate timber sale volumes. They also completed frequency cruise

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strips to estimate road-clearing volume and measured fifty-one timber stand improvement plots, providing Quinault with information to guide precommercial thinning priorities.

In February, the Team supported the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in Minnesota by marking four timber sale areas focused on thinning red pine plantations to reduce fuel loading and release hardwood regeneration. Over 10,800 trees were marked across 108 acres, with frequency cruise methods used to collect essential inventory data and demonstrations provided on data processing techniques with FSCruiser. Additional work included completing stand exams, coring trees for site index, and measuring regeneration to help guide future management decisions.

Most recently, the Team worked with the Karuk Tribe in Northern California to establish around 40 Continuous Forest Inventory plots designed for long-term monitoring. Using a nested plot approach, they collected precise measurements on tree growth, crown characteristics, and defect to support high-quality remeasurement in 10–15 years. The resulting data will help the Tribe calculate sustained yield, determine annual allowable cut, and make informed long-term resource planning decisions.

After a busy winter, the Timber Team will be working in North Carolina and Colorado early this spring.

The Timber Team's tenta-

tive schedule and openings for the remaining calendar year:

Date/Tribe/Region:

- March 16 – March 27, 2026: Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Sale/Prep, NC; ER
- April 6 - April 17, 2026: Ute Mountain Ute CFI, CO; SWR
- May 4 - May 15, 2026: Warm Springs Reservation Sale/Prep, OR; NWR
- June 1 - June 12, 2025: ITC Symposium and project assistance for the Menominee Reservation of Wisconsin
- June 21 - June 27, 2026: Crow Reservation Sale/Prep, MT; RMR
- July 12 - July 25, 2026: Tentative Hualapai Reservation Sale/Prep/CFI, AZ; WR
- August 3 - August 14, 2026: Puget Sound Agency Sale/Prep

for Hoh and Lower Elwha, WA; NWR

- August 24 - September 4, 2026: Tentative Colville Reservation Silviculture Rx/Sale Prep, WA; NWR

We are seeking proposals starting in October 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>.

2026 Northwest Region Timber Sales Workshop: Over 100 BIA and Tribal foresters gathered at the Spokane Tribe Resort and Casino for the Northwest Region Timber Sales Workshop held March 10–12, 2026. Attendees represented the Northwest Re-



Photo of a Timber Team forester coring a tree to determine site index while assisting the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in central Minnesota.

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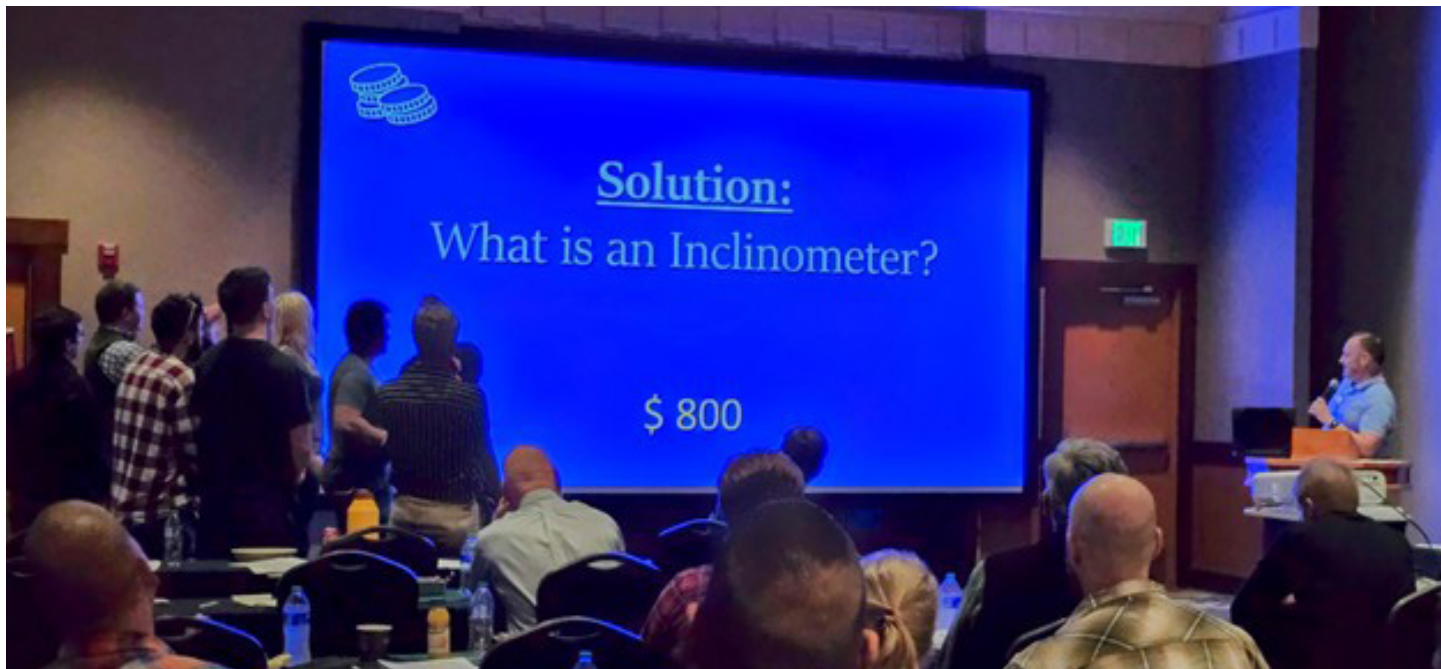


Photo of Shawn Hartzler, AKA "Alex Tree-bek" leads a round of Forestry Jeopardy

gion, Northwest Tribes, Central Office, Alaska Region, Midwest Region, and Western Region. Spokane Tribal leaders opened the workshop with a welcome address and song.

Workshop discussions covered a wide range of topics, including federal legislation, manuals and handbooks, appraisals, forest officer's reports, environmental compliance, artificial intelligence, scaling, the Trust Asset Accounting Management System (TAAMS), the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act (ITARA), allotment sales, financial accounting, and sale closeout.

Beyond formal sessions, the workshop also provided valuable information-sharing opportunities between regions. Central Office, Northwest Region, and Western Region consulted ahead of a scheduled April 2026 training in Phoenix. Since it has been several years since Wes-

tern Region hosted training, the workshop provided especially meaningful insights to support their upcoming event.

The Northwest Region also reflected on its 2024 timber sales workshop in Ocean Shores, Washington, where Shawn Hartzler led a Forestry Jeopardy icebreaker that brought together representatives from Tribes, regional offices, and Central Office. The Colville Tribe claimed the championship title in 2024 — and successfully defended their title in 2026, once again earning Forestry Jeopardy bragging rights.

Congratulations to the Northwest Region for organizing another successful and informative workshop. We are looking forward to many more collaborative events in the future.

BRANCH OF FOREST INVENTORY AND PLANNING (FIP)

FIP Project Update: FIP is currently managing five active projects, two in the cleaning and processing phase and three in the analysis phase. Across Regions and Tribes, ten projects are actively collecting field data, while fifteen are analyzing data to complete their FIA requirements. Of all active projects listed in the Project Planning Tool, 17% managed directly by FIP, with the remaining 83% managed at the regional, agency, or tribal level.

The U.S. Forest Service recently demonstrated Exam Mobile, FSveg Data Analyzer, and FSveg Spatial, highlighting the capabilities of each application. Currently, FSveg is only available to the USDA Forest Service. Making it accessible to BIA and Tribal forestry programs would require system modifications, secure hosting, and additional resources. We are working with

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the Forest Service to gather information on initial and recurring funding needs for access, hosting, and technical support.

To help determine whether expanding access to the FS Veg suite would benefit BIA and Tribal forestry programs, a survey was distributed to Regional Foresters and Tribal forestry staff. Participation was limited, and additional feedback is needed before deciding whether it is appropriate to pursue funding or development work to support broader access.

With improved survey participation—combined with clearer information on anticipated costs and system requirements—we are better positioned to assess whether a cross-agency collaboration on the FS Veg Suite of Applications is both feasible and beneficial. To request access to the survey, please contact Stephen.Singleton@bia.gov, survey will close on April 30, 2026.

Karuk CFI Installation: In the months leading up to the CFI

kickoff, FIP met virtually with the Forestry Program Manager at KDNR to determine inventory location and logistics, as well as what measurements would be most important for helping Karuk with their planned Forest Management Plan update. Through this collaboration, FIP developed inventory training manual, tablet data collection software, CFI tracker tool, and inventory database.

Once on site, FIP provided field training on how to collect the necessary plot, tree, cover type and site index measurements that will be analyzed to determine forest health and stand characteristics within the inventoried forestland. Despite working in steep terrain and occasional heavy rain, each morning, the foresters were rewarded with beautiful views of fog rising off the Klamath River.

KDNR will continue to measure the remaining CFI plots and intends to complete the inventory later this spring. FIP and KDNR can monitor the progress of the inventory measurement using the CFI Tracker tool developed

by FIP using Microsoft Power BI, which provides regular updates from the inventory database. The data collected will then be analyzed and put used to write the updated Forest Management Plan for Karuk.

ADVANCING FORESTRY DATA INTEGRITY THROUGH AI POWERED DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

By Christopher LaCroix, Forest Analyst, Branch of Forest Inventory & Planning (FIP)

The Branch of Forest Inventory & Planning (FIP) is piloting a new AI powered tool to streamline verification of key forestry metrics across Forest Management Plans (FMPs), Forest Inventory Analysis Reports (FIAs), and the Indian Forestry Database (InfoDat). What once required manually locating documents, scanning for values, and running comparisons can now be completed in minutes.

The tool extracts metrics such as planning years, commercial volume, allowable annual cut (AAC), indicated allowable cut (IAC), and regulated annual cut (RAC). It analyzes FMPs and FIAs simultaneously, displays extracted values in one place, and compares them to InfoDat to flag potential discrepancies.

The system includes:

- A Power BI library to filter and download documents.
- An AI document upload portal.
- A results dashboard with extracted values.
- A live InfoDat Power BI interface for side-by-side review.



Left Photo: Crew crossing steep, rugged forests in Northern California. Right Photo: Whether it's pouring or sunny, a forester always greets the day with a cheerful attitude.

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BIA Division of Forestry

by Caleb Cain

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Built entirely in the Microsoft Power Platform within the secure DOI environment, the tool inherits all BIA and DOI security and compliance protections. No information leaves the DOI network, aligning with current DOI AI guidance.

A core design principle is keeping a human in the loop. Analysts validate any mismatches, using document citations automatically generated by the tool. These references help verify accuracy, refine prompts, and support continuous improvement during the testing phase.

Early feedback from tribal forestry programs has already identified outdated documents and mismatched database values—demonstrating how the tool supports initiative-taking data quality checks and policy compliance.

As testing continues, FIP is refining prompts to accommodate unique document formats and

edge cases. By reducing manual workload and improving data reliability, this AI enabled approach strengthens forest management planning, reporting accuracy, and the long-term integrity of forestry information across Indian Country.

In late February, FIP and the Timber Team sent 8 foresters to the Pacific Region to help install the new Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) at Karuk. Spring timing was selected with the hope of arriving after the last snow and before the poison oak leafed out (spoiler alert – missed the snow by a week!). Over the following two weeks, BIA foresters worked with forestry staff at Karuk Department of Natural Resources (KDNR) to tag and measure over 1000 trees at 40 plots. Despite working in steep terrain and occasional heavy rain, each morning, the foresters were rewarded with beautiful views of fog rising off the Klamath River.

KDNR will continue to measure the remaining CFI plots and in-

tends to complete the inventory later this spring. FIP and KDNR can monitor the progress of the inventory measurement using the CFI Tracker tool developed by FIP using Microsoft Power BI, which provides regular updates from the inventory database. The data collected will then be analyzed and used to write the updated Forest Management Plan for Karuk.

The entire application was designed and built in house using the Microsoft Power Platform, which operates fully within the secure DOI Microsoft 365 environment. Power Platform tools inherit all security protocols, data protections, and compliance controls established by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior. This ensures that no sensitive data is released or accessible outside the DOI network and aligns with DOI approved AI and Power Platform usage described in DOI AI guidance and FAQs.



Education Committee

by Shawn de France



Shawn de France

The Education Committee met virtually on February 10, 2026. The meeting was well attended, and we had guests from the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), SKC TREES, and BIA Pathways Program.

Kelvin Braun & Mira Williamson attended the meeting from SFI. 8 people selected to interview for 1st round that will be held virtually. We reviewed & approved the interview questions.

Outreach has begun to set up interviews. Introduction letters to has been sent out to potential interviewees. Tia Beavert from Yakama Nation has been the lead on this project.

SKC TREES gave an update on their program. They currently have eight students in Forestry, and five in Fire. They are currently re-advertising for the TREES director position. They

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Education Committee

by Shawn de France

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participated in an initial meeting with Garth Fisher at BIA to discuss the possibility of a dual enrollment for Wildland Fire curriculum in partnership with BIA, Two Eagle River HS, and SKC. The BIA program is currently being advertised online. A Workforce Subcommittee is being formed, and we will have our first meeting on Monday, April 13, 2026, in Boise, Idaho during our next board meeting.

Darryl Monteau and Elisha Flores from the BIA Pathways Program provided an update for their program. They are currently in a holding pattern; no outreach or recruiting is currently taking place yet. They have not received word about the they can start up again.

They requested an extension of the deadline in hopes that they can recruit students before the summer. The agency's focus at this time is to fill leadership and administrative positions. There are currently twelve students in the program. When they are able to recruit again, direction from current leadership is to recruit for Forestry & Natural Resources.

Laura Alvidrez provided an update on the future student summit. Her and Cal Mukumoto met with Tom DeLuca at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon. We have a tentative date of end of April 2027 to host the event.

We are very excited to announce that Green Diamond has made another significant donation of \$50,000.00. Of which,

\$20,000.00 will be made available for scholarships. This is the second time that they donated for this amount.

The 2026 Truman D. Picard Scholarship deadline was March 20, 2026. We will be reviewing applications at our next board meeting in April. There were many promising applications! The Education Committee is dedicated to assisting students to reach their academic goals.

A quick reminder; we will be holding the raffle during the Symposium in June. You can bring your raffle items with you to the Symposium or you can mail them to Menominee Nation.



Wildland Fire Technical Specialist

by Jim Durglo



Jim Durglo

**U.S. WILDLAND
FIRE
SERVICE, U.S.
DEPARTMENT OF
THE INTERIOR**

Members of the ITC and Joe Majeski, now the Wildland Fire Service (WFS), Chief of Staff for Brian Hennessy, Aaron Baldwin, the Director of the Office of Tribal Trust and Juliette Jeane continue to meet periodically to share updates in the unification process. We have recently heard that the organizations are being filled from the top down. We also learned that Mark Jackson participated in the National Risk Assessment exercise. Also, Juliette said a draft consultation response letter is not yet approved.

In an April meeting in Boise, Idaho with members of the ITC leadership, Brian Fennessy, Chief, WFS seeks genuine part-

nership.

The new WFS will mirror the Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC) boundaries; Nine GACC directors have been named and will soon recruit staff for their areas, supporting delivery of critical national services.

The ITC continues to raise concerns about the 638 contracting and agreements process, payments, funding allocation, national risk assessments, access to training and medical standards, and confusion about line authority.

Much of that day-to-day detail

(Continued on page 13)

Wildland Fire Technical Specialist

by Jim Durglo

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Photo of the WFS Meeting on March 6, 2026, from L to R: Jim Durglo, ITC Contractor; Molly Anthony, WFS; Tim Miller, ITC Board / Grand Portage; Walker Craig, WFS; Brian Fennessy, WFS; Grant Beebe, WFS; Dawn Blake, ITC Board / Hoopa Tribe; Jason Fallon, WFS; Chris Wilcox, WFS; Ed Christopher, WFS; Cody Desautel, ITC Board / Colville Tribe; Aaron Balwin, WFS; Joe Majewski, WFS; and John Cervates, WFS.

has not been carried into the new organization yet. The WFS leadership tells us that nothing will be unplugged until the new organization has the capacity to manage it including 638 agreements. They also say that much of the ground level staff won't notice much change. They are currently building the National and GACC level organization.

ITC visits the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in Boise, Idaho on March 6, 2026: Members of the ITC Executive Board traveled to Boise for a meet-and-greet and organizational update with Chief Fennessy and leadership staff. During the meeting, Chief Fennessy emphasized his commitment to developing a genuine partnership with Tribes and Tribal organizations. Grant Beebe assured the group that current operations would continue until the new organization is fully prepared to manage. The ITC and WFS will work together to revise an MOU that promotes

relationship building and defines communication strategies.

ITC Hosts Listening Forum with Chief Fennessy on March 9, 2026: ITC hosted what hopefully will be a regular scheduled forum to discuss issues directly with Chief Fennessy. The virtual forum was well attended with over 80 participants logging in. The meeting was opened with introductions from Cody Desautel, ITC President, Cal Mukomoto, ITC Executive Director, and Brian Fennessy, Chief of the WFS. Chief Fennessy provided a brief update on the new organization while both Joe Majewski, Aaron Baldwin, and Juliette Jeane provided comments. Participants asked about suppression reimbursement payments, fire agreements and contracts under PL-93-638, Tribal inclusion in all programming, relationship building and funding mechanisms. A question was also raised about priorities of the Office of Tribal Trust. It was

noted that priority discussions and focused work will be done in conjunction with the Tribal Fire Management Officer leadership.

National Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (NWCG): The NWCG provides national leadership to enable interoperable wildland fire operations among federal, state, local, Tribal, and territorial partners. The primary function and priority are to establish wildland fire position standards, qualifications requirements, and performance support capabilities (e.g. training courses, job aids) that enable implementation of NWCG standards.

In February, DOI fire agency representation on the NWCG Executive Board was reduced from four to one. Garth Fisher (BIA), Brian Achziger (BLM), and Casey Teske (NPS) no longer sit on board while Eric Fransted, formerly from the Fish and Wildlife

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Wildland Fire Technical Specialist

by Jim Durglo

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Service (FWS), now represents the WFS.

The NWCG Executive Board Chair issued a memo outlining some significant accomplishments in 2025: Incident Performance and Training Modernization (IPTM) Effort: The IPTM project team made substantial progress towards developing a modern, integrated performance-based training system designed to strengthen a safe and effective wildland fire workforce. The project is 40% complete, with critical foundational components already in place. Additional positions launching in spring 2026 will further implementation and enhance interagency preparedness. The NWCG Executive Board appreciates the staffing and contract-

ed resources supporting IPTM's success. Check out the website for more information on Incident Performance and Training Modernization (IPTM) | NWCG at <https://www.nwcg.gov/training/iptm>.

Complex Incident Management (CIM) Support: Support for CIM courses remains strong. The S-320, Introduction to Incident Management Teams course achieved full certification in 2025 and is now available for delivery in the field. The Incident Management Team Course Steering Committee also initiated the revision of S-420 and hosted the first alpha test course in December 2025 — an important step toward modernizing the CIM training pathway. In addition, the archiving of Type 1 and 2 Command & General Staff positions for 2026 marks a major milestone in CIM

implementation.

NWCG Committee Reorganization: NWCG launched a major effort to restructure and streamline committee operations to better align with its core interagency mission. This reorganization is intended to strengthen collaboration across agencies while addressing rising operational demands and system complexities. The effort is expected to improve interagency coordination, increase system efficiency, and reduce overall workload. The full implementation target date is July 1, 2026.

Incident Response Pocket Guide: NWCG published the 2025 edition of its most widely used field reference — the NWCG Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG), PMS 461 — and distributed more than 300,000



Photo of CSKT Division of Fire Rx under burning on the Flathead Indian Reservation, Montana, 2020.

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Wildland Fire Technical Specialist

by Jim Durglo

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copies across the wildland fire community.

Incident Management Team Association: NWCCG welcomed the Incident Management Team Association (IMTA) as its newest associate member. IMTA is a professional organization dedicated to advancing the incident management discipline by promoting standards

and strengthening collaboration among federal, state, local, Tribal, and private-sector partners across all phases of incident management.

Tribal FMO Collaboration: I have been fortunate to join the frequent virtual FMO meetings and provide information on the ongoing DOI Fire Service Unification process. The meetings are an open forum format where both Tribal and BIA fire

staff discuss issues and challenges. Most raise questions about how the WFS 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 move toward full unification.



National Native Conservation Network Coordinator

by Kathy Ferge



Kathy Ferge

MOORETOWN RANCHERIA HOSTS ITC'S FIRST NNCN WORKSHOP

The National Native Conservation Network program is delivering! Eight tribes, six organizations and 37 individuals participated in our first in-per-



Photo of ITC NRCS Workshop attendees on January 29, 2026 in Oroville, CA.

son workshop “Growing Tribal Forests: Best Practices in Tribal Engagement with USDA NRCS Forestry Projects.”

Organized by the ITC NNCN in conjunction with the Forest Business Alliance, California Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Mooreville Rancheria, the day-long session was designed to provide Tribes with

information on NRCS programs, share Tribal success stories, and hear from potential match funders.

Session highlights included hearing how Tribal partners are connecting with USDA NRCS. ITC Board member Dawn Blake shared the long-time partner-

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National Native Conservation Network Coordinator

by Kathy Ferge

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ship between the Hoopa Valley Tribe and NRCS. The Tribe has used USDA NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program funds to assist with implementation of the Tribe's forest management plan. The plan, developed in 1994, guides all forest restoration work.

Key EQIP activities include:

- Road System Improvements, such as sediment management or control on both surface and subsurface, enhancing stream crossings, by armoring for low water crossings, culvert installations, and rock lined waterways and outlets.
- Forest Stand Improvement, including commercial and pre-commercial thinning, woody residue treatment, and prescribed burns.

Hoopa has focused largely on maintenance and/or improvement of the 738 miles of roads that crisscross their lands. The Forest Management plan specifically calls for appropriate road maintenance, while at the same time reducing stream sedimentation from erosion of roads.

Other projects have included: rehabilitation of an area that burned in 2008, developing fuel breaks to reduce the impact from catastrophic fires, and using prescribed burns to develop prairie elements within the forest.

Participants also heard from Marko Bey, Executive Director, and Belinda Brown, Tribal Partnership Director of Lomakatsi Restoration Project. Since 1995, Lomakatsi has been working

throughout southern Oregon and northern California on landscape scale projects to enhance natural resources and address Tribal cultural concerns as part of a holistic package. Lomakatsi's success stems from the ability to bring diverse partners and funders to a project to develop a framework for planning and implementing projects that all can agree on, thus building "Thriving Tribal Communities with Resilient Ecosystems."

While Lomakatsi also has a history of engagement with NRCS, two of the projects highlighted during the workshop included, Oak Woodland Health and Habitat Conservation, Fort Bidwell Tribal Forest Management and Ecosystem Restoration Project.

Oak Woodland Health and Habitat Conservation project covered a large area in southern Oregon and northern California through a NRCS Resource Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). A variety of practices were used throughout the region, including prescribed burns, to open the canopy and reduce competition, allowing the Oaks to thrive.

The Northern Surprise Valley All-Lands Restoration Project is another NRCS RCPP. The project included authorities, and funding from US Forest Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, US Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as state and philanthropic funders, all with a focus of building on the Fort Bidwell forest management strategy to create shovel-ready projects for future implementation.

In developing these collaborative projects they've developed

several keys for success, such as utilizing interagency agreements, Service First Authority, and Indian Forest Lands Assistance Account; developing Memorandum's of Understanding for Tribes and collaborators and establishing Regional Ecological Inter-Tribal Workforce Programs.

Funding partners from four California-based organizations shared how their programming can potentially offset NRCS cost shares or provide other funding streams to expand Tribal capacity. This included: the Forest Business Alliance, CAL FIRE: California Forest Improvement Program, Blue Forest, and The Watershed Center.

The day ended on a high note, as participants visited the Mooreville Rancheria Cultural Resources and Wildfire Departments. Natural Resources Director, Carrie Monohan, shared how she and her team are strategically building programs that both care for Tribal lands, and strengthen the Tribe's natural and cultural resources.

Bringing together the Tribes, NRCS and funders is so important to the Tribal forest management conversation. This venue offered time for informal exchanges to take place, which was especially gratifying to observe. This couldn't have happened without good planning, so I especially thank our planning team of Laura Alvidrez, ITC; Cherilyn Ashmead, Forest Business Alliance; and Kagat McQuillen & Cody Benjamin, CA NRCS Tribal Liaisons.

ITC NNCN is in the planning

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National Native Conservation Network Coordinator

by Kathy Ferge

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stages for similar training opportunities, including Pre-Symposium Workshop 2: Building Partnerships That Work with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services in Keshena,

WI. There are registration and travel stipends to attend this workshop. View the flyer for more details. There is opportunity for your Tribe or a group of Tribes to work with me to develop NRCS training specific to

your needs. You can reach me by email at kathy.ferge@icloud.com or by 541-571-3815.



Legislative Update

by Matt Hill



Matt Hill

APPROPRIATIONS STATUS UPDATE

Fiscal Year 2026: The FY26 federal appropriations for the Department of the Interior (DOI) were enacted in January 2026, as part of a bipartisan “minibus”. This resolved funding ahead of the continuing resolution deadline and largely maintained core program levels while rejecting the Trump Administration’s proposed deep cuts. The overall Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act provide \$42.56 billion -- a modest ~1.9% decrease from FY2025’s \$43.37 billion.

The BIA receives approximately \$2.490 billion in total discretionary funding (a slight ~\$15 million or 0.6% increase over FY2025 enacted levels of ~\$2.475 bil-

lion). This outcome preserves funding for tribal self-determination, public safety, trust responsibilities, and core services across 574 federally recognized Tribes, rejecting the President’s FY2026 budget request of ~\$1.71 billion for BIA (a proposed 31% cut overall, with steeper reductions in many areas).

BIA Forestry is funded under the “Trust—Natural Resources Management” sub activity within Operation of Indian Programs. BIA Forestry is funded at \$62.887 million, which is level/flat funding with FY2025 enacted levels.

Fiscal Year 2027: ITC President Cody Desautel recently testified before the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee in favor of increased appropriations in FY27 for BIA Forestry. Desautel stated that “More than 50% of all the timber produced from Department of Interior lands comes from Indian forests. Yet, this harvest level is only half the sustainable annual target set by tribal governments.” He pointed out that “tribal forests achieve [timber] productivity at a fraction of the cost (of other federal lands). By prioritizing funding for tribal lands, federal appropriations can be allocated where timber

is produced most economically, yielding the greatest return on investment for taxpayers while supporting tribal self-determination and economic sovereignty.”

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

ITARA Reauthorization (H.R.5515, Rep. Hurd): On November 19, 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).

The bill has not been scheduled for markup in the Natural Resources Committee. There is no companion legislation in the Senate.

FORESTS Act (Rep. Hurd): The bill (which has still not been formally introduced) 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

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Legislative Update

by Matt Hill

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the House Subcommittee on Federal Lands, where Rep. Hurd, U.S. Forest Service officials, and tribal representatives provided testimony.

The ITC has been working closely with the House Natural Resources Committee on improvements to the draft bill and technical assistance from the U.S. Forest Service. We are hopeful that the revised bill will be introduced soon.

Tribal Self-Determination and Co-Management in Forestry Act of 2025 (H.R.3444, Rep. Huffman):

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 has worked with ITC on changes to the bill and still trying to earn support from the Republican majority.

There is no companion bill in the Senate.

Fix our Forests Act (H.R.471/S.1462, Rep. Westerman/Sen. Curtis):

The House version of the Westerman bill passed the House in January 2025. A separate Senate version of the bill was introduced in April 2025, and a hearing held in the Senate Agriculture Committee in May 2025 and favorably reported out of committee in October 2025.

As of March 2026, the bill remains pending in the Senate and has not yet passed that chamber or been signed into law. The House Republicans continue to maintain the urgency of the legislation, including a recent oversight hearing making the one-year anniversary of the devastating Los Angeles fires.

FARM BILL UPDATE

The House Agriculture Committee advanced H.R. 7567 (the “Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026”) on a bipartisan 34-17 vote on March 5, 2026. The legislation reauthorizes and updates programs across 12 titles, with a focus on production, conservation, nutrition, rural development, energy, and forestry. The bill contains dozens of Indian Country/Tribal provisions. These generally expand eligibility, provide higher federal cost-share matches for Tribes, enhance technical assistance parity, support Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and create limited self-determination pilots—rather than sweeping new authorities.

Indian Forest Management Provisions: These are

concentrated in Title VIII (Forestry) and the new Forest Conservation Easement Program. The bill emphasizes Tribal participation in active management, wildfire mitigation, restoration, and conservation on or affecting Indian forest lands—building on 2018 authorities with technical fixes, eligibility expansions, and collaboration tools.

Key items include:

Tribal Forest Management Program (Sec. 8420 – Technical Correction): Converts the 2018 Farm Bill’s “demonstration project” (under the Tribal Forest Protection Act of 2004) into a permanent program. Tribes and Tribal organizations can now enter self-determination contracts (638 authority) with USDA or DOI to perform administrative and management functions for forest protection activities—especially on or near federal lands to safeguard Indian forests from wildfire, insects, disease, and other threats. This enhances Tribal self-governance over forest protection without new funding mandates.

Good Neighbor Authority (Sec. 8412): Explicitly adds “Indian Tribe” to the authority (amending the 2014 Agricultural Act). Tribes can participate in agreements with the Forest Service for restoration, fuels reduction, and related work. Tribes can retain and use timber sale receipts for projects on Tribal or Indian lands (including road construction/restoration). This supports cross-boundary management and economic benefits from federal forest activities.

Collaborative Forest Landscapes

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Legislative Update

by Matt Hill

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pe Restoration Program (Sec. 8413): Updates project selection criteria to prioritize proposals that reduce wildfire risk, restore ecosystems, or improve watershed health across ownerships, including Tribal lands. This facilitates larger-scale collaborative projects benefiting Indian forests.

Reforestation, Nursery, and Seed Orchard Support (Sec. 8305): Requires partnerships with Indian Tribes for training, technical assistance, and research. Eligible projects and grants (available to Tribes) include development of nurseries/seed orchards focused on native plants and seeds of cultural significance to Indian Tribes. Supports Tribal reforestation, afforestation, and agroforestry efforts.

New Forest Conservation Easement Program (FCEP – replaces Healthy Forests Reserve Program): Creates a voluntary entity-held easement program for working forestlands. Broadly defines “acreage owned by an Indian Tribe” (trust land, restricted fee title, rights-of-use, fee-simple tribal land, Alaska Native corporation lands, etc.) as eligible. Tribes are eligible entities; flexible options include 30-year contracts (with compensation equivalent to easements) or permanent easements. Allows economic uses per a management plan; provides for Tribal technical assistance agreements and potential delegation of administration. Prioritize habitat restoration and working forest conservation.

Additional Forestry Supports: Categorical exclusions for fuels reduction/vegetation management on National Forest System lands (e.g., up to certain acreages) when coordinated with Tribes; Tribal inclusion in wildfire technology testbeds (via Bureau of Indian Affairs); agroforestry centers that reference Tribal programs; and broader definitions/eligibility in conservation programs that can apply to Tribal forest/rangeland management.

It remains unclear if this (or any) version of the Farm Bill will be enacted this year. If Democrats capture the House (and/or Senate) in the Fall elections, the reauthorization may be delayed into 2027 when Democrats have greater political leverage.

U.S. FOREST SERVICE/BLM UPDATES

Northwest Forest Plan: The U.S. Forest Service is working to revise the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Northwest Forest Plan Amendment. The ITC has been working closely with the Forest Service on tribal engagement for the revision process. As a result, the Forest Service announced a series of tribal workshops. The ITC will be hosting pre-session discussions for each four-hour workshop for tribes to share thoughts, ask questions and prepare for formal engagement with the Forest Service.

Here is the (virtual) workshop schedule:

- March 19, 2026: Landscape Categories

- April 2, 2026: Moist Landscapes
- April 9, 2026: Intermediate Landscapes
- April 16, 2026: Dry & Cold Landscapes
- May 7, 2026: Common to All Landscapes
- May 14, 2026: At-Risk Species
- May 21, 2026: NEPA & Analysis

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, followed by another public comments period.

BLM launches plan revision for Western Oregon “OGC” Forests: In February, the BLM announced that it intends to revise the plans that govern management of approximately 2.46 million acres of mostly re-vested Oregon

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Legislative Update

by Matt Hill

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and California Railroad (O&C) lands and Coos Bay Wagon Road lands across 17 western Oregon counties. The primary goal is to increase sustained-yield timber harvest to historically higher levels—potentially up to around 1 billion board feet annually, or roughly four times recent levels. This would replace the current 2016 plan.

A draft EIS is tentatively scheduled for June 2026, with a final EIS and Record of Decision targeted for later in 2026–2027. No public meetings are currently planned. Tribes have two main avenues for input. Scoping comments were due March 23.

BLM will consult directly with

Indian Tribal Nations on a government-to-government basis or request to participate as cooperating agencies in developing the environmental analysis.

Tribes are encouraged to engage early through both channels if desired.

U.S. WILDLAND FIRE SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

The Department of the Interior (DOI) has officially established and launched the U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS), which represents the consolidation of wildland fire management programs across its various bureaus and offices. Brian Fennes-

sy (former Orange County Fire Authority Chief) was appointed to lead the implementation and oversee the new service.

As of mid-March, the USWFS is operational within DOI. Most personnel transitions occurred in early February 2026, focusing on modernization, technology, and partnerships—including with tribes. This includes the transition of approximately 3,900 federal wildland firefighters into USWFS.

Full integration with Forest Service assets depends on future congressional action and funding.



Operations Committee

by Jason Robison



Jason Robison

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES: FOREST ACT, CO- MANAGEMENT, AND

APPROPRIATIONS

Winter is settling in across the country. For many of you in the Midwest and Northeast, it's been cold, wet, and stormy. West, especially west of the Rockies, conditions have remained noticeably dry. We're hoping the coming weeks bring much-needed rain and mountain snowpack to ease drought conditions and help reduce wildfire risk as we head toward summer.

Against that backdrop, the ITC Operations Committee met virtually on February 11, 2026, to discuss federal legislative developments, forest policy updates, workforce and administrative capacity needs, fire governance changes, and ongoing initiatives

across research, certification, and wood utilization. Below is a summary of key discussions and next steps.

A special thank you to ITC President, Cody Desautel, and Executive Director, Cal Mukumoto, for leading the meeting in my absence, allowing me to support the Cow Creek Umpqua Tribe in our efforts in Washington, DC.

Northwest Forest Plan Revision: Matt Hill updated the Committee on revisions to the Northwest Forest Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The Forest Service plans to conduct issue-specific virtual tribal consultations, and tribes will soon receive formal invitations.

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Operations Committee

by Jason Robison

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Members emphasized the importance of ensuring the right tribal representatives, particularly those with technical and policy expertise, participate in consultations to effectively shape outcomes. ITC will continue monitoring engagement to ensure meaningful tribal input.

Stewardship Agreements and the Roadless Rule: The Committee discussed the Forest Service's use of 20-year stewardship agreements and the potential for sole-source contracting. Industry perspectives remain mixed, with questions about long-term impacts on timber production and market stability.

Members also reviewed developments regarding the Roadless Rule and the agency's intent to rescind or revise it. Changes could significantly affect forest management planning across states and will require careful tribal consultation to address state-by-state implications.

Farm Bill and Conservation Partnerships: Cody Desautel raised questions about the status of the Farm Bill. Matt Hill reported that draft text is circulating in the House Agriculture Committee, though progress is slowed by political debate over nutrition programs during an election year.

The Committee discussed continued collaboration with The Nature Conservancy to align priorities and strengthen tribal forestry provisions. ITC will follow up to identify next steps and opportunities for coordi-

nated advocacy.

Tribal Action Plan (TAP) Update: Reed Robinson, Director of the Office of Tribal Relations (OTR), provided an update on the Forest Service's Tribal Action Plan. With interim operations underway and a new Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) in place, the agency's FY26 priorities include safety, community protection, and expanded outdoor recreation.

ITC will play an active role in shaping updates to the TAP. A mini charrette with National Tribal GIS is planned to review the Gantt chart, gather feedback, and ensure tribal forestry priorities are incorporated.

EUDR and Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS): Kate Gatto, Chief Strategy Officer for NAFO, briefed the Committee on the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). Enforcement has been delayed, and discussions are underway regarding simplifications for low-risk countries. However, limited understanding within the EU about tribal timber producers remains a concern.

There is an open opportunity for ITC to influence the European Commission's review process. Options under consideration include a second Brussels delegation and a potential op-ed in an EU publication to highlight impacts on tribal forestry.

Kate also provided an update on the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS), particularly the definition of woody biomass. Clarifying eligibility could open new markets for tribal fiber,

including methanol production for aviation fuel. Members discussed building broader support among non-corn states and continuing advocacy through the federal budget process.

Workforce Development and Administrative Capacity - Administrative Manager Proposal: Executive Director, Cal Mukumoto proposed hiring an Administrative Manager to alleviate administrative burdens currently carried by Monica and Laura. The position would focus on bookkeeping, contract tracking, and organizational administration, allowing senior staff to focus on programmatic leadership. Funding would be supported through indirect budgets tied to Forest Service and NRCS agreements.

The Committee also discussed the need for a consolidated annual organizational budget rather than managing finances project-by-project. The proposed Administrative Manager could support development of this comprehensive budget.

In addition, Cal suggested expanding the role of ITC's HR consultants to review staff structure, position descriptions, and pay tables, drawing from GS-scale models and organizational best practices.

Shared Stewardship & Workforce Working Group: Updates were provided on the Shared Stewardship contract and the hiring of Stephanie Lucero, pending board approval. The Committee discussed forming a joint Workforce Development Working Group between

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Operations Committee

by Jason Robison

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the Operations and Education Committees to update the strategic workforce plan and clarify deliverables.

Fire Governance, Representation, and the Good Fire Act: Jim Durglo, ITC Fire Specialist, and Bill Tripp, Fire Subcommittee Chair, provided updates on federal fire reorganization efforts and the pause in cohesive strategy regional committees. ITC continues engagement with the National Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (NWCG), with a focus on standards and qualification pathways.

Members emphasized the need for stronger tribal representation in fire leadership committees and streamlined qualification processes for tribal burn teams.

Bill Tripp summarized discussions around federal fire unification and a draft consultation response letter. The Fire Subcommittee also recommended ITC sign onto California's Good Fire Act (AB 1699), which seeks to reduce operational barriers, clarify liability, and codify emergency actions to support

prescribed fire.

ITC will pursue a face-to-face meeting with the new BIA Fire Director to discuss impacts of federal restructuring on tribal sovereignty and resources.

Research, Wood Utilization, and Certification: Serra Hoagland, Research Committee Co-chair, reported strong engagement in the ITC Research Subcommittee, including interest from external researchers. Recent highlights include Comparative research on tribal and non-tribal wildland fire plans; A publication on establishing Indigenous faculty positions; and Scholarship recipients conducting research in prairie restoration and geomorphology. The Research Subcommittee meeting on April 3, 2026, will focus on wood utilization and emerging technologies.

Steve Rigdon (Sustainable Northwest) provided updates on: Development of a tribal wood products directory; Coordination on ownership and maintenance of the directory platform; and, advancing tribal certification approaches, including federal requirements and data sovereignty considerations.

The complexity of managing tribal fee lands was also discussed, particularly considering major acquisitions in Washington State and across the Yakama Nation. Members emphasized supporting tribal land management processes while navigating federal regulatory frameworks.

Looking Ahead: The Operations Committee will continue coordinating across subcommittees and partner organizations to ensure tribal forestry priorities remain at the forefront of federal policy, implementation, and funding decisions.

We appreciate the continued engagement from tribes and partners across the country. With major policy and funding decisions ahead, ITC remains committed to supporting tribal sovereignty, strengthening tribal forestry and fire capacity, and expanding opportunities for tribal wood products and workforce development.

I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at our meeting in April.



Awards Committee

by Robin Harkins



Robin Harkins

Thank you to the individuals who submitted application packets for their peers and the committee members who took the time to review and provide input on award recipients. There is a tremendous amount of great work happening across Indian country.

The ITC Awards Committee met virtually in March to review nominations received for the Earle R. Wilcox Memorial Awards. Committee members were provided with the submitted nomination packages and were able to evaluate and score them independently before the committee meeting. Scores were tallied by Awards Committee Chairperson Robin Harkins, and each nomination was discussed by the group. The accomplishments of your peers in Indian



Photo of the 2013 Earle R. Wilcox Awards Winners from L to R: Michael Richter, Davis Ellis, William Downes, and Walter Cox in Keshena, WI.

Forestry continue to be impressive.

Award recipients will be announced and recognized during the 49th Annual Awards Banquet on June 11, 2026, in Keshena, WI. We hope you can join the ITC Symposium in person to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of the award recipients.

It is never too early to start thinking about who you might want to nominate for future awards at both the regional and national levels. Do you know someone who has made an impact on

Indian Forestry in their region or across regions and might be deserving of these awards? If so, reach out to me or the ITC office and we can assist you in getting the process started.





INTERTIBAL TIMBER COUNCIL

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