



INTERTRIBAL TIMBER COUNCIL TIMBER NOTES

Summer ~ 2026



Kathy Ferge

Welcome to the Braided Canopy Initiative

I am just a couple of months into the second year of my contract with the Intertribal Timber Council (ITC) under the National Native Conservation Network grant. It has been an incredible year of relationship building, deep research, and program development. Through it all, our core mission remains constant: **to connect and assist federally recognized timber Tribes with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs and technical assistance.**

To give this vital work its own identity, I am thrilled to officially introduce the **Braided Canopy Initiative.**

This initiative encapsulates everything we learned over the past year by focusing on three highest-priority pillars: **Relationships, Technical Support, and Funding.** Much like a forest canopy, these elements must intertwine to foster true resilience and support the cultural, natural, and economic sustainability of Tribal forest lands.

As we look ahead, I encourage you to explore our new website at braidedcanopy.com, which features our full suite of services, NRCS program information, and a repository of workshop materials. In the meantime, here is how we weave these three braids together based on our Year One milestones.

Braid 1: Relationships

We spent our first several months researching Tribal forestry needs and fostering connections with the people who can help move this initiative forward. Our research reaffirmed that while most ITC tribes are well-served by the NRCS, smaller nations face steep funding and personnel barriers. We operate under a simple truth we heard in the field: “No one understands Tribal Forestry like a Tribal Forester.” To honor tribal traditions and cultural resources, strong, reciprocal relationships are vital.

To turn these relationships into

action, we implemented a comprehensive 2026 Outreach Plan, hosted our first national workshop at the 2026 Symposium, and established a national presence by presenting NRCS programming at both the Indigenous Agroforestry Network and the ATNI Winter Meeting.

Braid 2: Technical Support

Despite significant recent personnel transitions within NRCS leadership, we have been proactively engaging with new national Tribal Liaisons, field liaisons, and Regional Conservationists to maintain our momentum. By conducting outreach with new NRCS and FSA leadership, we are ensuring continuity for our programs.

Connecting directly with the field has been a major highlight of the past year. In August, our National Webinar drew over 150 registrants to highlight the

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Executive Director's Message

by Cal Mukumoto



Cal Mukumoto

A Warm Summer Update

It's hard to believe it has already been six months since I stepped into the role of the Intertribal Timber Cgton professor known as the "father of new forestry".

Hello everyone! As we reach the midpoint of 2026, I wanted to send a friendly update on everything happening here at the Intertribal Timber Council (ITC). Looking at this wonderful organization, I am constantly reminded that our shared dedication to Tribal forests remains just as strong today as it was in the very beginning.



Photo of Jim Durglo watching Tribal drumming and dancing during the Host Welcome Dinner at Woodland Bowl on June 9, 2026.

Celebrating the Symposium

First and foremost, a massive, heartfelt thank you to everyone who traveled to Keshena to join us for our 49th Annual National Indian Timber Symposium! It was an absolute joy gathering around our central theme, "Forestry in a Changing Environ-

ment".

We extend our deepest gratitude to our gracious host Nations, the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. You opened your beautiful homelands to us and did an inspiring job sharing your rich history, culture, and multi-generational approaches to natural resource management. Walking through your resilient forests reminded us all of Chief Oshkosh's guiding philosophy: take only the mature trees, the sick trees, and the trees that have fallen, and the forest will last forever.

An event of this size takes a huge community effort. Please join me in sending a warm thank you to:

- **Our Venues:** The Menominee Casino Resort and the College of Menominee Nation for taking such wonderful care of us in Keshena.



Photo of Smokey Falls, a beautiful lunch spot during the Tribal Tour on June 10, 2026, in Keshena, WI.

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President's Message

by Cody Desautel



Cody Desautel

Host Tribe Acknowledgment

I want to start this report by thanking the Menominee and Stockbridge-Munsee tribes for hosting us at the 2026 ITC symposium. I also want to thank the ITC staff and symposium committee for all their work in preparation leading up to, and during the week. The week was amazing, and as always the host tribes did a great job sharing their history, culture, and approaches to natural resource management. We look forward to the 50th annual symposium in San Carlos next year.

ITC Board Elections & Leadership Update

The Annual ITC Business Meeting was held on June 11, 2026, where member Tribes elected their 2026–2028 representatives: Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Coquille Indian Tribe, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, Karuk Tribe, Nez Perce Tribe, Yakama Nation, and confirmed continued 2025–2027 seats: Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian, Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa,



Photo of the 2026 Symposium Tribal Tour in Wisconsin.

Quinault Indian Nation, and Tanana Chiefs Conference. All officers retained their positions. Congratulations to Karuk Tribe on their appointment to the ITC Board. Cheers to all who were elected and continue to serve — your leadership strengthens our collective voice and moves our shared priorities forward.

Mid Year Legislative & Policy Priorities

As we hit the midpoint of 2026 we continue to work on tribal forestry legislation, coordination with the DOI Wildland Fire Service, EUDR, and federal appropriations. Since my last report we have added the 2026 Farm Bill to our list of priorities, with the House of Representatives passing their version of the bill recently. We have also secured funding from BIA for the ITC-BIA Forestry & Natural Resource Workforce Initiative, which will assist with internships and temporary assign-

ments with the Timber Strike team. I am also happy to report we have a 10-year extension for ITARA. We have continued to work with BIA, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, and the Secretaries office to get an extension in place ahead of the June 22, 2026, expiration date. We thank Secretary Burgum, and staff in Indian Affairs and BIA that helped to get this extension to the finish line.

Tribal Forestry Legislation & Farm Bill Update

There hasn't been much progress on the tribal forestry legislation since my last report. ITC continues to respond to inquiries from Congressional staff, and work with the Forest Service on technical assistance to clarify questions and intent of the proposed legislation. The House passing their version of the Farm Bill is significant step, but with many of the tribal pro-

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National Native Conservation Network Coordinator

by Kathy Ferge

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Grand Portage Tribe's successful partnership with the NRCS and FSA. We followed this in January with an interactive, in-person California Workshop co-hosted by the Mooretown Rancheria, California NRCS, and the Forest Business Alliance, which featured Hoopa Tribe success stories for 50 tribal participants. Looking forward, active workshop coordination is already underway for Washington, Southern California, and Michigan.

Braid 3: Funding

We know that cost-shares and a lack of personnel can be massive hurdles to Tribal participation in federal programs. We are tackling these barriers head-on by exploring a Technical Service Provider (TSP) certification program specific to tribes, which will allow us to get more NRCS-trained foresters directly onto tribal lands. Additionally,

we are actively tracking new grants and partnerships, using the ITC email network and the Timber Notes newsletter to broadcast regional funding and research opportunities as they arise.

How You Can Help Us Grow

We need your partnership to keep this momentum going. Please reach out to us with your insights and needs:

- **Share your needs:** Tell us exactly where you require technical support.
- **Showcase your success:** If your tribe already has a great relationship with the NRCS, let's collaborate to build a case study that can inspire others.
- **Host a workshop:** We are currently looking for 2027 workshop hosts in Oklahoma, Alaska, and the Southwest. It is first-come, first-served—we handle the heavy planning lo-

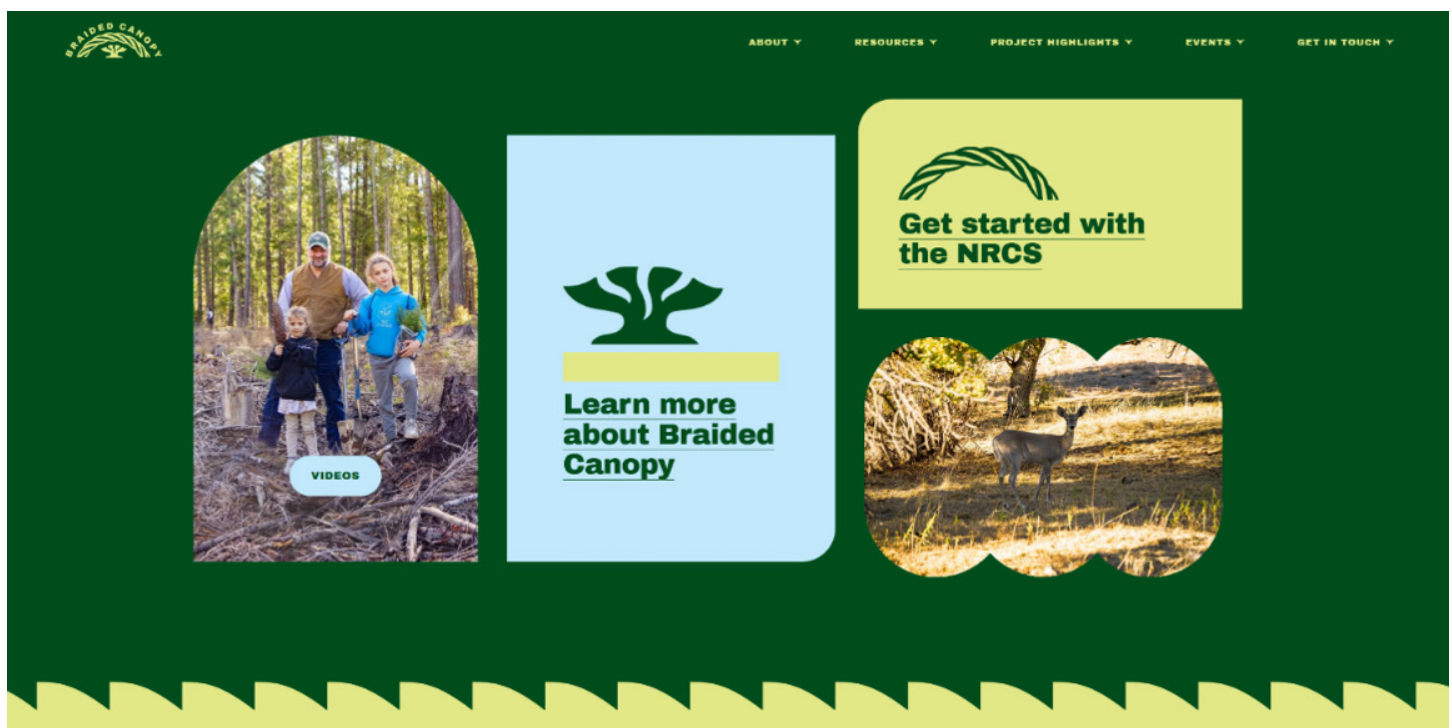
gistics, and you provide the setting.

Let the Braided Canopy Initiative be part of your Tribal forestry management solution.

Contact: Kathy Ferge | kathy.ferge@icloud.com | 541-571-3815
| *Availability: Monday & Wednesday (9:00 AM – 3:00 PM) | Friday (9:00 AM – 12:00 PM).*



An Intertribal Timber Council project



Executive Director's Message

by Cal Mukumoto

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- **The Symposium Committee:** For building such an engaging agenda. Huge rounds of applause for Howard Teasley, Jr., Shawn de France, Nicole Stiffarm, Tia Beavert, McKaylee Duquain, Ron Waukau, Sr., John Bryson, Jr., Paul Koll, and Kendra White.

- **Our Leadership:** Board President Cody Desautel, Vice President Phil Rigdon, and our entire Board of Directors for their steady guidance. We also send a very warm congratulations to the Karuk Tribe on their recent appointment to the board!

- **Our Dedicated Specialists & Staff:** Jim Durglo (Wildland Fire Technical Specialist), Stephanie Lucero (Shared Stewardship, TFPA, and GNA consultant), Matt Hill (Information Specialist), and Kathy Ferge (NNCN coordinator) for leading our specialized breakout sessions. And, of course, none of this runs smoothly without our amazing backbone staff: Program Manager Laura Alvidrez and Program Coordinator Monica Rushworth.

For those of you who stopped by the “50 Years in the Making” Storytelling Booth to record a field memory or honor a mentor—thank you. Your voices anchor our future, and we are already counting down the days until we celebrate our 50th Annual Symposium in San Carlos next year!

While celebrating our symposium highlights, I also want to give a special shoutout to the fantastic **#ForestProud** film, “*Forest of the First*

Stewards”! You can watch this inspiring spotlight on the Menominee Nation’s Indigenous forestry and stewardship by visiting YouTube at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pKdIC1oGOo>.

Policy & Legislative Issues

ITC has been working hard in Washington and beyond. ITC President Cody Desautel and Information Specialist Matt Hill will have more details in their upcoming reports, but I am thrilled to share that **ITARA has been extended!** A 10-year administrative extension was secured just ahead of the June 22nd expiration date, removing a massive cloud of uncertainty for our demonstration project Tribes. I want to thank all of our member Tribes who took the time to write to Secretary Burgum to express their support for the extension and highlight its importance to Tribal self-determination. **This collective Tribal effort to extend ITARA is so important; it proves once again that when Indian Country works together, that effort will truly make a difference.** Concurrently, ITC is actively supporting legislative pathways, such as H.R. 5515, to make this vital program permanent.

Boots on the Ground: Fire & Workforce Growth

As summer fire season heats up across the country, the DOI Wildland Fire Service continues to fill critical roles. To help bridge federal coordination with Tribal contracted and com-

pacted programs, a new tribal workgroup has been established, co-chaired by an Office of Tribal Trust employee and a Tribal Fire Management Officer. *(If your program needs to connect with your geographic area Chief or Office of Tribal Trust representative, let Jim Durglo know—he is always glad to help!)*

Finally, securing greater land management authority requires trained personnel ready to do the work. We are beyond excited to roll out the **ITC-BIA Forestry & Natural Resource Workforce Initiative**. Supported by BIA funding, this program will reimburse your home programs for salaries, fringe benefits, and travel expenses, enabling Tribal employees to deploy on 1–2-week temporary assignments with the BIA Timber Strike Team. Acting BIA Chief Forester Caleb Cain shared the comprehensive details with us in Keshena, and we will have more details on the summer internship component to share this fall.

To help us hit the ground running, ITC will soon be looking for a dedicated Workforce Specialist to implement this initiative! Please keep your eyes peeled for that job announcement shortly and help us spread the word to great candidates across your networks.

As we navigate federal transitions and shifting partner resources, the support and input of our member Tribes keep us grounded and strong. Please plan to join us for our virtual board meeting in September

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Executive Director's Message

by Cal Mukumoto

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and never hesitate to reach out if you have questions or concerns that ITC can support you with.

Wishing you all a safe, happy, and prosperous summer! Warmly, **Cal Mukumoto**, *Executive Director, Intertribal Timber Council.*



Photo of a happy Jon Martin during the Pre-Symposium WS 1 USDA Forest Service on June 8, 2026.

President's Message

by Cody Desautel

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visions from the 2024 version being excluded ITC will start work with Senate staff to restore those provisions in their version. The Senate Ag committee released a discussion draft, so we have text to work from. We have also seen the House Appropriations committee pass their version of the Interior spending bill, with an increase for Tribal forestry from \$63 to \$66 million. ITC will continue to work with the House as that bill goes to the floor for approval, and with the Senate to advocate to maintain or increase the House appropriations for tribal forestry.

EUDR Simplification Report & Next Steps

Since my last report the European Commission released their report on EUDR simplification, and unfortunately the report

didn't address any of the issues that impact Indian country. We will continue to look for opportunities to advocate for change that lightens the reporting burden on tribes. More updates to come as the EU determines what's next with a looming implementation date of January 1, 2027.

U.S. Wildland Fire Service Coordination & Tribal Workgroup

The U.S. Wildland Fire Service continues to fill critical roles as fire season is upon us. Some geographic areas have significant work to do, while others have many positions filled. Contacts for tribal programs have largely been identified, but if tribes have questions ITC can help connect them with their geographic area Chief or Office of Tribal Trust representative. A tribal workgroup has also been stood up to help the Service de-

velop structure and navigate coordination and services for tribal contracted and compacted programs. That group is co-chaired by an Office of Tribal Trust Employee, and a Tribal FMO.

ITC BIA Forestry & Natural Resource Workforce Initiative

The ITC-BIA Forestry & Natural Resource Workforce Initiative is a new program that we hope will provide training opportunities, experiences with other tribal programs, and operation and technical assistance to tribes. The BIA Timber Strike team has provided these services for the last several years, and we hope this addition expands those capabilities and opportunities. The program will include both internships and temporary work opportunities for tribal employees. We expect

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President's Message

by Cody Desautel

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the temporary deployment of tribal staff to function similar to fire assignments, with 1–2-week deployments. The program will include reimbursement for costs to their home program for salaries, fringe, and travel expenses. The internship component is still being developed, but we expect to have details to share in the fall.

Member Tribe Engagement & Upcoming Meetings

As we continue this work, support from our member tribes is needed more than ever. Please join us for our virtual board



Photo of Juliette Jeanne, TJ Clifford, and Aaron Baldwin at the 2026 Symposium.

meeting in September or reach out if you have questions or con-

cerns that ITC can support you with.



BIA Division of Forestry

by Caleb Cain



Caleb Cain

Expanding Tribal Forestry Capacity: Timber Team Assignments, Collaboration, and Internships

To enhance its capacity to deliver professional forestry services nationwide, the Timber Team is actively seeking assis-

tance from Tribes to assist with Timber Team project work, fostering a collaborative approach where Tribes support one another. Through a new partnership between BIA Forestry and ITC, participating Tribes are reimbursed for the full cost of their involvement with the Timber Team.

Timber Team assignments generally span a two-week period and encompass a range of projects, including timber sale preparation, contract administration, forest development, forest inventory, timber salvage, and geographic information system (GIS) support on Tribal lands. This partnership offers a valuable opportunity

for individuals to enhance their field forestry skills and benefit from mentorship that fosters professional growth among Tribal forestry professionals.

Additionally, a Forestry internship opportunity is available, open to Tribal members and those interested in pursuing a career serving Indian country. Internships are paid and fully reimbursable through ITC, ensuring participants incur no costs. Specialized field equipment is provided for the summer, offering interns the resources they need to gain hands-on forestry experience in the field.

For more information, contact

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Cal Mukumoto (cal@itcnet.org) or Ryan Frandino (philip.frandino@bia.gov).

Timber Team

The Timber Team sprang into action this past March by traveling to North Carolina to assist the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in evaluating the management feasibility of a proposed elk habitat restoration project. After identifying accessible project areas, the team measured 40 cruise plots and developed a silviculture prescription designed to establish meadows and travel corridors for local elk populations while also improving stand conditions to support white oak and hickory regeneration.

Next, the team supported the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe by installing Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) plots in a mountainous region of Colorado. The steep, rocky terrain made access challenging, but they successfully installed 19 CFI plots that will contribute to long-term monitoring of forest growth and health—data that will be critical for future forest management decisions.

From the Southwest Region, the team moved to the Northwest Region to assist the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon. There, they measured 111 cruise plots spanning 400 acres. Using a variable-radius plot design, they collected detailed information—including species, diameter at breast height, merchantable height, and percent defect by log segment—enabling the

tribe to calculate metrics such as board feet per acre and overall defect percentages for the timber sale area.

In June, the team worked with the Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin by planting swamp white oak seedlings and marking red pine thinning plantations. Approximately 350 seedlings were planted along black ash wetland edges to prepare for losses from emerald ash borer (EAB). Following the planting work, the team marked roughly 127 acres of red pine plantations, removing low-vigor or defective trees while prioritizing strong residual stand structure.

Most recently, they supported Mi'kmaq Nation in Caribou, Maine by installing CFI plots across tribal forestlands. Using a nested plot design with major, minor, and regeneration plots, the team collected data that will be used to calculate sustained yield estimates and annual allowable cuts, enabling Mi'kmaq Nation to make informed long-term forest management decisions.

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

- July 13 - July 24, 2026: Hoh Indian Tribe Sale/Prep, WA; NWR
- August 3 - August 14, 2026: Lower Elwha Tribal Community Sale/Prep, WA; NWR

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

- October 5 - October 16, 2026: Hualapai Indian Tribe of the Hualapai Indian Reservation CFI, AZ; WR

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>.

New Forestry Measure - 2437 - Annual Timber Volume Sold

The Forestry Measure 2437 – Annual Timber Volume Sold has been fully uploaded into the Indian Affairs Performance Management System (IAPMS) and is now included in the Department of the Interior (DOI) FY2026–2030 Strategic Plan. This annual, end-of-year reporting measure strengthens transparency and accountability in timber program performance across Indian Affairs.

Executive Order 14225 further reinforces this integration by directing bureaus to align mission-critical performance measures—such as annual timber volume sold—with departmental strategic planning and oversight frameworks. Together, EO-14225 and the DOI Strategic Plan ensure that Measure 2437 supports long-term forestry stewardship, enhances data-driven decision-making, and advances key DOI and Indian Affairs priorities.

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Branch of Forest Inventory and Planning (FIP)

The Branch of Forest Inventory and Planning (FIP) has spent the past two weeks exploring OpenAI Codex as an AI-assisted development tool, and early results show strong potential to streamline several core workflows. Using Codex, FIP rapidly developed internal applications that support offline, tablet-based field data collection; accelerate quality review of forest inventory databases; and prepare project databases for upcoming measurement cycles. These tools reduce manual processing, improve consistency, and help create more repeatable, auditable workflows—cutting tasks that previously took days or weeks down to hours or minutes.

FIP is also testing new QA processes, including a tablet-based system that connects directly to project databases and runs CFI checks in the field. All tools remain under internal testing with human review built into each workflow. Codex has significantly accelerated the move from concept to prototype, while staff continue validating outputs, refining interfaces, and ensuring all applications meet BIA data quality standards and field operations requirements.

FIP is excited to announce a major modernization milestone: the legacy BOFRPapps platform is being rebranded as InventorySuites. With the current analysis phase now complete, this shift reflects how far the application has evolved—from its early program roots to today's

enhanced logic, streamlined workflows, and significantly expanded capabilities. The new name signals to users that FIP is embracing a more integrated, modern, and forward-looking approach to inventory management. InventorySuites represents not just a name change, but our commitment to continuous improvement and to delivering tools that better support the way we work today and into the future.

NASP Module 3: Silviculture – It Just Gets More Complex

by Casey Sigg

Oak trees are a classic part of the American landscape. Acorns, fall colors, fine cabinetry and legislation advancing through Congress (The White Oak Resilience Act), the species remains an ever-present part of our culture. I grew up in Oakland Country, Michigan which was aptly named. Although it was my boyhood love of chasing brook trout in the cedar swamps of Northern Michigan that started an interest in the woods, my first memories of trees are likely of oaks back in suburban Detroit. I am sure many Americans who grew up east of the Mississippi hold a similar fondness for the tree.

Challenges facing oak species are used as the lens for teaching objectives of the third module of the National Advanced Silviculture Program titled, “Advanced Silviculture Topics”. Across the eastern US, oaks are failing to recruit into dominant crown positions, and one could walk for miles in an Appalachian forest without coming across a

pole-sized tree. The causes are multiple and compounding, ranging from lack of fire to some believing the extinction of passenger pigeons has a role. Today's generation of foresters has a major challenge in finding solutions to keep a strong component of oak in tomorrow's forest.

Virginia Tech and the University of Kentucky came together to put us to the test. The first few days are spent getting familiar with the rich biodiversity of the Blue Ridge Mountains and understanding the stand dynamics of oak regeneration. After visiting a mixed hardwood stand near Virginia Tech's campus, students were tasked with accurately summarizing inventory data and modeling future growth outcomes. Yellow poplar and red maple are the main competitors. Teasing out the differences in success to the overstory for these species is why this “diagnosis” of stand conditions is so important. Subtle differences in height or density can sway a silviculturist's decision for treatment. As many a silviculture professor has said, “Silviculture is not a cookbook” and your inventory tells you why.

For many NASP students, I am sure their time at the University of Kentucky's Robinson Forest is a high point of the whole program. This 14,000-acre school forest is comprised of rich hardwood stands and has been isolated from the mining activities so prevalent in the region. Meals from the dining hall are hearty southern fare and every evening ends with a forestry school

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tradition, a campfire after the day's fieldwork is done.

Those of you following my NASP journey know understory plants and non-timber forest products are a keen interest of mine. Much of time walking through the Robinson's cove forests I was looking down at my boots. I quickly spotted an old favorite – bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*). A spring-blooming herbaceous perennial, bloodroot has a beautiful flower and leaf architecture. It has also been important to the people of the Appalachians for generations. Eastern Tribes used its dark-red sap for dyes to color skin and baskets while more current uses have been for dental hygiene and veterinary products. Increased focus on the management of non-timber forest products was one of the major recommendations of the fourth Indian Forest Management Assessment Team (IFMAT) report and current research suggests certain plants serve as indicators of forest resilience to disturbances.

Discussions in the field on the Robinson were often about white oak. Its importance as barrels for the spirits industry and recent bourbon boom is frequently the topic of conversation when foresters discuss white oak, but our silviculture instructor from the University of Kentucky had different ideas. "If we're managing for merch specs, it's hard to win on that bet", he said and went on the reference an old article from the *Journal of Forestry* titled, *The Fallacy of Preferred Species* by Walton Smith. He tells



Photo of the FIP Forester at the Robinson Forest.

the story of foresters treating stands to favor current stumpage values which proved irrelevant decades later. Does anyone remember when dogwood was the favored species for thread looms or imagine girdling 30-inch hickories to release yellow poplar saplings? Such management ignores the larger complex ecological framework we work in as silviculturists. Understanding this framework is at the heart of NASP. Smith ends his article by stating, "Foresters must accept the challenge of professional care of the entire forest for the multiple uses demanded by the future."

Module 3 concludes with a final group project presented "World Café" style. Each group was tasked with writing a comprehensive silviculture prescription to promote oak dominance. By comprehensive, I mean the prescription had to thoroughly address concerns of other re-

source areas such as wildlife, rare plants, and social license to operate (SLO). SLO is often an after thought for many of us, but this module provided strong training in building trust with outside stakeholders.

In our groups we debated the finer points of European shelterwood terminology (Bavarian versus Swiss Femelschlag) and how to best convey our reasons for treatment to the public. As is the case with each module, the project work lasted long into the evening. But the final morning came quickly as we loaded into vans for the last time and headed to the stand we wrote the prescription for to begin the World Café. The "café" consisted of multiple stations hosted by each of the module instructors where students had to defend their prescription before an expert. Stations consisted of silviculture, prescribed fire,

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BIA Division of Forestry

by Caleb Cain

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wildlife, forest health, logging systems, and social license to operate. If you chose to use herbicide over fire for controlling red maple, you better be prepared to defend yourself at the prescribed fire station. The instructor at SLO might have you make an improv conversation describing your reasoning for

harvesting to a concerned hiker on the Appalachian Trail. All things to show students the complexities we navigate in this career.

Not all of us will be faced with the challenges of oak silviculture, but each of us will have what feels like a nearly intractable social or silvic-based problem to contend with during our

careers. By the end of this module, the camaraderie of the class and instructors felt strong, and I believe that makes us all more confident practicing the “art and science” of silviculture in this ever-changing world.



Photo of the Timber Team Supervisory Forester assisting the Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin by planting a swamp white oak seedling along the edge of a black ash wetland.

Education Committee

by Shawn de France



Shawn de France

2026 Truman D. Picard Scholarship Recipients

Greetings ITC family, I hope you are reading this in good health and enjoying your summer. This year we had 26 complete applications come in for the Truman D. Picard Scholarship. I am excited to report that we were able to award all **26 applicants**. I would like to thank the members of the Education Committee for their dedicated time reviewing and selecting this year's scholarship recipients.

This year, ITC awarded **\$87,000 in scholarships** to students representing **20 different tribes**. Since 1988, ITC has awarded 629 scholarships **totaling \$1,381,000!** During the past ten years there have been **122 forestry majors** awarded scholarships. On behalf of the ITC Board and Education Committee we offer our sincere congratulations to each of this year's recipients! We look forward to seeing you all complete your education and hope your career paths will bring you back to the ITC family.

Graduate College

\$4,000 – Forestry or Fire

- Arantxa Curley
- James Douthwaite
- Destiny Sanderson
- Jonel Yazzie

\$3,000 – Natural Resources

- Kateri Mikayla Gachupin
- Alana Miller-Schofield
- Anna Muselmann
- Jeremiah North Piegan
- Yvette Picard
- Sierra Red Bow

Undergraduate College

\$4,000 – Forestry or Fire

- Corinne Alton
- Zachariah X. Eneas
- Alfredo Santiago Labro III
- Agapito Perez
- Alexia Rose Pierre
- Francisco Saavedra, Jr.
- Ethan Standridge
- Gregory Weatherwax
- Mariah Williams

\$3,000 – Natural Resources

- Claire G Boeshaar
- Rylie Dupuis
- Callie Tenijieth

High School

\$2,000 – Natural Resources, Forestry or Fire

- Averi Carter
- Lillian Clark
- Emerald Comanche

- William Hull

Donations

The Education Committee would like to express heartfelt thanks to **Terry Baker (SAF), Vincent and Diane Corrao, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, Green Diamond Resource Company, and Menominee Tribal Enterprises** (Symposium Golf Tournament) for their generous donations. Each student that received a scholarship this year will also receive a complementary one-year Society of American Foresters (SAF) membership. Thank you to SAF for supporting our scholars.

Funding for the scholarship each year is supported in part through the raffle held at the Annual Timber Symposium. This year's event, hosted by the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and the Stockbridge Munsee Community, featured an incredible array of donated raffle items. We are deeply

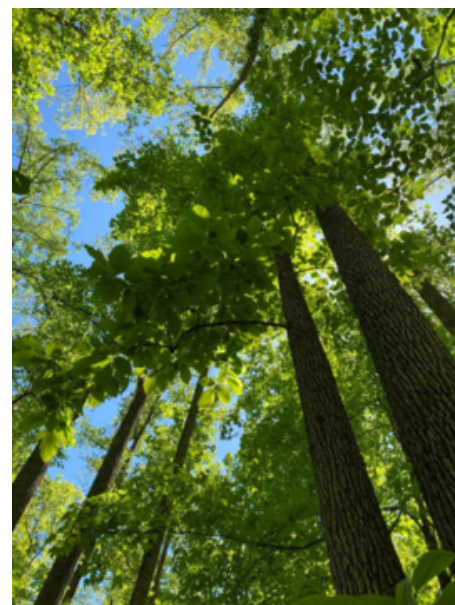


Photo of the Cove forest type at the Robinson Forest.

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Education Committee

by Shawn de France

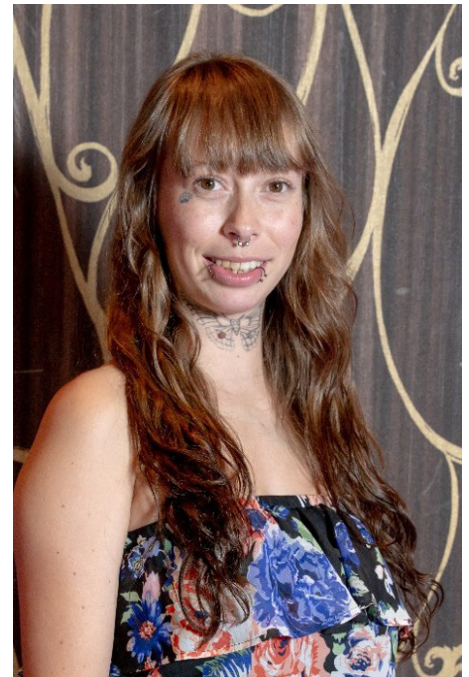
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humbled by the craftsmanship and generosity of our donors, as well as by everyone who purchased tickets in support of

the scholarship.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the Truman D. Picard Scholarship. I'm pleased to share that this year's **raffle**

generated \$13,000 to support Native students pursuing education in natural resources.



Photos of 2026 Picard Scholarship Winners (L to R) of Kateri Mikayla Gachupin, Alfredo Santiago Labro III, and Alexia Rose Pierre at the Annual Awards Banquet on June 11, 2026, in Keshena, WI.

Wildland Fire Technical Specialist

by Jim Durglo



Jim Durglo

Advancing Tribal Self-Governance in Forest Management

The Intertribal Timber Council (ITC) has played a central role in advancing Tribal self-governance and self-determination in forest management by supporting legislation and policies that expand Tribal authority, affirm the federal trust responsibility, and strengthen long-term stewardship of forest resources. This article highlights ITC's commitment to youth engagement as essential to sustaining Tribal forestry across generations, while also arguing that the transition from Bureau of Indian Affairs oversight to the Depart-

ment of the Interior Wildland Fire Service creates a timely opportunity to strengthen government-to-government relations and reassess Public Law 93-638 contract language in support of greater Tribal sovereignty. Framed within a broader historical and legislative context—including the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, and the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act—with emphasizes that progress toward Tribal self-determination is generational, built through legal re-

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form, institutional change, and increasing Tribal control over land, trust assets, and natural resource management.

A Generational Commitment to Tribal Self-Determination

In a blog posted by the Intertribal Timber Council in March 2026, Gary Morishima said that the primary goal of the ITC was to support Tribal self-governance and promote Indian self-determination. He said that for 50 years, ITC has been a driver in expanding Tribal authority over forest planning and management through legislation, including the National Indian Forest Resources Management Act (NIFRMA), Secretarial Order 3206, Tribal Forest Protection Act, and Indian Trust Asset Reform Act (ITARA). These laws and policies have expanded Tribal authority to plan, manage, and protect their forest resources directly. They have also affirmed the federal trust responsibility and created mechanisms for Tribes to assume greater control over decision making, stewardship, and long-term resource sustainability.

He also said that “One of ITC’s most enduring legacies is its commitment to youth. After all, Tribal forestry is part of a continuum: honoring past knowledge, addressing present realities, and preparing future generations to carry the work forward”. ITC also ensures that young people participate in community meetings, IFMAT visits, and educational workshops, giving them firsthand exposure to the challenges and

responsibilities of forest stewardship.

Transitions in Fire Management and Strengthening Government-to-Government Relations

I believe our current fire management leadership remains unsettled after more than 200 years of paternalistic oversight by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Now that this direct BIA oversight has shifted to the unified DOI Wildland Fire Service (WFS), it is time to reassess Public Law 93-638 contract language to strengthen the Tribal position.

As we enter a new phase of building relationships with the newly established WFS, we have an opportunity to strengthen government-to-government relations. I believe the next generation will help lead the way toward greater Tribal sovereignty.

I have come to realize that the journey toward Tribal self-determination and self-governance unfolds over generations rather than in a single moment. Much of the modern legislative push occurred from the mid-1960s through the late 1990s, with the most transformative changes taking place between 1968 and 1990.

Key Milestones: ISDEAA, ITARA, and Emerging Opportunities

Among these laws, the **Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act** (ISDEAA) of 1975 was a defining milestone. It created a lasting framework for Tribal self-governance that continues to sha-

pe policy and practice. More recently, the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act (ITARA) has emerged as another promising step in that process. I believe more Tribes will advance toward self-governance through ITARA, though progress will take time.

The ISDEAA enacted in 1975 as Public Law 93-638, authorized the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and other federal agencies to contract with and provide grants directly to federally recognized Tribes. By allowing Tribes to administer these funds, the Act increased Tribal control over programs affecting their communities. The ISDEAA is codified in Title 25 of the United States Code, beginning at section 530.

The ISDEAA made self-determination a central principle of federal Indian policy. It marked a shift away from the federal termination policy, which had sought for decades to weaken treaty relationships and federal obligations to Tribes. Also in 1988, Congress authorized a **Self-Governance Demonstration Project** under Title III of ISDEAA, enabling tribes to negotiate compacts with the BIA and IHS. The 1994 amendments (Title IV) made the program permanent for BIA programs, and later amendments (Title V and VI) extended permanent self-governance authority to IHS programs and explored expansion to other federal programs.

The Indian Trust Asset Reform Act (ITARA), signed on June 22, 2016, authorizes the

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Wildland Fire Technical Specialist

by Jim Durglo

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Secretary of the Interior to establish the Indian Trust Asset Management Demonstration Projects.

Tribes involved in forest land management or surface leasing on trust lands may apply to participate. Selected Tribes must submit an Indian Trust Asset Management Plan (ITAMP) explaining how they will manage those assets. As of 2026, only a small number of Tribes have approved ITAMPs. Recently the Secretary has administratively extended the program until June of 2036. Caleb Cain, BIA Acting Chief Forester, notes that “Notably, the extension received considerable support through numerous letters from Tribes and the Intertribal Timber Council, which played a significant role in influencing the administration’s decision.”

Looking Ahead: Tribal Sovereignty and the Next Generation



Photo courtesy of CSKT Division of Fire showing Mission Valley Fire staff performing under burn in the Valley Creek area of the Flathead Indian Reservation, Montana, 2008.

For 50 years, the ITC has supported Tribal self-governance in forest and fire management by advancing laws and policies that expand Tribal authority and strengthen stewardship of forest resources. ITC also views youth engagement as vital to the future of Tribal forestry and fire management and sees the transition to the DOI Wildland Fire

Service as a chance to strengthen government-to-government relations and further Tribal sovereignty.



Awards Committee

by Robin Harkins



Robin Harkins

2026 Earle R. Wilcox Memorial Award Recipients

The 49th Annual National Indian Timber Symposium Awards Banquet was held on June 11, 2026, in Keshena, Wisconsin, at the Menominee Casino Resort. Each year, this event provides an opportunity to honor exceptional achievements in Indian forestry through the Earle R. Wilcox Memorial Awards. Established in 1984, these awards recognize individuals whose work has significantly advanced Indian forestry and natural re-

source stewardship. They honor the legacy of Mr. Earle R. Wilcox, remembered for his profound contributions to Indian people and their forests.

National Forester of the Year

Peter Wakeland

Peter Wakeland, BIA Chief Forester, retired, was recognized as the 2026 Earle R. Wilcox National Forester of the Year. Recognized for his leadership, in-

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Awards Committee

by Robin Harkins

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novation, integrity, and lifelong commitment to the stewardship of Tribal forestlands, Pete has helped strengthen not only forests and natural resource programs, but also the people and communities connected to them.

A citizen of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, he began his forestry journey after earning his degree in Forest Management from Oregon State University and returning home to work as a forester in his Tribe's Natural Resources Department. He served many tribes in leadership positions over the years, ultimately leading the BIA as Chief Forester for the Division of Forestry and Wildland Fire.

Pete has been a steadfast advocate for Tribal forestry programs, Tribal self governance, and culturally grounded stewardship. His forward thinking leadership helped establish the BIA Timber Team, modernize systems, strengthen interagency partnerships, expand Tribal access to emerging federal authorities and funding, and support long overdue updates to forestry manuals and handbooks. Colleagues consistently highlight his willingness to listen, mentor, collaborate, and lead with integrity—even in the most challenging situations.

His steady leadership and genuine concern for both people and forests have earned him tremendous respect throughout Tribal forestry and natural resource management. Pete's influence will continue to shape Tribal forestry for generations to come.



Photo of Pete Wakeland and his former BIA staff at the Awards Banquet on June 11, 2026, in Keshena, WI.

Eastern Region Individual Achievement Award

Joshua Shumak

Joshua Shumak, Tribal Liaison for the South Carolina Commission for Community Advancement and Engagement, received the Eastern Region Individual Achievement Award for his work demonstrating what is possible when Tribal leadership, natural resource stewardship, and community advocacy come together with purpose.

Working collaboratively with all 11 Tribes in South Carolina, Joshua has advanced land stewardship, conservation, food sovereignty, and environmental resilience initiatives rooted in Tribal priorities and authority. His leadership in environmental justice, conservation planning, and sustainable land management offers a model for Tribal state collaboration in regions where formal Tribal land protections have historically been limited.

Joshua was not able to join us in person at the Awards Banquet. His acceptance speech can be viewed online: <https://youtu.be/D5b24c4zjm8>

Northwest Region Individual Achievement Award

Ryan Sanchey

Ryan Sanchey was recognized with the Northwest Region Individual Achievement Award for his service to the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. Ryan's career has spanned forestry operations, timber sale administration, fuels management, wildfire response, and Tribal forestry leadership.

From his early days as a forestry technician to his current role as Forest Operations Manager, he has consistently demonstrated operational excellence, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to sustainable forest management. He has earned a reputation as someone who

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Awards Committee

by Robin Harkins

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leads through action and approaches every challenge with humility, creativity, and determination.

Ryan shares his knowledge openly with other Tribes, strengthening forestry capacity across Indian Country.

Those who wrote in support of this award winner described him as hardworking, humble, innovative, and deeply respected across Indian Country. One colleague wrote that he “walks the walk,” bringing passion, collaboration, and real action to every project he touches.

Like Mr. Earl Wilcox, the leadership, devotion, and accomplishments of this year's National and Regional Achievement Award winners will leave a lasting impact on Indian forestry and natural resources across the nation. Congratulations Pete, Joshua and Ryan!



Photo of Ryan Sanchez at the Annual Awards Banquet on June 11, 2026, in Keshena, WI.

President's Award

David Wilson (1955-2025)

The 2026 President's Award honored a man whose quiet dedication, technical brilliance, and generous spirit left a lasting mark across Indian forestry. Presented posthumously to David “Dave” Wilson, the Intertribal Timber Council presented a memorial blanket to Dave's family in recognition of his en-

during legacy in Tribal Forestry.

Dave's forestry journey began at Michigan Technological University, where he studied forestry and met the love of his life, Mary. He began his career on the Menominee Indian Reservation working on the continuous forest inventory database and quickly earned a reputation for excellence, then joined the BIA Division of forestry where he became of Forest Inventory Specialist and over the next two decades supported tribes across Indian country.

While his technical knowledge was exceptional, those who knew Dave remember him most for his kindness, humility, and sense of humor. He was always willing to help, teach, and do whatever was needed to support Tribal forestry programs and the people behind them even after his retirement in 2021. Dave's legacy endures in the forests he helped steward, the programs he strengthened, and the many people he inspired along the way.



Photo of Dave Wilson's family at the Awards Banquet being presented with a memorial blanket for the President's Award (Posthumous) on June 11, 2026, in Keshena, WI.

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Awards Committee

by Robin Harkins

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Thank you to those who worked diligently to put together nomination packets for well-deserving individuals. It is an honor to work with the awards committee and learn about the

accomplishments of those who have made and continue to make huge contributions to Indian Forestry.

The awards committee will be seeking nominations for the 2027 Earle R. Wilcox Awards in

the winter. It is never too early to start thinking about those deserving individuals and pulling together materials and information for a nomination.



Legislative Update

by Matt Hill



Matt Hill

FY2027 Appropriations Status Update

Congressional Process: The House Appropriations Committee recently approved its version of the Fiscal Year 2027 Interior Appropriations bill, which funds the Department of the Interior and U.S. Forest Service. Earlier this Spring, ITC President Cody Desautel testified before the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee in favor of increased appropriations in FY27 for BIA Forestry.

The committee-passed measure allocates nearly \$66 million for BIA Forestry, which is a \$3M increase over the FY26-enacted level. This is \$40M over the Administration's proposed budget request, which ITC strongly opposed in a letter to congressional appropriators. The bill

funds the U.S. Wildland Fire Service at \$1.63 billion and includes a portion for tribal national to achieve pay parity for tribal wildland firefighters.

The Senate has not released its version of the FY27 Interior appropriations bill, which would need to be reconciled with the House before presenting a last version to the President for enactment.

ITARA Authority Extended

In a move to advance tribal self-governance, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) within the U.S. Department of the Interior announced a 10-year extension of the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act (ITARA) Demonstration Project. Signed into law in 2016, ITARA's Title II created this voluntary demonstration program to allow eligible tribes to develop Indian Trust Asset Management Plans (ITAMPs) for forest land management and surface leasing activities on trust lands. Approved plans enable tribes to establish their own regulations and assume certain federal approval authorities, reducing bureaucratic oversight while upholding the federal trust responsibility.

The original 10-year authoriza-

tion was set to expire on June 22, 2026; the extension keeps the authority in place through June 22, 2036. Only a small number of tribes have participated so far, including the Coquille Indian Tribe (the first to receive approval in 2020), the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, and the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians. The extension gives additional tribes time to apply, build capacity, and develop plans tailored to their communities' priorities. Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Billy Kirkland noted that the action reflects the administration's support for tribal sovereignty, stating that tribal leaders "understand the values and needs of their communities better than federal officials in Washington, D.C."

The ITC and tribal leaders have welcomed the certainty the extension provides while continuing to advocate for congressional legislation to make the authority permanent and broaden eligible trust assets. The opportunity for tribes to apply remains open through the BIA's Division of Forestry.

Forest-Related Legisla-

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Legislative Update

by Matt Hill

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tive Updates

ITARA Reauthorization (H.R.5515, Rep. Hurd): 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). Unfortunately, there has been no movement on the bill since then, and there is no companion legislation in the Senate.

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

The bill's concept is facing significant questions from the Administration and does not have an immediate path forward without significant changes. The ITC will continue to work with the Administration on legislative options that would accomplish similar goals on federal land.

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.

There have been no developments or announcements about Senate floor consideration of the bill. If passed by the Senate, it would require re-passage by the House, given changes made

in the Senate.

U.S. Forest Service Updates

HQ Relocation and Agency Restructuring: The U.S. Forest Service has announced a major restructuring that will move its national headquarters from Washington, D.C. to Salt Lake City, Utah. This places the Chief and much of the agency's leadership closer to the forests and communities they manage. USDA leaders have framed the move as a "common sense" modernization effort intended to improve mission delivery, reduce bureaucracy, and strengthen recruitment by shifting staff and decision-making authority westward. The formal announcement came on March 31, 2026. Approximately two-thirds of National Capital Region positions will relocate, while one-third—including the Associate Chief—will remain in D.C. to support interagency and congressional coordination. The relocation of headquarters is targeted for completion by summer 2027.

Alongside the relocation, the Forest Service is transitioning from its long-standing regional structure to a new state-based organizational model. Fifteen state directors will oversee operations, forest supervisors, and partnerships within one or more states, supported by small state-level leadership teams. Many functions previously housed in regional offices will shift to a network of Operations Service Centers located in Albuquerque (NM), Athens (GA), Fort Collins (CO), Madison (WI),

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Legislative Update

by Matt Hill

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Missoula (MT), and Placerville (CA). The agency is also consolidating its research stations into a single national Research and Development organization headquartered in Fort Collins. While regional offices will close, several facilities (including Juneau, Vallejo, and Albuquerque) will be retained for specific mission needs. The transition is occurring in phases to ensure continuity, with support provided for affected employees.

Northwest Forest Plan Amendment: Following the release of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in November 2024 and receipt of over 3,400 public comments, the agency announced next steps and an updated timeline on March 30, 2026. At the ITC's request, the Forest Service conducted a series of in-depth tribal workshops on various elements of the plan amendment. In response to comments from tribes, cooperating agencies, partners, and the public, the agency is conducting additional analysis and developing updates to the range of alternatives. These updates include refinements to forest type definitions, greater clarity on commercial timber opportunities, and adjustments to Survey and Manage requirements. The agency previously announced plans to release proposed updates for public comment in Summer 2026, with a Final EIS and Record of Decision expected in early 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 44.7–45 million acres of National Forest System lands (the rule originally applied to nearly 60 million acres). The Roadless Rule's provisions supersede the plan components for inventoried roadless areas applied through individual land management plans. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins announced the intent to rescind the rule on June 23, 2025. A Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement was published on August 29, 2025, with the public comment period closing on September 19, 2025. The proposed rescission 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. It would not affect state-specific roadless rules in Idaho and Colorado. The Tongass National Forest in Alaska is included in the proposed rescission.

Legislative efforts to permanently repeal the rule (including H.R. 7695 and S. 140) have also advanced in Congress as of mid-2026. Purely administrative repeal is reversible by future administration through new rulemaking. Statutory repeal with an explicit prohibition on substantially similar rules creates a durable barrier that the Forest Service cannot overcome on its own—it would require Congress to act again.

Farm Bill Update

In April, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 7567, the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026. Senate Ag-

riculture Committee Chairman John Boozman released a discussion draft of the Agricultural Act of 2026 in late June 2026. Both versions advance forestry and conservation priorities amid ongoing wildfire risks, forest health challenges, and tribal sovereignty goals, but they differ notably in tribal self-determination authorities versus eligibility expansions. The bills will likely proceed to conference negotiations later this year.

Tribal Forest Management Provisions: The House-passed bill includes several provisions strengthening tribal roles in forest management on and adjacent to federal lands. It makes permanent the Tribal Forest Management Demonstration Project, enabling Tribes to enter into Public Law 93-638 self-determination agreements for forest management activities. It also directs USDA to designate an existing office to oversee these 638 contracts and provides modest staffing authorization. The bill advances tribal parity under the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) by allowing Tribes to participate in GNA agreements with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and retain/reinvest timber revenues for projects on Indian lands. It creates a new USFS Nursery and Seed Orchard Financial Assistance program to support production of native trees and culturally significant plants/seeds important to Tribes. The new Forest Conservation Easement Program (FCEP, in the Conservation title) explicitly includes "acreage owned by an Indian tribe" as eligible land, continuing and modernizing support previously provided.

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Legislative Update

by Matt Hill

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ded through the Healthy Forests Reserve Program (which the bill repeals).

The Senate draft expands tribal eligibility across conservation, forestry, and rural development programs. In Title VIII (Forestry), it broadens the Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA) to include Tribal organizations and Alaska Native Corporations and authorizes \$15 million annually for fiscal years 2027–2031 to support tribal-proposed projects on federal lands.

Federal Forest Management and Wildfire Resilience: Both chambers prioritize active management, hazardous fuels reduc-

tion, and wildfire resilience on National Forest System lands, with shared elements such as streamlining certain Endangered Species Act consultations (“Cottonwood fix”) and supporting reforestation/nursery capacity. The House bill expands GNA and stewardship contracting authorities, increases acreage thresholds for categorical exclusions (CEs) under NEPA for fuels reduction and restoration projects, clarifies emergency authorities for wildfire/insect/disease outbreaks, and includes targeted tools for high-value landscapes (e.g., giant sequoias) and community wildfire defense planning. It also supports prescribed fire authorities and wood products markets while

addressing forest inventory and data improvements.

The Senate draft emphasizes modernizing federal forest data systems (including the Forest Inventory and Analysis program), reauthorizing and expanding hazardous fuels reduction programs with larger project sizes, creating, or expanding NEPA CEs for wildfire-risk reduction projects, and providing flexible funding for State Forest Action Plans. It also expands Civilian Conservation Centers for forestry and wildland firefighting workforce development.



Operations Committee

by Jason Robison



Jason Robison

As I traveled home from the 49th Annual National Indian Timber Symposium in Keshena, Wisconsin, I found myself reflecting on the conversations that happened between the meetings rather than the meetings themselves. Hosted by the Menominee

Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and the Stockbridge Munsee Community, the Symposium theme, Forestry in a Changing Environment, perfectly captured the challenges and opportunities facing Tribal forestry today.

Throughout the week we discussed changing climates, wildfire, evolving federal policy, emerging technology, workforce development, and economic opportunity. Yet one message stood above the rest. Tribal Nations are no longer simply responding to change. We are helping to lead it.

Serving as Chair of the Operations Committee has been a privilege because it has allowed me to collaborate with dedicated Tribal leaders from across Indian Country who share a

common commitment to healthy forests, strong communities, and Tribal sovereignty. Looking back on the past year, I am incredibly proud of what we accomplished together.

Leading Through Change in Federal Policy

The Operations Committee remained actively engaged on implementation of the Fix Our Forests Act, the FORESTS Act, Farm Bill priorities, Tribal co management legislation, revisions to the Northwest Forest Plan, proposed Roadless Rule changes, and federal agency reorganization. We also worked closely with ITC leadership to develop policy positions and comment letters that ensured Tribal priorities remained part

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of national discussions.

Equally important was strengthening relationships with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the USDA Forest Service, the Office of Tribal Relations, and the Department of the Interior. Those relationships continue creating meaningful opportunities for Tribal participation in federal decision making while reinforcing the importance of Tribal leadership in forest stewardship.

Advancing Tribal Self Governance

One of the defining themes of the year was Tribal self governance. During the Symposium I had the privilege of coordinating the workshop on Emerging Legislative Pathways for Self Governance and Co Management. The workshop explored Public Law 93 638, ITARA, the Tribal Forest Protection Act, the HEARTH Act, Good Neighbor Authority, and other authorities that are expanding Tribal leadership in natural resource management.

The discussion emphasized that self governance is much more than administrative authority. It is about strengthening Tribal institutions, building capacity, and ensuring Tribes have the tools to successfully manage their own lands and resources.

The Operations Committee made the Indian Trust Asset Reform Act one of its highest priorities. We worked with ITC leadership, member Tribes, Congressional offices, and the Department of the Interior to develop educational resources,

produce an ITARA video, and author a national opinion article explaining why permanent authorization matters.

Those efforts helped support one of the year's greatest accomplishments. On June 22, 2026, the Department of the Interior approved a ten-year extension of the Indian Trust Asset Management Demonstration Project through 2036. This achievement reflects the tireless advocacy of ITC member Tribes and Tribal leaders who worked together to educate both Congress and the Administration. While this milestone deserves celebration, we remain committed to supporting Representative Jeff Hurd's H.R. 5515 to permanently authorize ITARA.

Building Partnerships and Expanding Opportunity

The Operations Committee continued strengthening partnerships that advance Tribal forestry while ensuring Tribal voices remain at the center of those conversations.

Working with the National Alliance of Forest Owners, Sustainable Northwest, the Society of American Foresters, and other partners, we advanced discussions surrounding wildfire resilience, Tribal wood utilization, biomass, Renewable Fuel Standard reform, Tribal certification, and the European Union Deforestation Regulation. We also continued developing the Tribal Wood Products Directory to improve visibility and market access for Tribal forestry enterprises.

These partnerships recognize

that healthy forests and healthy economies go hand in hand. By working together, we can expand markets, create jobs, strengthen restoration efforts, and increase opportunities for Tribal communities while maintaining the stewardship values that distinguish Tribal forestry.

Investing in the Future

People remain our greatest investment. The Symposium highlighted youth forestry camps, university partnerships, mentoring programs, and student leadership initiatives that are inspiring the next generation of Tribal forestry professionals.

The Operations Committee continued advancing IFMAT IV recommendations and initiated development of a joint Workforce Development Working Group with the Education Committee. We also expanded discussions around research, artificial intelligence, Indigenous knowledge, Tribal data sovereignty, and emerging technologies, recognizing that innovation must always complement, not replace, generations of Tribal stewardship knowledge.

Fire Leadership

Wildfire continues reshaping forests across the country, making Tribal leadership in fire management more important than ever. Throughout the year we worked closely with the ITC Fire Subcommittee while engaging national fire leadership organizations and supporting increased Tribal representation, prescribed fire, and cultural burning.

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Operations Committee

by Jason Robison

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Organizational Growth

Internally, we also supported Executive Director Cal Mukumoto's efforts to strengthen ITC through organizational improvements, strategic planning, staffing discussions, and long-term capacity building. These investments ensure ITC remains well positioned to serve Tribal Nations into the future.

Looking Ahead

The accomplishments of this past year represent meaningful progress, but they are only milestones along a much longer journey. The Operations Committee will continue advancing permanent ITARA authorization, strengthening partnerships,

supporting workforce development, investing in research and innovation, and ensuring Tribal Nations remain leaders in national forestry policy.

None of these accomplishments belong to one individual or one Tribe. They reflect the collective leadership of ITC member Tribes, the ITC Board of Directors, Executive Director Cal Mukumoto, ITC staff, our federal partners, and the many professionals who contribute their time and expertise throughout the year.

If you have ever considered becoming involved with the Operations Committee, I encourage you to join us. Whether your interests are forest management, wildfire, policy, research, partnerships, or workforce devel-

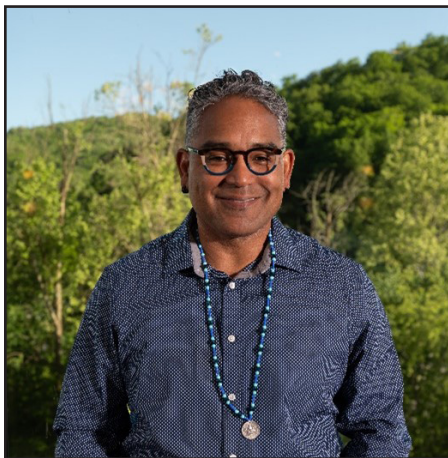
opment, your experience and perspective are valuable. The strength of ITC has always come from its members, and we welcome new voices who are ready to help shape the future of Tribal forestry.

As I look ahead, I remain optimistic. Tribal Nations continue demonstrating that stewardship rooted in Indigenous knowledge, strong partnerships, and long-term thinking provides a proven model for healthy forests and resilient communities. Together, we are not simply responding to change. We are helping define the future of Tribal forestry.



Symposium Committee

by Howard Teasley, Jr.



Howard Teasley, Jr.

2026 Symposium Recap

In June, we gathered in Wisconsin for the 49th National Indian Timber Symposium, hosted by the Intertribal Timber Council, the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, and the Stockbridge

Munsee Community. This year's theme—**"Forestry in a Changing Environment"**—set the tone for a week packed with learning, connection, and a few unexpected weather adventures.

Symposium Highlights

Sunday, June 7: Early arrivals kicked things off at the Shake the Timbers Golf Tourney. Great weather, good company, and plenty of friendly competition.

Monday, June 8: We started strong with a **record-breaking eight Pre-Symposium Workshops**—an incredible showcase of Menominee and Stockbridge Munsee homelands, forestry operations, and hospitality. Workshop proceeds

supported the Truman D. Picard Scholarship, and by afternoon folks were checking in at the Menominee Casino Resort before heading to the Host Icebreaker.

Tuesday, June 9: The Opening Ceremony set the stage, followed by a keynote from **Chris Caldwell, PhD**, President of the College of Menominee Nation. Panels throughout the day dug into extreme weather, tribal adaptation, and strategic forestry initiatives. The Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and Stockbridge Munsee Community closed out the day with their Host Presentation and a lively Host Welcome Dinner at

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Symposium Committee

by Howard Teasley, Jr.

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the Woodland Bowl—complete with dancing and local culture.

Wednesday, June 10: We spent the day out on a **six-stop Tribal Tour** with the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and the Stockbridge Munsee Community. Stops included the Stockbridge Wind Disturbance, White Pine Shelterwood, Single Tree Selection Treatment, lunch at Smokey Falls, the Oak Understory Burn & Oak Wilt Treatment, and the South Branch Fuels Treatment Unit. Despite humidity, rain, and storm warnings, spirits stayed high and the tour ended up being one of the week's standout experiences.

That evening's **General Membership Meeting** came with a surprise tornado warning. Everyone sheltered safely in the storytelling studio and hallway until the storm passed, then picked the meeting back up and finished the night without further interruptions.

Thursday, June 11: The day opened with leadership updates from federal partners, followed by **four concurrent ITC workshops** – Biomass & Carbon, Building Partnerships in Fire Management, Tribal Self-Governance & Self-Determination, Forest Vegetation Simulator Technical Training. Afterward, the Annual ITC Business Meeting convened. We wrapped up the Symposium with the Annual Awards Banquet, celebrating the Earle Wilcox Award recipients, Truman D. Picard Scholars, and winners of the scholarship fundraiser.



Photo courtesy of Kelvin Braun of the Host Tribe Welcome on June 9, 2026, at the Woodland Bowl.

Looking Ahead

Future National Indian Timber Symposium Dates:

- **April 5–8, 2027** – 50th Hosted by San Carlos Apache Tribe, San Carlos, AZ
- **May 1–4, 2028** – 51st Hosted by Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Durant, OK
- **2029** – 52nd Hosted by Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Washington
- **2030** – 53rd Hosted by Seminole Tribe of Florida • Hollywood, FL
- **2030** – 54th Hosted Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, Roseburg, OR

Member Tribes vote on future host locations during the Annual Business Meeting each year.

Attendance & Participation

This year's Symposium saw an outstanding turnout: **358 attendees, 40 participating**

Tribes, ANCSA Corporations, and Tribal organizations, 7 federal agencies and partners, 74 speakers, 13 college students, and 16 exhibitors.

2026 Exhibitors: Action Floor Systems; Braided Canopy; An Intertribal Timber Council Project; Central Wisconsin Woodworking Corporation; Forest Stewardship Council U.S.; Forsite; H Window Company; LandMark Spatial Solutions; Menominee Tribal Enterprises; National Indian Carbon Coalition; Oregon State University–College of Forestry; Patrick McBride; Prostar Surfaces, Inc.; Society of American Foresters; Sustainable Forestry Initiative; The Forest School at the Yale School of the Environment.

Thank you to everyone who joined us. **Final Proceedings links will be emailed later this summer.** And to those who couldn't register—our sincere apologies. Space was tight this year and will be tight again
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Symposium Committee

by Howard Teasley, Jr.

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in 2027, so please register early.

Membership

ITC now includes **58 General Members** and **33 Associate Members**. Welcome to our new and returning member Tribes: **Crow Tribe of Montana, Passamaquoddy Tribe, and The Klamath Tribe.**

General Membership is **\$250**

annually. Associate Membership is **\$25 annually.** Membership applications can be found at http://www.itcnet.org/about_us/.

Stay Connected

#ITC2026 Follow us: **@intertribaltimbercouncil** on BlueSky, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and X. Check out our blog on forestry & fire issues: [medium.com/@intertribaltim-](https://medium.com/@intertribaltimbercouncil)

[bercouncil](https://www.intertribaltimbercouncil.org).

We appreciated everyone who made the trip to Wisconsin. **Qe'ci'yew'yew — Thank you!**



Photo courtesy of Paul Koll of the Symposium Tribal Tour on June 10, 2026, in Wisconsin.

Forest Service Directives Modernization: Tribal Review & Comment

The USDA Forest Service has initiated national Tribal consultation on its **Directives Modernization** effort. Tribes are encouraged to review proposed changes across the Forest Service Manual (FSM) and Forest Service Handbooks (FSH).

These updates specifically target two critical areas that shape how agency staff carry out their responsibilities:

- **Tribal Relations Directives:** Addressing government-to-government consultation, Tribal sovereignty, treaty rights, Sacred Sites, and reburial.
- **Land Management Planning Directives:** Governing all aspects of National Forest management and forest planning, including the implementation of the 2012 Planning Rule. These updates will directly dictate how Tribal interests, Tribal consultation, and Indigenous Knowledge are integrated into forest planning.

Key Dates & Opportunities

- **August 15, 2026:** Deadline for Tribes to submit comments to the Forest Service.
- **Request Consultation:** Tribes can request direct Government-to-Government consultation by emailing SM.FS.otrtribalcon@usda.gov.
- **Review Draft Materials:**



How ITC is Supporting Tribes

The Intertribal Timber Council (ITC) is reviewing the drafts to support Tribal Shared Stewardship priorities and will provide template letters for member Tribes. ITC is hosting two virtual office hours to discuss the changes, answer questions, and gather feedback:

- **July 20, 2026 (10–11 AM PT):** Register here:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/Dag7t-nURmO9OcZ6jk3O9g>
- **July 28, 2026 (2–3 PM PT):** Register here:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/17YH6zU6StatORbdRo-Xbg>
 - Registration links can also be found at www.itcnet.org.

For questions, contact Stephanie Lucero, Shared Stewardship Coordinator for ITC, at Lucero.Stephanie@gmail.com



Photo of ITC Board of Directors (L–R): Timothy P. Miller, Robin Harkins, Michael Dolson, Jason Robison, Cody Desautel, Phil Rigdon, Howard Teasley, Jr., Bill Tripp. Not pictured: John Bryson, Jr., Tommy Cabe, and Clinton Northway.



Photo of Confederated Bands and Tribes of the Yakama Nation staff celebrating Ryan Sanchez's Wilcox win during the Awards Banquet on June 11, 2026.



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