

A National Tribal Strategy on Natural Resources

A Collaborative Leadership Process

Background

Natural resources have sustained the lifeways, cultures, and economies of tribal peoples for countless generations and remain vital to their health and welfare today. For tomorrow, needs for effective and efficient preparation, mitigation and adaptation strategies for natural resource management will surely escalate as tribes confront threats to energy, food, and water security arising from climate change.

The nearly 100 million acres of land in Indian ownership contain substantial amounts of natural resources and tribal reserved rights to water, fish, and wildlife affect access and utilization over a broad geographic range. Tribal resources like oil, natural gas, coal, timber, uranium, and wind could play a prominent role in shaping the future economy and strategies for meeting pressing needs for energy independence and national security. Opportunities abound, but with opportunities come threats that tribes cannot afford to overlook. Tribes will need to find the means to protect their interests against these threats and preserve their jurisdiction, sovereignty, and capacity to use their resources to benefit their own people.

The Obama administration seeks new ways to involve the citizenry, encourages innovative approaches to the country's largest problems, and believes in collaborative and inclusive leadership. The stage is set for tribal leadership to establish and present their strategy for natural resource management and development and to reap the rewards of their involvement.

Now, more than ever, tribes must be actively engaged in the deliberations that will develop future policies for natural resource management and the practices that result. Tribal natural resource expertise is broad and deep. Over the years, tribes have been on the vanguard in developing innovative ways to address natural resource issues. Due to rich and varied natural resources and fewer bureaucratic constraints, tribes are able to leverage partnerships and pilot new approaches, often resulting in ground-truthing methodology that becomes best management practice.

But, tribal natural resource management suffers from the lack of a cohesive, comprehensive, and unifying vision. Fragmentation and stove-piping of efforts and disciplines has marginalized the influence of tribes in regional, national, and international forums. The results: (1) the potential leadership that tribes can

bring to the natural resource arena remains unrealized and overlooked; (2) natural resource policy and implementation are being developed without tribal insight, capability, knowledge, and (3) funding for and investment in Indian natural resources have lagged.

Despite the seminal importance of natural resources to tribal communities, other topics like jurisdiction, education, social services, law enforcement, and gaming have commanded the bulk of attention of tribal leadership. A strategy to focus attention on natural resources in Indian Country is badly needed.

Proposal:

Convene a "brainstorming forum" where leadership from intertribal natural-resource based organizations can candidly explore interest in improving collaboration and coordination to advance a natural-resource agenda for Indian Country.

The most effective leadership strategies are developed collaboratively, including the broad range of interests and perspectives. By bringing together leadership from intertribal organizations that are familiar with the views of national leadership in the natural resource arena, including federal agencies, environmental organizations and industry, deliberations will be informed by a broad variety of knowledge, perspectives, and experience that will hopefully lead to a rapid determination of whether or not a functional strategic framework can be devised and a coalition formed to guide implementation.

The agenda must provide an integrated and holistic view of natural resource issues and futures and be expressed in terms that resonate with tribal leadership.

The desired outcomes for the forum include:

1. A clear and compelling call to action for tribes to come together on natural resource issues at a national scale
2. A foundation for a long-term collaborative structure that will inform tribal leadership of natural resource issues and needs, preparing a foundation ripe for decision making
3. A framework for action which enables each intertribal organization to understand how it fits into the "big picture" and provides the

basis for tribal leadership to shape policy and strategy for the future

4. Increased prominence for tribal roles in natural resource leadership in professional associations, public awareness, and the Obama administration.
5. Strategic visions, objectives, and goals to help guide tribal leadership as they confront efforts to revamp future administration of the trust responsibility of the United States towards Indians and their natural resources
6. The flow of new funding to support tribal natural resource initiatives.

Methodology and Timeframe

The time for action is now. The intertribal natural resource forum is proposed for the week of September 14, 2009. The new administration is already barraged with new ideas and initiatives. Stimulus funding is being distributed (\$1.15 billion to the US Forest Service alone). Climate Change is prompting new levels of effort and planning.

The development of the first-ever tribal natural resource strategy will present a wide range of challenges and will require the expertise and experience of a seasoned professional to manage. In recognition of this, I would like to strongly recommend that that Ms. Rebecca Reynolds be considered for this key role. Ms. Reynolds is a distinguished leadership consultant with a specialization in the natural resource arena. She is known for developing engaging and effective processes that bring diverse perspectives together and produce outstanding results.

Ms. Reynolds is highly skilled at designing process that gathers and incorporates viewpoints and thinking from a wide variety of stakeholders on complex subject matter. Her projects are recognized for creating new levels of enthusiasm among participants that result in greater opportunity and achievement.

I share these comments about Ms. Reynolds from my past professional experience with her. Rebecca provided the management over-sight of a very complicated and diverse effort to development a state-wide forest and watershed health plan called for by NM Governor Bill Richardson. This Plan, which was signed by the Governor in March, 2005 and is currently being implemented with great success, called for bringing together all land owners and managers, as well as NGOs and other special interest groups, in the managing of the State's forested

watersheds. It has also enabled the more effective inclusion of the 22 NM tribes, nations and pueblos into the management process, resulting (as an example) in state funded forestry restoration projects being awarded on tribal lands.

This is the caliber of person that we will need to help bring us together as national tribal natural resources organizations; bring us together in a sustained way that will empower each of our organizations to better serve Indian Country and its leadership.

Ms. Reynolds writes on leadership subjects and is known for her ability to support leaders in realizing their highest potential. See her www site at: www.rebeccareynoldsconsulting.com

As mentioned earlier, I would like to propose that we find a day during the week of September 14, 2009 to come together in Denver to begin this important journey. I have attached a scheduling tool, called a "Doodle Poll" that will help identify the most available day for the group to meet. Please click on to the identified link and select the meeting day that best fits your schedule. Once a date is selected, I will then get back with each of you with meeting logistics.

<http://www.doodle.com/wnxk22cxcq5kkvyv>

If you have questions or need further information regarding this proposed meeting, please contact me at (505) 690-3222 or e-mail at arthur.blazer@state.nm.us.

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