



Natural Resources Committee Report Summary

This committee report is a record of what transpired and was accomplished during your time together at the USET meetings.

Impact Week Meeting

Joint Collaboration
Mid-Year Meeting

Annual Meeting

This Report is due the day before the last day of meetings, 5:00 pm in the USET office.

Tribal Nations represented 12 Committee Members in attendance 6

Topics Discussed Highlights from Meetings	Outcomes / Any Decisions Made* see directions below	Next Steps / Action Items / Responsible Party* see directions below
DAY 1		
The Natural Resources Committee was joined by two recently hired Environmental Program Managers/staff from the Nansemond Indian Nation and the Pamunkey Indian Tribe.	USET Staff Support, Casey Thornbrugh communicated with Cameron Bruce (Nansemond Indian Nation) and Joe Capella (Pamunkey Indian Tribe) regarding the process to become voting members of the NR Committee.	Casey Thornbrugh will make sure Cameron Bruce and Joe Capella have the forms needed to take to their Tribal Leadership so they or the most appropriate representative can join the Committee as a voting member. Chuck Loring, Natural Resources Director for the Penobscot Indian Nation, also received a form to join the Committee as a voting member.
Introduction to USGS Tribal Programs	USGS Northeast Tribal Liaison, Jason Sorenson gave a thorough presentation on USGS opportunities available to Tribal Nations as well as USGS projects with Tribal Nations.	
Modern Sequencing and Bioinformatic Tools for Surveillance of Zoonotic and Wildlife Pathogens	USGS biologist Dr. Serguei Drovetski gave a presentation on tools available for proactive monitoring of bird diseases.	
AI/ML to Detect Fish Health Impairments from Citizen (Angler) Photos	USGS fish biologist/PhD Candidate, Clayton Raines gave a presentation on an AI/ML tool available for collecting data on fish diseases.	
DAY 2 – AM		
Climate, Environmental, and Human Health		USET-OERM Assistant Tribal Climate Science Liaison, Steph Courtney is reaching out to Tribal Program Managers regarding the Climate Science Priorities of the Southeast CASC and the Northeast CASC. Please look out for her communication to hold conversations on Tribal Climate Science priorities, so these priorities may be communicated with the CASCs.

<p>USET's Office of Environmental Resource Management – Programmatic Updates:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Climate Resilience Program 2. Utilities Program 3. Lead Testing Program 4. Agriculture Program 	<p>Question was asked from Seminole Tribe of Florida - Wildlife Program Manager, Craig van der Heiden if USET OERM could help push forward the importance of RAWA. OERM Direct Jerry Pardilla mentioned such action was more on the USET SPF (501c4) side, but that OERM could reach out to USET SPF on the matter.</p>	<p>Casey Thornbrugh, USET OERM Climate Program Manager reminded the Committee of the upcoming USET-OERM Tribal Climate Resilience Camp scheduled June 10-14 in Durham, NC.</p> <p>Step1: USET-OERM to communicate with USET SPF to address legislation related to Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) and there would be \$98 million for Tribal Wildlife Programs.</p> <p>Step 2: Discussion with USET SPF for the NR Committee to begin drafting a resolution for USET support of RAWA based on the NR Committee Subject matter expertise.</p>
Business Session	<p>Election of Officers for 2024-2025 term.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jerry Cain, Chair - Kristi Weatherford, Vice Chair - Shavonne Smith, Secretary <p>Discussed plans for the next meeting (see At-a-Glance Agenda below)</p>	
DAY 2 - PM		
Roundtable Discussion: Tribal Activities	<p>Shannon Hill – Mi'kmaq Nation Environmental Program.</p> <p>Brook trout hatchery since 2015. High demand to feed our people and sales, so they are breaking ground in the spring on an additional hatchery, we will go from 12,000 pounds to 40,000 pounds of fish per year. Funding \$4 million comes from the Economic Development (EDA). Another \$1 million from other sources. The old hatchery facility is still functional so may be utilized</p>	

to raise eels. New hatchery will be carbon footprint free and will run off solar.

We have a forestry program, air quality monitoring station, we will have 8 acres for agricultural production. We have a staff of 4.

We have a certified state of Maine water testing laboratory, only one north of Bangor, Maine. We are looking for construction funds to increase the size of our water quality lab. We do stream water and surface water monitoring as well. We have 30 grants and about 8 staff.

Joe Capella – Pamunkey Indian Tribe - Natural Resources Department:

The Pamunkey Indian Tribes has a new Natural Resources Department as of January 2024 funded by EPA GAP. Climate resilience is a major priority. The Pamunkey Indian Tribe is a coastal Tribal Nation. The south end of the entire island/peninsula is expected to be flooded within a few decades. We are trying to work with FEMA and engineers to do an assessment of the one road the accesses the peninsula which is vulnerable to sea level rise and a flooding creek.

We working on an annual water testing plan. VA-Tech provides some funds to testing. We are mapping our septic tanks and wells to make sure we know where they all are precisely. We just

submitted a grant for a methodology for mapping of septic tanks. Tribe currently leases out agricultural land for conventional farming and pesticides. Want to re-think this and think more on agricultural activities for growing traditional foods.

In the 1910s a hatchery was started then in 2017-2018 funding and staffing fell off. They want to get this hatchery back up for American Shad a threatened species. We also have thought of having an SAV nursery or freshwater mussels. Working with Friends of the Rappahannock to plant 100 new trees on the reservation.

VC Rise Service Center is being asked to look into subsidence (paper mill near by draining ground water may be contributing to land subsidence).

**Kristi Weatherford – Director
Poarch Band of Creek Indian
Environmental Program**

<https://vimeo.com/911614714?share=copy>

Issue with flooding with one of our casinos working with FEMA and USGS also to use Lidar for Earth mapping.

We have 106, 319, pesticides programs.

We applied for wetlands protection grants. We are adding fish and wildlife to protect endangered species 15,000 acres of Tribal lands including the Eastern

	<p>Diamondback Rattlesnake. Mayhaw trees, which are culturally significant to the Poarch Band of Creek Indians.</p> <p>We got a grant to restore the Perdido creek. There is a historically significant place where baptisms took place, but water no longer flows there.</p> <p>We applied for the Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) grant. Poarch band of Creek Indians is the only recycling center in the county.</p> <p>We got the Climate Pollution Grant (Mi'kmaq Nation and Catawba Nation also got this grant). We are a staff of 8 (5 professional staff) and we have 14 grants.</p> <p>We have a program for septic tanks we work with IHS on NEPA and then work with contractors to put in wells and septic tanks. We have about 3,000 citizens.</p> <p>We have an EPA PPG Grant – includes Pesticides – Worker protection, storage of pesticides, training on handling of pesticides.</p> <p>We were awarded \$16 million for solar covered parking at our casino. First community in the area to have an electric school bus.</p> <p>Scott Hansen – Natural Resource Department – Catawba Indian Nation</p> <p>We have 128A, Lead, 106 and other typical EPA grants. Our</p>	
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service area is a very large area of South Carolina and portions of North Carolina.

We are looking at seasonal variations on contaminants in the Catawba River. We started a River Cane project in 2020. We want to identify storm water sites where river cane can be planted. Catawba also received river cane from the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

We are also addressing landfills at near homes and we also go into vacated homes testing them to make sure it is clean and safe for families to move into.

We are one of 7 sites in South Carolina that monitors and reports on air quality. Working on new construction on our air quality facility.

Our Environmental Department oversees also Tribal water and waste water. We are working with USET on putting together a new plan for a new waste water treatment plant.

ARPA funds are used for HVAC work. We want to make homes more energy efficient first then due renewable.

Shavonne Smith – Director for the Environmental Department Shinnecock Indian Nation

We have a water quality monitoring program. We have TAS, but we want regulatory jurisdiction to set our own water quality standards.

We have monitoring wells (USGS) for ground water to observe ground water increases or microbial changes and to monitor for saltwater intrusion.

We have a concern about poor water quality around Heady Creek, which is seasonally closed to shellfishing from contamination, but Tribal citizens still sometimes shellfish there. We want to know the source of the water contamination. Working with Cornell on algae harvesting program.

We received EPA funds for a wetland program. We have migrating salt marsh wetlands due to sea level rise and Super Storm Sandy impacts from 2012. The Nature Conservancy is working with us to identify the location wetlands are migrating to.

We are working on food sovereignty. We have classes for youth on hunting, fishing, clamming, plant gathering. We have a community garden. We have USDA Climate Smart Agriculture project for a test site we are looking Tribal workshops on agriculture and for Tribal citizens to do own gardens. Trading shellfish for seeds with Haudenosaunee Nations up state New York.

Setting up contacts with Tribal citizens to purchase foods to distribute to Community for free.

	<p>We had a major clean-up of a multi-generational dump, got it on the brownfield inventory included IHS, EPA, and USGS. EPA paid for phase I assessment IHS paid for phase II clean up. We deal with high staff turn-over, so that is a challenge.</p> <p>We are trying to work with the town South Hampton on Common ground issues.</p> <p>We have 13 grants and about 8 staff.</p> <p>Penobscot Nation:</p> <p>We are working on a NOAA program to restore Atlantic Salmon. We now have 6 million Alewife moving through the Penobscot River and the population is coming back.</p> <p>We got awarded America the Beautiful for fish passage a million dollars. Working to fundraise for a 30,000 acres land return project and another 1,700 acres. We have 120,000 acres of trust lands.</p> <p>We did COVID testing on Moose.</p> <p>We just defeated a mine in partnership with Maliseet.</p> <p>Sears Island identified for offshore wind and we are doing damage control on that and we have concerns.</p>	
<p>A Tribal Historic Preservation Perspective on Accelerated Environmental Reviews for Green Projects</p>	<p>Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Councilman and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, David Weeden.</p>	

State and other programs get 8 cents collect on every kilowatt generated from offshore wind.

Paleo soils and remnants of dry land inhabited by our ancestors out to Georges Banks 12,000 year ago. There is an ancient lake in the middle on Nantucket Sound

What is having is that the federal government is combining Section 106 and NEPA to expedite the process. Initially in 2012 they started with the Smart-from-the-Start now it has changed to Fast 41.

Many large-scale projects can ask to be a part of the fast 41 process. Any projects under Fast 40, Tribes can apply for discretionary funding to have Tribes be a part of these reviews. Funding is available for up to 3 years. Mashpee applied for these funds that got partially awarded.

BOEM offers funding but it is through IDIQ mechanism where they have to find a company to work with you. Useful but not as helpful in self-determination space.

THPOs should be working more closely with Natural Resources and Environmental Programs. THPOs would like a second set of eyes to review projects. We often only get 30 days.

NREL has come out with a TAP program for funds to travel to federal and state energy related conferences and trainings.

We are training to work with NROC and we are also communicating with our Yurok Relatives on the West Coast. There is a California Tribal Alliance and we want to create something similar on the East Coast. We could use NREL funding. We also want intercultural exchange with West Coast and Gulf of Mexico Tribal Nations.

Anthony Morgan Rodman is the Executive Director for the Whitehouse Council of Native American Affairs (WHCNA). He is a good point of contact to address how the federal government is addressing Executive Order 14112. Another issue is that Tribal are not paid for their time. With no compensation for our time we are just getting steam rolled. We support renewable energy, but not at expense of cultural spaces.

Gov't Accountability Office GAO is looking into BOEM and how they are or not upholding the Trust responsibilities. GAO folks will be at USET on Friday. Keep an eye out from email from THPO David Weeden and NROC for participation.

Mashpee, Aquinnah, and Mashantucket Pequot, Shinnecock, and Delaware Nation have been on the calls regarding off shore wind.

Cooperating Tribal Governments is another tool or a way for Tribal Nations to work with one another to have a say in the permitting

	<p>process and having access to federal agencies for technical expertise like NOAA endangered species. By being designated as Cooperating Tribal Governments to you can be next in line behind the federal government for consultation in front of the states as it should be.</p> <p>Each offshore wind project cost \$4 Billion Dollars. It will be a \$70 billion industry by 2045.</p> <p>Fast 41 is not just offshore wind its everything (solar, transportation etc.) Tribes can apply to be a Fast 41 Project. There is a map of all the Fast 41 projects available.</p>	
<p>USET's Infrastructure Development Program</p>	<p>The Natural Resources Committee joined the Economic Development and Entrepreneurship Committee for a joint session.</p>	
<p>DAY 3 - AM</p>		
<p>DAY 3 - PM</p>		

***Next Steps / Action Items / Responsible Party** (ie: Resolution for submission to Board [Draft resolutions submitted after the deadline are only eligible for consideration at the authorization of the USET SPF Executive Officers Committee (EOC) if: (1) the resolution addresses an emergency, an issue that was not known before the deadline, or for other good cause; and (2) the EOC, at its discretion, agrees to consider the resolution. Whenever possible, late resolutions will be directed to Committee(s) of Jurisdiction prior to USET SPF BOD consideration.]; consultation session scheduled; listening session in works; future/upcoming meetings to be aware of; comments / testimony required – SPF involvement; add to best practices, request special meeting; any motions carried, are there policy implications for USET SPF involvement, etc.)

Impact Week – Did you visit the HILL? Yes No

Annual Meeting – Did you Tour the Host Tribal Nation? Yes No

OTHER Business

Elections:

2024 Chair: Nomination Jerry Cain – Environmental Program Director - Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Co-Chair of EPA EEC – Chair of EPA Region 4 RTOC

Unanimous: Yes Opposed: 0

2024 Vice Chair: Currently held by Kristi Weatherford - Environmental Program Director – Poarch Band of Creek Indians, nominated also for 2024 Vice Chair

Unanimous: Yes Opposed: 0

2024 Secretary: Nomination of Shavonne Smith, Environmental Program Director, Shinnecock Indian Nation

Unanimous: Yes Opposed: 0

At A Glance Agenda Items for Next Meeting

Plan for 2 days of topics (3rd day field trip)

- Invite USDA / USDA-NRCS (Invite speakers for the Annual Meeting, but also plan field trip to USDA / USDA-NRSC Office during Impact Week
- Focus on USDA-NRCS Funding and Program, opportunities for Tribal Nations
- NRCS has sister organization such as FSA and RD that also have funding opportunities for Tribal Nations
- Report on EPA National Tribal Committee (Shavonne Smith Region 2 Rep can assist with contacting speakers)
- Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (NAFWS)
- Available funding to address PFAS (addressing and testing including air quality-related issues.)
- National Tribal Science Council
- Always looking for a Tribal-based presentation
- Freight farm – Container Farming: Presentation offered by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Ag. Program – Jeremy Whipple
- Cattle Beef Slaughter Facility being built by the Poarch Band of Creek Indians should be operational by 2025, NR Committee Vice Chair suggested it and will request permission on presenting.
- Mi’kmaq Nation presentation on Aquacultural Farming with Brook Trout (Impact week 2025)
- Also welcoming Tribal sustainability projects (e.g. recycling food or animal waste for fertilizer for Tribal Ag.

Were Elections Held? YES NO

Chair

Jerry Cain

Vice Chair

Kristi Weatherford

Secretary

Shavonne Smith

Date: _____3/28/2024_____

Prepared by: __Casey Thornbrugh USET Staff Support _____

Committee met under the direction of Chairperson: __Kristi Weatherford – NR Committee Vice Chair_____