

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
Between The  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,  
And The  
INTERTRIBAL TIMBER COUNCIL**

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) is hereby made and entered into by and between the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), including its agencies and instrumentalities, and the Intertribal Timber Council (ITC).

**I. PARTIES**

The parties to this MOU are the ITC, headquartered in Portland, Oregon, and the USDA, headquartered in Washington, D.C.

***Intertribal Timber Council***

Established in 1976, the ITC is a nonprofit nation-wide consortium of Indian tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and individuals dedicated to improving the management of forested tribal lands and other natural resources of importance to Native American communities. The ITC is dedicated to realizing these goals through cooperation, collaboration, and shared information among its member Tribes and with Federal, State and local governments, private industry, and academia. Over 60 Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations currently belong to the ITC, representing almost all of the 18.6 million Indian forest acres held in Federal trust. The ITC is the primary intertribal organization that supports common goals of the majority of Indian Tribes with significant forested landscapes.

***U.S. Department of Agriculture***

USDA has extensive responsibilities and authorities for forests, woodlands, range lands, agriculture, conservation of soils, food, and rural lands and communities. These responsibilities and authorities, along with the Department's agencies and instrumentalities, are divided among 7 Departmentally-designated Mission Areas: Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services; Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services; Food Safety; Marketing and Regulatory Programs; Natural Resources and Environment; Research, Education, and Economics; and Rural Development.

Indian Tribes are eligible to participate in several USDA programs, services, and benefits. Within the Natural Resources and Environment Mission Area, USDA has overarching responsibility for the Federal Government's monitoring, managing, and fostering of America's

national forest resources, including Federal, tribal, State, and local governmental forests and private forests. Across many of the USDA's other Mission Areas, there is a great range of applicable programs and services to evaluate and assist, directly and indirectly, the forest resources and forest-dependent communities across the United States.

As an instrumentality of the United States, USDA has a duty to honor and fulfill the United States Government's unique and historic obligations to Tribes, which often require specific and separate standards for their discharge.

USDA's Department-wide application of programs, services, and obligations to Indian Tribes, including tribal forestry and other tribal natural resources, is coordinated through the Office of Tribal Relations (OTR) in the Office of the Secretary, a statutory office at the Department's highest level, which is dedicated to overseeing, coordinating, and fostering USDA's engagement across all Mission Areas with Indian Country. The Secretarial OTR complements and helps coordinate the activities of various individual program or agency Tribal Liaisons and Tribal Relations offices.

## **II. STATEMENT OF MUTUAL INTERESTS AND BENEFITS**

### ***Mutual interests***

USDA and ITC have many shared forest and forest-related goals and responsibilities, including sustainable forest management and the realization of benefits for citizens across a wide variety of multiple uses. The ITC has an interest in participating in a wide array of USDA programs that relate to their communities, resources, lands, rights, and interests, and USDA has an interest and obligation to include those Indian Tribes under USDA and other applicable Federal authorities. Tribal forests and USDA Forest Service (USFS) National Forest System lands are also extensively proximate, underscoring the importance of an "All lands, all hands" approach to collectively and actively pursue broader responsibilities, including staffing; forest health, fire/fuels, disease infestation, and climate change; forest management; traditional ecological knowledge; the Federal trust obligation and outreach on USDA programs. As neighbors on the landscape, it is in the mutual best interest of the parties to cooperate and collaborate to address common challenges and benefits from emerging opportunities.

### ***Mutual benefits***

ITC and USDA can mutually benefit by working together to achieve common goals through cooperative and collaborative relationships that can facilitate the exchange of information and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their respective operations in maintaining healthy, productive forests.

Cooperation and collaboration between USDA and ITC may have the following mutual benefits:

- 1) Improved coordination of efforts to maintain healthy forests, including proactively implementing programs to address insects, disease, and invasive species; improving carbon capture; adapting and mitigating for impacts of climate change; protecting cultural

resources and sacred places; and retaining and enhancing forest ecosystem benefits, such as water, air, soil, habitat, and recreation.

- 2) Enhanced ongoing collaboration and cooperation between ITC and USDA to contain wildfire risks and costs, reduce excessive fuel loads, and greater opportunities for participation in the development of forest-based renewable fuels and products from bio-refining.
- 3) Increased forest-based economic activity, including reinvestment in the land and supporting harvesting, transportation, management, and processing infrastructure to support forest-dependent communities.
- 4) Greater efficiencies through sharing and coordinating information and expertise, including forest applications of tribal traditional ecological knowledge, science, practical experience, and the investigative and analytical research capacities of USDA's agencies.
- 5) Improved awareness and fulfillment of the Federal tribal trust relationship.
- 6) Strengthened Federal and tribal forest workforces through efforts to recruit, train, employ and share forestry personnel and expertise.
- 7) Improved communications and awareness of USDA and tribal objectives, concerns, and constraints on contemporaneous forestry issues.

### **III. PURPOSE**

Based on the forgoing, the purpose of this MOU is to establish a relational framework that:

- 1) Recognizes the mutual goals and aspirations of ITC and USDA;
- 2) Memorializes the ongoing collaboration and cooperation between the parties;
- 3) Expands ITC's involvement with USDA agencies beyond the USFS;
- 4) Establishes and formalizes a relationship in which ITC and USDA and its agencies and instrumentalities work in partnership in achieving:
  - a. Broader, more effective USDA engagement throughout Indian Country, better fulfilling its duties, mission, objectives, and aspirations, including strengthening the forest resources within the United States;
  - b. Improved tribal awareness of and opportunities to participate in USDA programs and services to enhance Indian Tribes' ability to better realize the benefits of their forest resources;
  - c. Realization of joint benefits through landscape-based forest and forest-related initiatives across multiple lands/jurisdictions; and

- d. Mutually beneficial undertakings to address current and future challenges facing Federal, tribal, and other forest managers, including staffing; forest health, fire/fuels, disease, infestation and climate change; forest management; traditional ecological knowledge; the Federal trust obligation and outreach on USDA programs.

ITC, through partnering with USDA in this MOU, will facilitate a more robust fulfillment of USDA's service mission to Tribes and their forest resources, seeking to expand opportunities for both the USDA and Indian Tribes.

**IV. ITC SHALL:**

- A. Facilitate the exchange of perspectives and information to increase awareness, understanding and engagement between USDA and its agencies and ITC member Tribes.
- B. Assist with the distribution of appropriate USDA and its agencies' information to ITC member Tribes.
- C. Coordinate with its member Tribes to provide information to USDA on tribal concerns and needs in the development of policies and programs affecting tribal forests.
- D. Provide its member Tribes with information relating to the availability of opportunities to participate in USDA programs and obtain assistance from research activities and climate hubs
- E. Seek to cooperate and collaborate with USDA and its agencies on forest and forest-based natural resource landscape issues that bear upon tribal and USDA interests.
- F. Work with the USDA to address forestry and related natural resources staffing issues, such as workforce diversification and inclusion, recruitment, training, and deployment.

**V. THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE and its agencies and instrumentalities SHALL:**


- A. Facilitate the exchange of perspectives and information to increase awareness, understanding and engagement between the ITC member Tribes and USDA and its agencies.
- B. Assist with the distribution of appropriate ITC member Tribes' information to USDA and its agencies.
- C. Seek to collaboratively inform and engage the ITC in development of policies, programs, projects, and activities that may affect tribal forests or Tribes' abilities to participate in USDA forest-related programs.
- D. Endeavor to improve USDA employee education on and awareness of Indian Tribes and the tribal – Federal Government to government relationship and history.
- E. Encourage inclusion of representatives of tribal Government on advisory, oversight, and policy committees or boards within USDA, pursuant to existing regulation and statute.

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

By:   
Secretary of Agriculture

Date: APR 01 2016

**INTERTRIBAL TIMBER COUNCIL**

By:   
Philip Rigdon, President

Date: 4-5-2016