

# Wildfire Crisis Strategy Intertribal Roundtable Meeting Summary

Prepared by the Udall Foundation's  
[John S. McCain III, National Center for Environmental Conflict Resolution](#)  
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Virtual Zoom Meeting

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*Fire is a part of what defines us as being Native. Fire has been a part of our identity that was partially taken away from us, much like our language, salmon, prayers, and other identifiers that make us who we are. Efforts to re-vitalize that component of our culture are ongoing and continues to be a part of connecting people to place. Throughout Indian Country our relationship with the land is one of respect born from the intimacy of interacting with it. ././As we move forward with opportunities such as BIL and America the Beautiful, we must not be pressured with outputs such as acres produced or we elevate the risk of losing respect for the land and all that it offers.*

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Vernon Stearns, Jr.  
Fire Subcommittee Chair  
Intertribal Timber Council

## Introduction

Wildfires in the U.S. have been growing in size, duration, and destruction over the past 20 years, reaching crisis proportions in the West. This national emergency calls for decisive actions to protect people and communities and improve forest health and resilience. The USDA Forest Service initiated discussions to develop strategies to address these needs. An early listening session was held with Tribes in [December](#).

In January 2022, the Forest Service released [Confronting the Wildfire Crisis Strategy](#) and associated [Implementation Plan](#) (Plan). Under this Plan, the Forest Service will work with Tribes, employees, partners, and the interested public to support the management and restoration of millions of acres of land toward improved forest health and watershed function and the protection of human infrastructure.

To better incorporate contemporary ideas, perspectives, and experiences into the Wildfire Crisis Implementation Plan, the UDA Forest Service (Forest Service) partnered with the [National Forest Foundation](#) to host a series of [ten virtual regional roundtable](#) discussions in the winter and spring of 2022. Each roundtable discussion incorporated Tribal panelists and encouraged consideration of Tribal representatives. These roundtable discussions demonstrated that Tribes are a vital partner in improving forest health and resilience and addressing wildfire risks.

To ensure that Tribal voices are part of the Implementation Plan's framing, development, and exercise, the Forest Service partnered with the [Intertribal Timber Council \(ITC\)](#) to host a national intertribal roundtable discussion on April 26, 2022. The purpose of this Roundtable was to host a dialogue with Tribes to engage around the Implementation Plan process. This report is a summary of key themes from the 2022 [Intertribal Roundtable](#).

## Roundtable Design and Purpose

The goals of the Wildfire Crisis Strategy Intertribal Roundtable (Roundtable) were to:

- Share information, goals, and timelines for the Plan;

- Hear directly from Tribes and their representatives on their concerns, priorities, thoughts, and considerations to inform the Plan;
- Provide an opportunity for dialogue among Forest Service leadership and Tribes to identify key needs and opportunities of the Plan; and
- Identify opportunities for continued coordination and partnership between the Forest Service and Tribes on Plan development and implementation, gauge ongoing levels of interest and determine ways to leverage that interest and energy.

The Intertribal Roundtable was a three-hour session of facilitated dialogue between Forest Service executive leadership, Tribal leaders, and Tribal staff. Participants included Tribal staff with direct experience with wildfire and fuels reduction, forestry, natural resources, watershed, cultural resources, and other programs connected to forests and grasslands. Participants also included representatives from intertribal organizations working in this field and Tribal culture bearers.

Acknowledging the plethora of input Tribes have already shared with Forest Service relative to wildfire management, the Intertribal Roundtable focused on facilitating dialogue on the potential solutions and next steps and encouraged the development of action-oriented recommendations. Tribal Forestry professionals framed the nature of discussions and considerations in a panel, and participants were invited to review and discuss questions related to the Plan with Executive Leadership in breakout sessions focused on **Science Supporting Wildfire Risk Reduction; Cross-Boundary Partnerships and Shared Prioritization**; and **Workforce Capacity, Markets, and Industry**.

In addition to the summary of themes provided in this report, notes captured during breakout sessions were shared with internal agency teams and Intertribal Timber Council staff.

## Roundtable Welcome and Introductions

**Stephanie Lucero**, National Center, welcomed participants ([Appendix A](#)) to the Roundtable, introducing **Alice Lincoln Cook** (Karuk), Chairperson of the California Indian Basketweaver’s Association, to give the Tribal invocation.

**Randy Moore**, U.S. Forest Service Chief, gave opening remarks welcoming everyone to the Roundtable and emphasizing the Forest Service’s commitment to listening and learning during the Intertribal Roundtable. Chief Moore underscored the contributing factors to the current wildfire crisis. He likewise credited the traditional role of fire in shaping forests and grasslands within the U.S. continent and the role of indigenous people in stewarding these fire-adapted landscapes. Chief Moore acknowledged that past non-indigenous forest management strategies removed fire and indigenous people from the landscape. Past management strategies, climate change, and other factors have led to the current crisis. Chief Moore recognized partnering with Tribes to incorporate indigenous traditional ecological knowledge into science and land management practices. He discussed the need to increase the pace and scale of fire treatments across the landscape and jurisdictional boundaries, emphasizing the importance of partnerships between the Forest Service, Tribes, and States to protect communities and natural resources and restore healthy, resilient fire-adapted forests.

**Cody Desautel**, ITC President and Acting Executive Director, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, welcomed participants and shared his appreciation for the opportunity to include Tribal interests and perspectives in the Plan development. He acknowledged that the Forest Service and Tribes might have different project goals and objectives regarding wildfire management. However, he

highlighted the once-in-a-career opportunity to address wildfire management available with the funding provided through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) to increase the scope and scale of projects.

Mr. Desautel emphasized the need for collaboration in this work and thanked the other speakers and participants for joining the roundtable discussions.

### Tribal Forestry Partners and Neighbors: Panel

A panel of Tribal Forestry Managers and USDA FS leadership provided an overview of initial thoughts and perspectives on the Wildfire Risk Implementation Plan and the opportunities arising from Tribal engagement in this Roundtable and the Plan. The panel comprised of:

- **Brian Ferebee**, Forest Service Chief Executive of Intergovernmental Relations
- **Phil Rigdon**, Deputy Director, Department of Natural Resources, Yakama Nation
- **Cody Desautel**, President, ITC, Acting Executive Director, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- **Grant Steelman**, Forester, Seminole Tribe of Florida

**Brian Ferebee**, Forest Service Chief Executive of Intergovernmental Relations, provided an overview of the 10-Year Wildfire Crisis Strategy and accompanying Implementation Plan, shared an update on what has occurred since the [December Tribal listening session](#), and highlighted some planned next steps. In addition, he shared the high-risk firesheds identified in the Wildfire Crisis Strategy. Finally, he acknowledged other high-risk firesheds that today's conversations would help identify for the next round of focused Agency investment.

**Phil Rigdon**, Yakama Nation Deputy Director of Natural Resources, shared thoughts on the role of Tribes in landscape-level stewardship. He emphasized that Tribal connections to the land lying beyond reservation lands. Mr. Rigdon discussed the collective responsibility of solutions development and challenges to landscape-level stewardship. He emphasized how Tribes' forest health treatments are important but not enough to address the issues in communities, as evidenced by a large fire on Yakama Nation lands in 2015. A concerted, multi-jurisdictional, collaborative landscape-level effort is the only path forward.

**Cody Desautel**, ITC President, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation Acting Executive Director, shared thoughts on what is achievable in the next ten years and the hardest points and obstacles to consider. He shared that Congress has acknowledged that Tribes, the Forest Service, and state partners work better collectively. While each Tribe and Federal agency has different perspectives and priorities, this is the opportunity to strategically identify commonalities and meet the challenge of balancing those priorities and perspectives. He emphasized the importance of having everyone at the table to ensure that all our communities and neighboring communities support outcomes.

**Grant Steelman**, Seminole Tribe of Florida Forester, shared additional tools and lessons learned from putting fire back on the landscape. He emphasized focusing on new ways of doing things for efficient planning and implementation, including keeping an eye on new technologies and remembering and addressing workforce constraints. He discussed how Tribal and Forest Service workforces are limited, reiterating that we still have an opportunity to identify how to build those workforces strategically and train them in all the available tools and technologies.

## Tribal Forestry Partners and Neighbors: Question and Answer Session

After introductory remarks, panelists responded to questions from Roundtable participants. The associated dialogue is summarized below.

Tribal participants sought **clarification on this Plan versus previous strategic plans and the work done to build those**. Brian Ferebee and Chief Moore shared that the current Plan uses scientific data to determine what areas are most at risk; moves from independent, small-scale projects to cross-boundary work; and the BIL provides the budget to do large-scale work. Chief Moore emphasized that the available funding offers opportunities to do the needed work.

Participants sought **clarity on how this Plan addresses concerns over culturally significant areas and devastation to sites significant to Tribes**. Panelists shared the tools and authorities available to Tribes to help address these concerns (e.g., Tribal Forest Protection Act 638 Contracting, Tribal co-management on federal lands). Panelists emphasized the key role of Tribes in guiding restoration work to address the challenges of protecting culturally significant sites, sacred sites, and access while managing wildfire. Panelists encouraged Tribes and Tribal community members to reach out to ITC and neighboring national forests to discuss opportunities for collaboration. While these are issues to be addressed at the level of individual Tribes, collaboration among Tribes and other land management partners ensures all voices on the ground are heard at the management decision level. Panelists also emphasized that collaboration and restoration work focusing on culturally significant areas and priorities will have far greater effects on the environment than simply on fuel reduction.

Brian Ferebee also **emphasized the legal obligations that Forest Service has to formally consult with Tribes before implementing work** and ensure cultural site clearances for proposed actions. However, he added that the Forest Service would like to go beyond formal consultation to work together with Tribes, understand issues, and find a path to solving problems collaboratively. Therefore, his team is seeking opportunities to ensure informal dialogue in addition to formal consultation that honors the Nation-to-Nation relationship and grows those relationships beyond formal consultation.

In response to **opportunities for science supporting wildfire risk reduction that incorporates Tribal priorities**, Cody Desautel emphasized looking at what is achievable in the next ten years. Fire and fuels research is done mostly by the Forest Service Research and Development Deputy Area, and Tribes often look to academia since that incorporates Tribal priorities. Panelists suggested exploring “How can academia and the Forest Service Research Station help Tribes answer management questions and have the work done on time?” Thinking through the ten-year timeline, “What do Tribes anticipate needing to do this work in the next ten years?”

Cody Desautel also encouraged Tribal participants and Forest Service leadership to consider “**What would a staffing package look like to implement the plan in the next ten years?**” “**How much funding is needed?**” “**Will you need more contracting or HR personnel?**” Panelists emphasized concerns about capacity and dealing with available funding to do the work Tribes are already charged to do, notwithstanding the new work proposed in the Plan. However, BIL funding is a strategic funding opportunity for which ITC and Tribes have been preparing. Chief Moore emphasized a need for dialogue in asking and responding to these questions. The Forest Service is looking to partners and Tribes to tell them what is needed to make work happen on the ground. The Forest Service seeks to frame decisions

with input from collaboratives to deepen accountability to local collaboratives (versus those collaboratives being accountable to Forest Service).

Panelists and participants discussed the need to **incorporate Tribal community members in these dialogues and working venues**. The discussion focused on the work of basketweavers and other culture bearers in similar working venues collaborating with the Forest Service, Tribal Government, States, and local governance. Participants emphasized that the focus should be on land management, the forests as a source of food and resources, and the connection between indigenous communities and fire. Panelists and participants discussed the balance of maintaining those connections to the land and ensuring continued progress in restoring the landscape, agreeing that problems will not be solved in 10 years, but require continued progress. Panelists also referenced the difficulties of pulling off cultural burns under current policies and actions, given land ownership checkerboarding. Phil Rigdon shared that we are at a unique time where Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) and Tribal history are coming into the broader discussion. He shared that Tribal communities have an opportunity to add our voice in a meaningful way, allowing our connection to land and place and the history to influence decisions. He pointed to this as an opportunity to allow basket weavers to continue to do what they taught us and incorporate Tribal values and history on the land as a piece of the puzzle for land management decisions.

Panelists shared their thoughts on the **next steps to mobilize wildfire suppression workforces, and address capacity needs related to the Plan**. Grant Steelman shared that the problem he sees is getting the workforce to apply to position vacancies since environmental jobs pay less than in the private sector. He hopes newer technology aspects of the jobs will entice some of the next generations. Cody Desautel emphasized that this must be a bottom-up and top-down approach, saying we need operational feedback from the ground. We also need the leadership level to message and staff to support getting the needed workforce without adding workload to those already overburdened on the ground. Capacity exists but is not always right where you need it, so more coordination is needed. The Forest Service also confirmed to participants that an effort is underway across the agency to standardize position descriptions, including fuel positions.

Participants and panelists also addressed **Tribal concerns about working collaboratively with Federal agencies that displaced the same communities from their homelands**. Phil Rigdon shared his perspective that the lands are in part hurting because Tribal voices have not been incorporated into management decisions, and now an opportunity and space are opening up for including Tribal voices again. Mr. Rigdon emphasized Tribes and their representatives contribute to the dialogue and set the future's direction so Tribes do not lose more of what is important to them.

## Recognizing What Has Been Heard To Date

**Rachel Neuenfeldt**, Wildfire Risk Reduction Infrastructure Team (WRRIT) Engagement Specialist, shared what the WRRIT team has heard during regional roundtables and in previous consultations. Her office hopes these discussions can be more of a follow-up to what has been heard to date and help actualize the 10-Year Plan. Themes from [regional roundtables hosted by National Forest Foundation](#) fed into the [discussion questions](#) for the Intertribal Roundtable. Some information heard from these earlier dialogues includes:

- The importance of a land ethic to the work of the Forest Service

- The long history of coordination between some Tribes and the Forest Service around wildland fire
- An ongoing partnership between Forest Service Regions and ITC and how that can be strengthened with new agency paradigm shifts
- Need for increased training on and use of authorities like Tribal Forest Protection Act 638 contracting to facilitate more work with Tribes
- Barriers to Tribal capacity and suggestions to build relationships through the increased use of Tribal liaisons and Tribal worker development
- Successes and frustrations with incorporating ITEK, including discussion on how this information gets integrated into project planning at a larger scale

## Breakout Discussions

Participants were encouraged to move into breakout discussions to review and discuss the questions outlined in the [Discussion Questions Worksheet](#) (See Appendix B). Participants had an opportunity to move between breakout rooms during two rounds of dialogue. US Forest Service Executive Leadership stayed within each breakout room to hear discussions and offer Forest Service perspectives to the dialogue. Highlights from the Breakout sessions are outlined below

## Science Supporting Wildfire Risk Reduction

Breakout room participants discussed several questions about access to and use of science to inform fuels and fire reduction, what information is available, how new research is identified and proposed, and the role of Tribes in filling existing information gaps. Participants were also encouraged to share elements of successful projects incorporating Indigenous Traditional Ecological knowledge.

Alex Friend, Deputy Chief, Research and Development, USDA FS, joined participants as they offered the following insights:

- Participants and Forest Service identified the work in the Pacific Southwest research station in addressing wildland fire effects, traditional ecological knowledge, and climate change.
- Forest Service emphasized that Research and Development funds are not solely available for Forest Service researchers but also for partners like Tribes, universities, and NGOs to help answer questions.
- Participants emphasized the need to fund the identification of fire risk areas important to Tribes.
- The Forest Service uses the data from the [Regional Roundtables](#) with social science to make sense of the needs raised and identify questions for investigation.
  - Forest Service may need to consider how Tribes may inform the identification of those needs and the questions for investigation.
- Participants emphasized that ITEK is relative to work in each location and cannot be generalized. At the same time, the potential narrow application of ITEK should not disqualify the use of ITEK.
- Participants discussed the importance of bringing ITEK knowledge bearers (e.g., basketweavers) to the table in implementing plans at a local level
- While Tribes appreciate that ITEK is being honored, it is important to acknowledge and develop systems that respect that ITEK knowledge belongs to the Tribes. The Forest Service should explore how to ensure coordination with Tribes in incorporating ITEK at a local level.

- One process is to evaluate whether management activities in Plan implementation are considered with localized ITEK.
- Participants shared tools they have utilized and developed to demonstrate different perspectives in wildfire situations (e.g., Augmented Reality Management Tools from Tejon Tribe).
- Participants discussed the importance of making work products and success stories available to communities and local Tribes and connecting with the Forest Service Regional Research Stations to help answer questions coming up for those on the ground.

### Cross-Boundary Partnerships and Shared Prioritization

Roundtable participants were asked to explore the work of cross-boundary partnerships, cooperative stewardship, and opportunities to achieve landscape-scale outcomes. Participants also focused on the efficacy, opportunities, and barriers to incorporating Tribal priorities in cross-boundary projects planning and implementation, with a significant focus on Tribal and forest service workforce capacity, funding, and community education relating to Tribe’s relationship to the Forest and Forest Service. Jaelith Hall-Rivera, Deputy Chief, State, and Private Forestry, USDA Forest Service, and John Crockett, Associate Deputy Chief, State, and Private Forestry, joined participants as they offered the following insights:

- Many partners need to be brought into this cross-boundary partnership, and some will need technical support to be engaged. Partners to consider include:
  - Various Federal agencies (BIA, BLM, NPS, etc.)
  - Intertribal organizations can play a role in reaching less engaged communities and building capacity among non-engaged Tribes.
  - Community members, traditional knowledge holders, local neighbors, basketweavers, etc.
- Participants emphasized the value of sharing success stories in capacity building and engaging with new Tribal partners.
- Participants discussed the active role the Forest Service can take in coordinating between Federal agencies (as well as Tribes, States, and local collaboratives) to facilitate larger landscape collaboration and work that prioritizes Tribal interests.
- Participants discussed the importance of educating collaboratives and the Forest Service workforce on Tribes’ historical and current roles and their relationship with the land to bring a healthy ecosystem, including “good fire” and indigenous communities’ role in stewarding healthy health landscapes. These educational initiatives and resources are vital when incorporating Tribal priorities into the planning at the scale and scope of work being done.
  - Suggested future discussions include ways to address Tribal capacity and incorporate Tribal priorities in larger landscape collaboratives.
- The role of relationship building was emphasized as a success factor in cross-boundary partnerships. Relationship building includes agreements for co-management and integrates Tribal cultural approaches to accountability. Participants also discussed the important role of Tribal liaisons and Tribal employees in the Forest Service in supporting relationship building.
  - Participants highlighted the vital role of Tribal Forest Service employees and acknowledged the difficult space they may exist within. Participants shared the difficulties in sharing personal perspectives and the Tribal voice while balancing agency objectives.

- A barrier to success in relationship building is staff and leadership changes. Continuity of partners is important to success.
- Discussions also identified concerns from the Forest Service and Tribes over the risk of litigation for wildfire reduction work.

### Workforce Capacity, Markets, and Industry

- Participants were identified to discuss workforce capacity considerations, key skills, and other barriers to the workforce that require addressing to meet accelerated treatment. In addition, participants discussed the need to address workforce needs for both Forest Service and Tribes. Another critical challenge identified is the lack of sufficient infrastructure to treat biomass and forest products, as well as the diminished markets that support the development of this infrastructure. Participants were invited to share strategies to address these challenges. Robert Velasco, Chief Financial Officer, USDA Forest Service, and Jason Kuiken, Wildfire Risk Reduction Implementation Team Deputy, joined participants as they offered the following insights: Participants discussed the difficulties of retaining forest management workforces in Tribal communities. Barriers include staff funding, compensation rates, roles training, etc.
- Participants shared the need for coordination among Federal agencies (BIA, Forest Service, etc.) and Tribes. All are working with similar challenges in workforce capacity, recruitment, and retention.
- Pay for fuels and fire risk reduction positions is significantly lower than other jobs nationwide. Tribes are unable to compete in local markets.
  - Some attempts to address this issue include raising pay for the positions by restructuring the organization and educating community members at a young age about the importance of Tribal lands and their stewardship. This type of outreach will increase awareness and interest in these career paths.
  - Participants discussed successes working with non-profits and the Forest Service to train Tribal members to become part of their land management workforce.
- Tribal representatives shared the barriers to tribal members working on the land to address wildfire risk. These include failing to validate or requiring tribal members with significant traditional knowledge and experience in wildland fire and fuel treatment to pursue Forest Service approved certifications at their own expense to conduct work on the land. These barriers limit tribal members' access to the land and their ability to help address workforce capacity.
  - Participants suggested exploring options to reduce the barriers to those with requisite knowledge and experience working in the field.
- Tribes also identified the need to upgrade existing infrastructure to fulfill forest management plans better. Examples of needed infrastructure need include:
  - Availability of milling operations Nationwide, identifying the lack of Mills in the southwest, and exploring wood and pulp facilities,
  - Increased access to current wood markets for small diameter wood and increasing opportunities for those markets,
  - Exploring opportunities to build biochar markets to generate energy in communities with limited access to other renewable energy sources,
  - Updates to roads, bridges, and other infrastructure needed for the trucking industry.



- Forest Service suggested additional dialogues to explore opportunities to address Forestry infrastructure and workforce opportunities across Tribal government, Federal and state agencies.
- The participants discussed how regional workforce assessments and gap analyses could support capacity building for Tribes and the Forest Service to identify where coalition opportunities exist to meet workforce needs and prioritize workforce development efforts.

## Conclusion

**Angela Coleman**, Forest Service Associate Chief, discussed how critical Tribal perspectives, experiences, values, and judgments are to successfully carrying out this Plan. She and other Executive Leadership highlighted major take-home considerations from what they heard in the Breakout discussions. Angela Coleman closed the session by asking everyone to imagine what our future collective story might be if we work together and what we can share with future generations.

## Recommendations

The Intertribal Roundtable offered various tribal perspectives on the origins and path forward to address the Wildfire Crisis. These dialogues presented short- and long-term goals. These holistic approaches included work on the ground and larger considerations, including a coordinated workforce, community education, and consistent incorporation of more indigenous perspectives to indigenize the research and approach to fire and fuel management. Tribal participants and Forest Service leadership identified various recommendations to consider moving forward:

- **Direct funding to projects addressing wildland fire risk that incorporate Tribal, Federal, state, and local priorities.** This includes limiting barriers to funding tribal partners to engage in cross-jurisdictional projects,
- **Increased education and awareness of the indigenous connection to the land and the Federal and Tribal governance relationship** across both Forest Service and communities near National Forest Lands. This includes increased validation of Indigenous ways of knowing and tribal perspectives in federal decision-making.
- Addressing long-term and short-term workforce capacity concerns by:
  - **Bringing Tribes, Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and similar federal partners together** to address workforce capacity through regional or national dialogues
  - **Conducting regional assessments of workforce gaps.**
  - **Identifying barriers to tribal knowledge bearers** (basket weavers, cultural burners, etc.) to access land to conduct traditional management practices and retain and reinforce the cultural connection to the land.
  - **Increase tribal youth recruitment to the workforce** through increased access to the land and reinforcing tribal cultural connections to forest lands.
  - **Improving access and availability of forest industries** (i.e., small diameter wood mills and roads to access those mills.)
  - **Establish competitive wages** for desired workforces.

Addressing short-term and long-term workforce capacity was a significant theme in these discussions, requiring immediate and sustained action. The conversations about workforce capacity were dynamic and included contingencies and considerations beyond hiring new staff. The next steps should include these considerations (e.g., Tribal access to lands, incorporating tribal priorities and perspectives in

research and decision-making, cultural differences, partnership and support of sustainable forest markets, etc.). A promising first step during this Roundtable was regional assessments of workforce and industry infrastructure gaps. This assessment should include Tribes and all relevant federal agencies (e.g., Forest Service, BIA, etc.) Forest Service may also benefit from speaking with the various perspectives (through an advisory committee or additional dialogue sessions) to develop more short and longer-term recommendations to address identified concerns.

## APPENDIX A

Tribes and Tribal Organizations Registered (in alphabetical order)

1854 Treaty Authority	Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria	Manzanita Tribal Government
Big Pine Paiute Tribe	Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
Buena Vista Rancheria Me-Wuk Indians	Minnesota Chippewa Tribe – Grand Portage Band
Caddo Nation	Modoc Nation
Calaveras Healthy Impact Product Solutions	Northern California Indian Development Council
California Indian Basketweavers Association	Nor Rel Muk Wintu
Chickasaw Nation	Osage Nation
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma	Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma
Chugachmiut	Pit River Tribe
Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes	Ponca Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma
Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation	Pueblo of Jemez
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation	San Carlos Apache Tribe
Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs	Seminole Tribe of Florida
Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians	Shawnee Tribe
Forest County Potawatomi Community of Wisconsin	Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians
Grand Portage Tribe	Spokane Tribe of Indians
Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission	Tejon Indian Tribe
Hoopa Valley Tribe	Thlopthlocco Tribal Town
Intertribal Timber Council	Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation
Jamestown	United Auburn Indian Community
Kalispel Tribe of Indians	Washoe Tribe
Karuk Tribe	White Mountain Apache Tribe
	Yurok Tribe

## APPENDIX B

### Wildfire Crisis Strategy Roundtables: Breakout Discussion Questions and Worksheet

#### Room 1: Science Supporting Wildfire Risk Reduction

Participants in this breakout may discuss how to develop and integrate the best available science, application of Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge, use and sharing of data, challenges, and technology successes.

What we've heard to date:

- Tribes maintain Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK)<sup>1</sup> that can support fire strategies, but knowledge is shared, maintained, and integrated into fire stewardship differently from conventionally accepted science strategies.
- Integration of ITEK requires partnership and collaboration with Tribes at all stages of fire stewardship.
- FS and partners must acknowledge and respect ITEK consistent with other approaches.
- Conventional/modern science is behind ITEK.
- Tribes should be integrated into research planning. Tribes (using ITEK and other methodologies) can help craft the focus of future science and research.
- FS must establish protocols for maintaining confidentiality and data sovereignty of ITEK and other Tribal data to ensure ease of sharing and use in planning.

Discussions questioned are intended to support dialogue that moves towards action:

1. What do you feel FS should do to ensure that science is used effectively to inform fuels and fire risk reduction?
  - a. What do you see as current gaps and information needs in the science on fuels and fire risk reduction? (for instance, local fire history maps to inform treatments, smoke emissions and prescribed fire, best practices related to streams and fuels work, wildlife mitigations, etc.)?
  - b. How can Tribes be engaged to fill those research gaps?
  - c. How do we make science, research, and subsequent decision-making accessible to Tribes?
2. What are the elements of success or examples of projects that have incorporated Indigenous and/or Traditional Ecological Knowledge? What do you feel is needed to build on those successes nationally/regionally/locally?
3. Is there anything missing from the above summary?

#### Room 2: Cross-Boundary Partnerships and Project Prioritization

Participants in this breakout room will explore the work of partnerships, cooperative stewardship, and opportunities to achieve landscape-scale outcomes. Participants may also discuss how best to ensure Tribal priorities are incorporated into cross-boundary projects planning and implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> Also referred to as Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge and Wisdom.

What we've heard to date:

- Tribes are integral partners in cross-boundary partnerships but must be engaged early in project planning and identifying project priorities.
- FS needs to create greater opportunities for shared management, increase opportunities, and ensure the eligibility of Alaska Tribes.
- Fireshed and planning maps should incorporate Tribal needs and priority landscapes.
- FS must acknowledge that Tribal priorities for fire stewardship may differ from FS priorities and find opportunities for mutual benefit.
- Cross-boundary partnerships require an increase in the scope and scale of projects. This requires greater preparation by FS for work on the ground (completed NEPA or CatEx conducted in collaboration with Tribes, etc.)
- Collaborative work required for these partnerships requires significant staff capacity to facilitate dialogues that take Tribes away from the time needed to address internal Tribal priorities.
- Good Neighbor Authority is a possible tool if the limitations to Tribes in funding sources are removed.
- TFPA could be a better tool with available funding for projects, FS preparation of NEPA in areas of need, and greater understanding by FS staff on agreements with Tribes.
- FS needs more grants and agreement staff that understand working with Tribes as sovereigns.
- Allocated funding for restoration and risk reduction work is needed to move projects forward and increase partnerships.
- Project prioritization should be more holistic, incorporating considerations for water supplies and water infrastructure, watershed health, critical ecological values, ecosystem services, economic values, cultural and historical significance, fire risk to communities, and areas of social importance.
- Projects have been prioritized for too long, based on what can get funded versus what is needed.
- Funding for Tribal priorities is often piecemeal based on specific FS priorities (climate change, specific plants, watershed, specific tools, etc.).
- FS grants and agreements processes are overly cumbersome for Tribal partners.
- Tribal capacity for partnering with FS is not a one-size-fits-all.
- It is unclear how all levels of the Forest Service will communicate and coordinate with Tribes in defining priorities.
- See also comments on Workforce Capacity.
  - Liability protection and certification for Tribal workforces.

Discussions questioned are intended to support dialogue that moves towards action:

1. What are the short-term and long-term priorities for increased cross-boundary partnerships and/or co-management of natural resources? How can this work build on the foundation of these and other regional/national efforts to advance forest resiliency and wildfire risk reduction goals on a larger scale?

2. What support would Tribes like to see from Forest Service incorporate Tribal priorities into project prioritization? What planning tools, monitoring tools, or metrics are you currently using or interested in, and why?
3. If you were in charge, what would be the first action you would take to address forest resiliency and fire risk or identified barriers? How do you prioritize treatments on the landscape?
4. What do you see as needed support or obstacles to overcome to increase communication and coordination between FS and Tribes?
5. Is there anything missing from the above summary?

### Room 3: Workforce Capacity, Markets, and Industry

Participants in this breakout room will explore what it means to build and sustain an inclusive and collaborative workforce while considering current and future markets and opportunities for innovation.

What we've heard to date:

- Tribes cannot all collaborate with FS to the level needed without additional financial and staffing support.
- FS does not have sufficient tribal liaison, tribal governance, and grants and agreement staff capacity to ensure collaborative partnerships with Tribes at the desired pace and scale.
- There is not enough completed NEPA for many areas where Wildfire risk reduction or restoration work is needed or desired.
- Tribes may want opportunities for their staff to work for FS. However, other Tribes may be struggling with building their wildland fire and forest stewardship workforces.
- Tribes and state and federal agencies do not have coordination agreements during fire suppression events. Workforce collaboration is not defined in advance of fire events. The chain of command is not clearly defined.
- Due to geography or legal access restrictions, many high-risk fire areas are difficult to access. These require hand crews and labor that exceed available resources.
- There are not sufficient markets for fuels reduction byproducts.
- Tribes have different capacity issues ranging from Tribe to Tribe and region to region, including:
  - Number of staff
  - Ability to certify fire suppression staff consistent with state and federal standards (e.g., red cards)
  - Liability insurance for tribal suppression teams
  - Meeting federal and state training requirements.
  - Availability of equipment
  - Maintaining work for trained staff year-round (i.e., retention)
  - Staff resources and time to address planning, fire suppression, and restoration work needed in the office and on the ground.

Discussions questioned are intended to support dialogue that moves towards action:

1. What needs to be done in the near-term and long-term to increase support of Tribes and Tribal capacity in cross-boundary fuels reduction work? What are the inherent challenges and/or barriers to address first in developing a comprehensive workforce inclusive of Tribes?

2. How can the Forest Service help to address these capacity constraints? Where does the agency need to focus on being helpful in this fuels reduction work? What commitments would Tribes like to see from Forest Service to support increased Tribal capacity for cross boundary projects?
3. What are the challenges to healthy traditional and innovative forest products markets in your area? How can we overcome these challenges?
4. Is there anything missing from the above summary?