

# Tribal Wildfire Resource Guide

## Preliminary Evaluation

*September 2006*

### Introduction

In February 2004, Resource Innovations started to examine the needs of Native American tribes and Alaska Natives in relation to wildfire issues. In collaboration with the Intertribal Timber Council, Resource Innovations released the *Tribal Wildfire Resource Guide* in June 2006. The purpose of the Guide is to provide tribes with an additional resource for issues related to fire planning and management.

The Tribal Wildfire Resource Guide was released at the June 2006 Intertribal Timber Council conference in Fairbanks, Alaska. Since then, Resource Innovations has distributed 200 bound copies and 560 CD-ROMs of the Guide. Users range from federal agency representatives, private consulting firms, nonprofit organizations, community members, and other diverse interests working with wildfire issues.

In August 2006, Resource Innovations began receiving evaluations of the Tribal Wildfire Resource Guide. The intent of this report is to illustrate the professional backgrounds of those using the Guide, how they are using it, and what they perceive to be its strengths and limitations. The evaluations offered significant praise for the Guide, particularly in its sections covering tribal and federal policy, grant information, and technical resources, while also offering constructive recommendations to strengthen future editions or updates of the Guide.

*The Guide is available at <http://www.itcnet.org> or at <http://ri.uoregon.edu/programs/CCE/tribalwildfireguide.html>.*

### Questionnaire Methodology

Resource Innovations asked people that requested copies of the Tribal Wildfire Resource Guide complete a brief survey to assess the Guide. The questionnaires provided information about readers' affiliations, how they heard about the Guide, how they are using it, feedback, and suggestions for improvement. The questionnaire also provided respondents the opportunity to include their email addresses for receiving future updates related to the Guide.

CD-ROM versions of the Guide included an electronic version of the evaluation, while hard copies included a separate evaluation sheet. Resource Innovations also sent emails with evaluation forms for readers to complete.

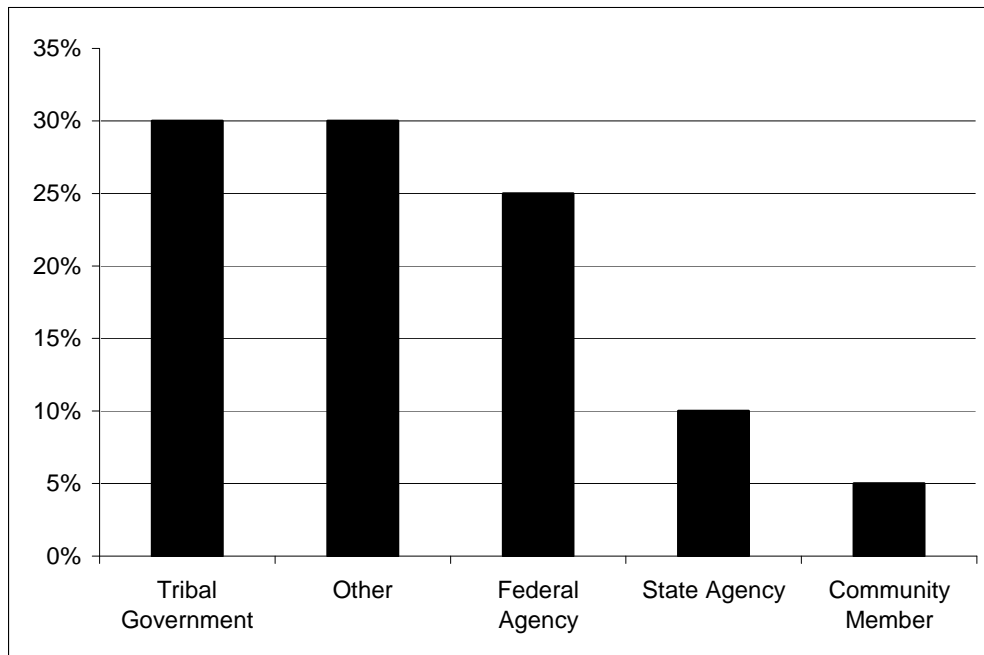
Resource Innovations completed the data analysis from the questionnaires using a statistical spreadsheet. Staff coded responses for each of the questions, where applicable, with 0 representing a negative response and 1 representing a positive response. The coded answers allowed percentages to be calculated and determine the percent of respondents replying with a particular answer.

Of the 93 individuals who requested the Tribal Wildfire Resource Guide and received evaluations, 20 were returned, allowing for a response rate of 21.5%.

## Findings

People requesting the Tribal Wildfire Resource Guide come from a variety of professional backgrounds (see Table 1). Thirty percent of the respondents are affiliated with tribal government, followed by 25% working for federal agencies. State agency representatives (10%) and community members (5%) also requested copies of the Guide. The “other” category’s respondents (30%) range from people with private and nonprofit organizations, and a Tribal College.

**Table 1: Affiliation of Tribal Wildfire Resource Guide Users**



***“I have read over the book and I believe it has covered many aspects of the use of fire on Indian lands and the policies that effect federal managers on Reservation lands.”***

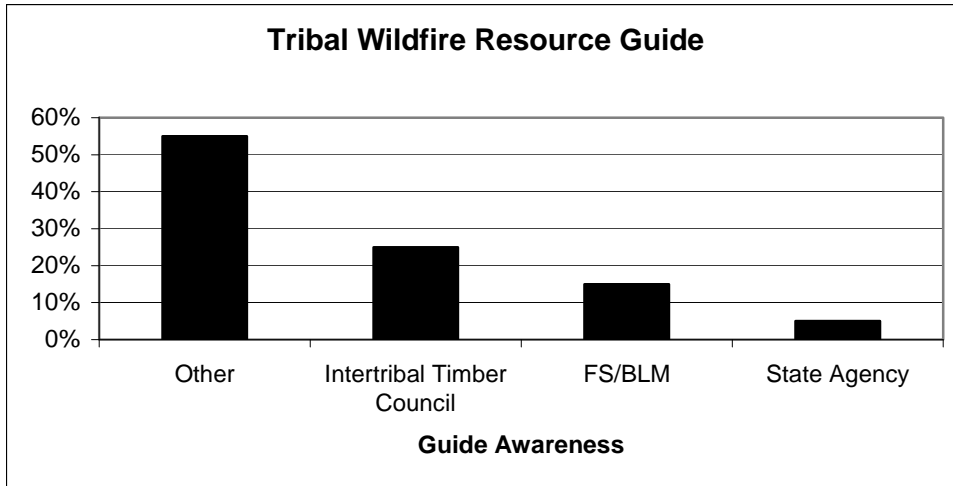
Respondents heard about the Guide through a variety of different means (see Table 2). The survey included categories of:

- ❖ Intertribal Timber Council Symposium,
- ❖ Bureau of Indian Affairs,
- ❖ Forest Service/Bureau of Land Management
- ❖ Stage agencies,
- ❖ Tribal associations, and
- ❖ Other.

The “other” category comprised 55% of responses for how respondents heard about the Guide. These responses included word-of-mouth recommendations, an Internet search,

an email forward, viewing the Resource Innovations web site, and referrals by organizations, such as the American Society of Foresters and the California Fire Safe Council.

**Table 2: Tribal Wildfire Resource Guide Awareness**



### Ranking the Tribal Wildfire Resource Guide’s Chapters

Respondents were asked to rank the Guide’s nine chapters (see Table 3). The Guide is well-received, noting that the average chapter is “very useful” to 58% of the respondents.

*“This is a terrific guide for working with Tribes. I recommend that everyone who will work with Tribes read it.”*

**Chapter One** provides a background for wildfires and issues surrounding the growth of the wildland-urban interface and past forest management practices.

**Chapter Two** addresses traditional use of fire and its role as a land-management tool. Recent federal legislation, such as the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, stress fire’s importance to reduce large wildfires for maintaining ecological health. Fifty-five percent of readers rate each of these sections as “very useful.”

**Chapter Three** offers a background of relevant federal fire, tribal, and forest management policies that affect wildfire protection, tribal self-determination and self-governance, and forest health. This section has the highest rating of any chapter, with 75% rating it as “very useful.”

**Chapter Four** reviews the role of consultation with tribes in fire management planning and implementation had slightly more diversity in responses than other chapters. Most people (55%) believe the chapter is “very useful.”

**Chapter Five** concentrates on the federal fire-management process and tribal participation in that process. This section’s responses are similar to the consultation chapter, citing the fact that 53% of respondents find it “very useful,” while 16% of the responses state that the section has “limited usefulness.”

*“I think this guide will be helpful to Tribes that are searching for reference materials as they move forward with building their fire programs.”*

**Chapter Six** provides a framework for a Tribal Wildfire Plan

that ensures comprehensive risk assessment, fire prevention and protection, and emergency response systems. This section has the lowest rating of any chapter. It is the only part of the Guide with more people evaluating it as “somewhat useful” (50%) than “very useful” (42%).

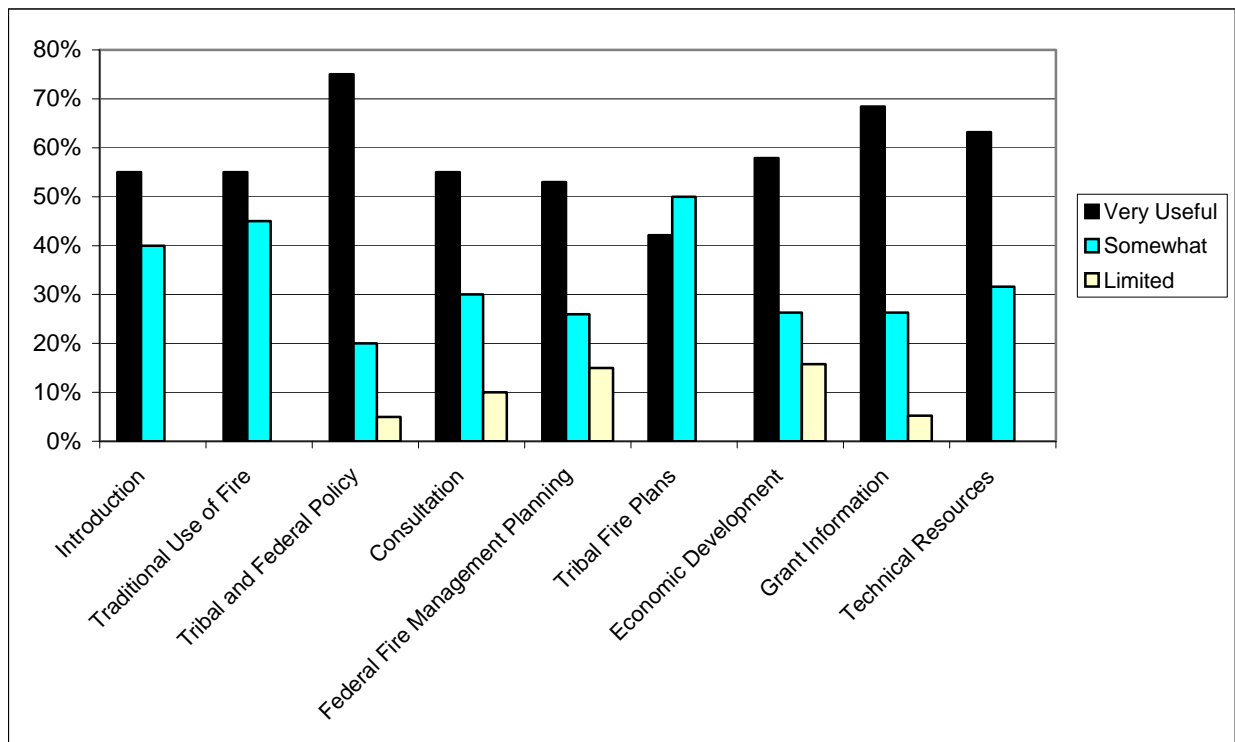
**Chapter Seven** explores economic development opportunities through fire management activities, including biomass utilization and contracting. Most readers (58%) find the economic development information “very useful,” although 16% of the respondents think the chapter has “limited usefulness.”

**Chapter Eight** is a summary of grants related to forestry, fire protection and prevention, native business development, small-diameter wood and biomass utilization, and capacity building. Respondents give this section the second highest rating of any chapter, with 68% finding it “very useful.”

*“The guide provides useful information in a digestible format and takes some of the mystery out of federal programs and resources.”*

**Chapter Nine** provides a list of the technical resources, including Bureau of Indian Affairs regional contacts, intertribal organizations, and web sites, resources, and literary sources. This information is “very useful” to 63% of respondents, while 32% find it “somewhat useful.”

**Table 3: Summary of Chapter Rankings\***



\*Chapters 1,4,5,6, and 9 each recorded one answer of “Don’t know.”

## How the Tribal Wildfire Resource Guide is Being Used

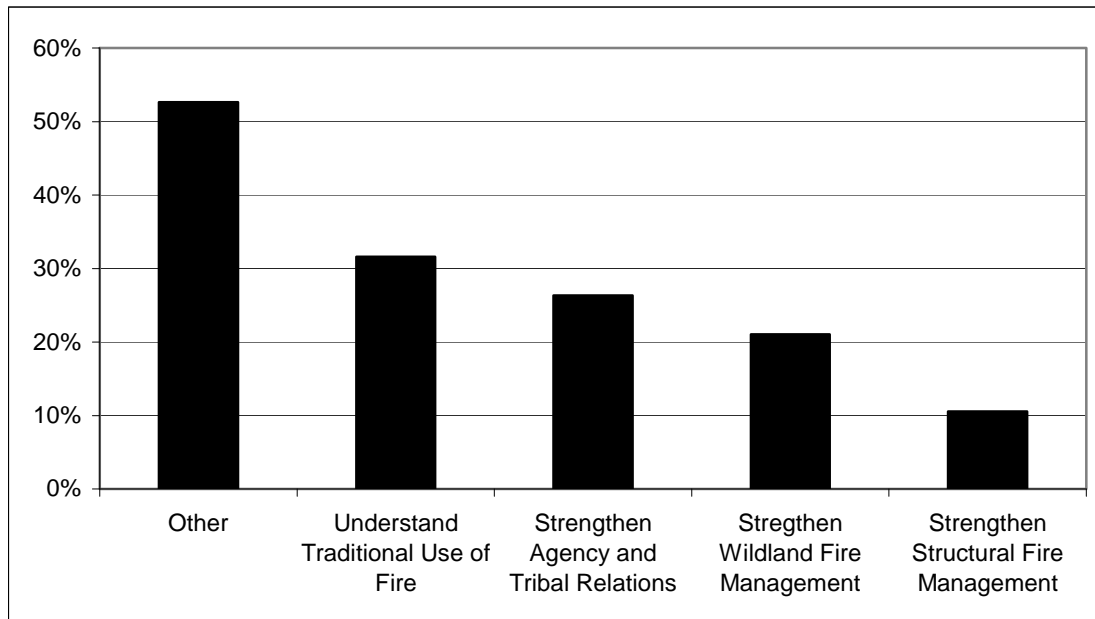
Tribal Guide readers requested the publication for a variety of different uses (see Table 4). Respondents received the options of choosing among:

*“Easy reference and informational resource; organized so information is readily accessible for follow-up.”*

- ❖ To strengthen a tribal fire management program (structural),
- ❖ To strengthen a tribal fire management program (wildland),
- ❖ To strengthen agency and tribal relations,
- ❖ To increase my understanding of traditional use of fire, and
- ❖ Other.

The range of uses is reinforced by finding that “other” makes up the largest bulk of responses (53%). Examples of “other” uses include learning about grant information and consultation, performing outreach to Indian communities, learning about biomass opportunities, designing fire management plans for military bases that are located near Indian lands, and to use as an orientation document for new employees in a tribal organization.

**Table 4: Tribal Guide Uses**



*“This is a very useful guide, not only for Tribes, but for all agencies involved with [the] implementation of the National Fire Plan goals.”*

## User Suggestions for Improvement

The evaluation included a section for respondents to offer suggestions to strengthen the Guide. Their comments are listed below.

- ❖ “Very well organized. Could also use some examples from areas outside of reservations as the progress that has been made in the private sector could easily apply to reservation lands fronting wildlands.”
- ❖ “Update to keep the Guide current with new policies, fire planning processes and resources.”
- ❖ “Make sure the Guide receives wide distribution with state and federal land management agencies.”
- ❖ “New regulations are always coming out from agencies (federal, state, Department of Defense, BIA, etc on fire issues), so at least semi-annual updates of these regulations and how the regulations may influence fire management would be very useful. ”
- ❖ “Keep updating chapters 7, 8 and 9 (Economic Development, Grant Information, and Technical Resources) as new examples, opportunities and technical resources become available. ”
- ❖ “Providing current case studies and resource information is important. Conduct regional workshops based on the Guide.”
- ❖ “Suggested updates on legislation related to forest health issues. ”
- ❖ “Possibly integrate more regional areas that have very different policies, land ownerships, and differing laws that would enable further coverage for all Native American regions—not just the Pacific Northwest or Southwest. ”

## Long-Term Recommendations

Resource Innovations received considerable praise for the information contained in the Tribal Wildfire Resources Guide. Ninety-five percent of the survey respondents included their email addresses to receive updates related to the Guide in the future. Since its distribution went to so many individuals representing a variety of backgrounds, there are interesting recommendations to improve future versions or related documents.

- ❖ *Expand the Guide’s scope*—Possibly integrate more regional areas with different policies, land ownerships, and laws that would enable further coverage for all Native American regions, not just the Pacific Northwest or the Southwest.
- ❖ *Increase Guide distribution*—Make sure the Tribal Wildfire Resource Guide receives wide distribution among state and federal land management agencies.
- ❖ *Establish a long-term strategy for updating the Guide*—Develop a plan for how often and which sections of the Guide will be revised in the future. **Revise the information**, as new information becomes available and provide updates on legislation related to

forest health issues, new forestry policies, and fire planning processes and how they may influence fire management.

Staff could conduct an annual update of the Guide and then post it on the Resource Innovations web site. It may also explore the possibility of conducting a workshop to discuss the Guide's content.

If Resource Innovations chooses to publish new hard copies or CD-ROMs of the Guide, it may consider exploring available funding options to pay for publishing costs.

**Other Comments:**

*“The entire guide was very impressive, especially the CD (with color pictures!) and I am looking forward to taking it to my Fire Safe council meeting in August.”*

*“Excellent guide. Wealth of information in a user-friendly format.”*

*“The guide appears to be very useful in helping us do fuel reduction work in the future.”*

*“Very interesting information and background.”*