



Tribal Data Development Work Group - Working to Improve Visibility

What is the WRAP Tribal Data

Development Work Group? As one of the many forums and committees of the WRAP, the Tribal Data Development Work Group (TDDWG) was formed with the purpose of facilitating the collection of data related to air quality on tribal lands. This includes information on sources of air pollution on or near reservations, tribal ambient air quality data, and demographic information, which may be used to project air quality in the future.

The WRAP recognized that the absence of data made it difficult for tribes to assess the affects of proposed policy on tribal lands and economies. The mission of the TDDWG is to facilitate the development and collection of tribal air quality-related data in a manner that respects the interests of tribes, including the protection of sensitive information.

What does the TDDWG do? The TDDWG has a multi-year work plan to fill the tribal "data gap." It has contracted with the Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals at Northern Arizona University on several projects, including a comprehensive assessment of the tribal air quality programs in the West, produced in 2001 and available at the WRAP Web site, www.wrapair.org. Currently, the TDDWG and NAU ITEP, along with a private environmental software company, are developing an innovative Tribal Emissions Inventory Software Solution. This user-friendly software program will provide tribal staff with a tool to assist in developing electronic inventories of emissions on their reservations. This tool is being designed with a recognition that not all environmental staff people are experts in emissions inventories technology. must be generalists who serve in many capacities. Several states have also expressed interest in the software.

Why is the work of the WRAP important for your tribe?

The WRAP keeps abreast of the latest regulations in air quality issues and provides a way for tribes to give input into federal air quality regulations. There are good reasons for tribes to maintain an awareness of the progress of the WRAP and to consider participating in it as resources allow. One obvious reason is that air quality issues in tribal communities affect both ecologies and economies.

Another reason is that tribes have tribal sciences or cultural beliefs that teach protection, preservation, and

perpetuation of that which has been provided by Mother Earth. Poor air quality affects all things: the land, water, animals, plants, and people. Poor air quality also degrades sacred cultural areas. Those tribes who are located in or near National Parks and Wilderness areas can be affected by the poor air quality and poor visibility that impacts many of these locations. Social health and welfare often are determined by the quality of the air our children and elders breathe, but economic concerns also face these same sensitive populations. WRAP is an important venue for which tribes can provide input on development and adoption of policies. The TDDWG is one of the many important forums in which they can voice their opinions and concerns.

The visibility rules, on which the WRAP is working, are based on very long-term planning. The first "long-term" strategy period goes until 2018, and the ultimate goal is pristine air in all National Parks and Wilderness areas by the year 2064. The current activities of your tribe may not be affected, but you may wish to shape policy to help preserve opportunities in the future.

Finally, among the collateral benefits of tribal participation in the WRAP is the increased awareness among states and interest groups of tribes as governmental and regulatory authorities. Participation in the WRAP also provides opportunities for tribal staff to interact and form professional networks with state, federal, industry, and environmental colleagues, which creates a human resource to draw upon in the future. Perhaps most important are the opportunities for tribes to shape the agenda and define the issues that the WRAP will address.

How can my tribe participate in the WRAP? The WRAP, the TDDWG and other WRAP forums and committees are seeking more input from tribes. For more information, contact:

Bob Gruenig
National Tribal Environmental Council
2501 Rio Grande Blvd., NW
Albuquerque, NM 87104
(505) 242-2175
bgruenig@ntec.org

— Specifically for TDDWG —
Roxanne Ellingson, TDDWG Chair
Walker River Paiute Tribe
(775) 773-2306
roxanne@gbis.com