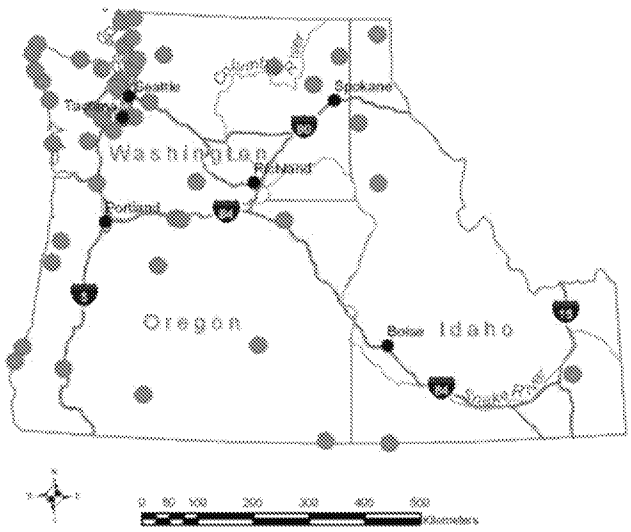
EPA Region 10 Overview of Tribes, Tribal Program, and Priority Tribal Issues

Federally-Recognized Tribes

Of the Nation's 567 federally-recognized tribes, 271 (48%) are located in Region 10, and of that number, 229 are located in Alaska. Diversity among the tribes and their environments is great. Many reservation-based tribes in the lower 3 states (Washington, Oregon, and Idaho) are large and have thousands of acres to manage. Most Alaskan tribes are small and geographically-isolated, with Alaska Native Corporations (created by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act) controlling more than 44 million acres. There are more cultural differences among tribes than there are similarities, but all are intricately linked to the environment and subsistence resources.

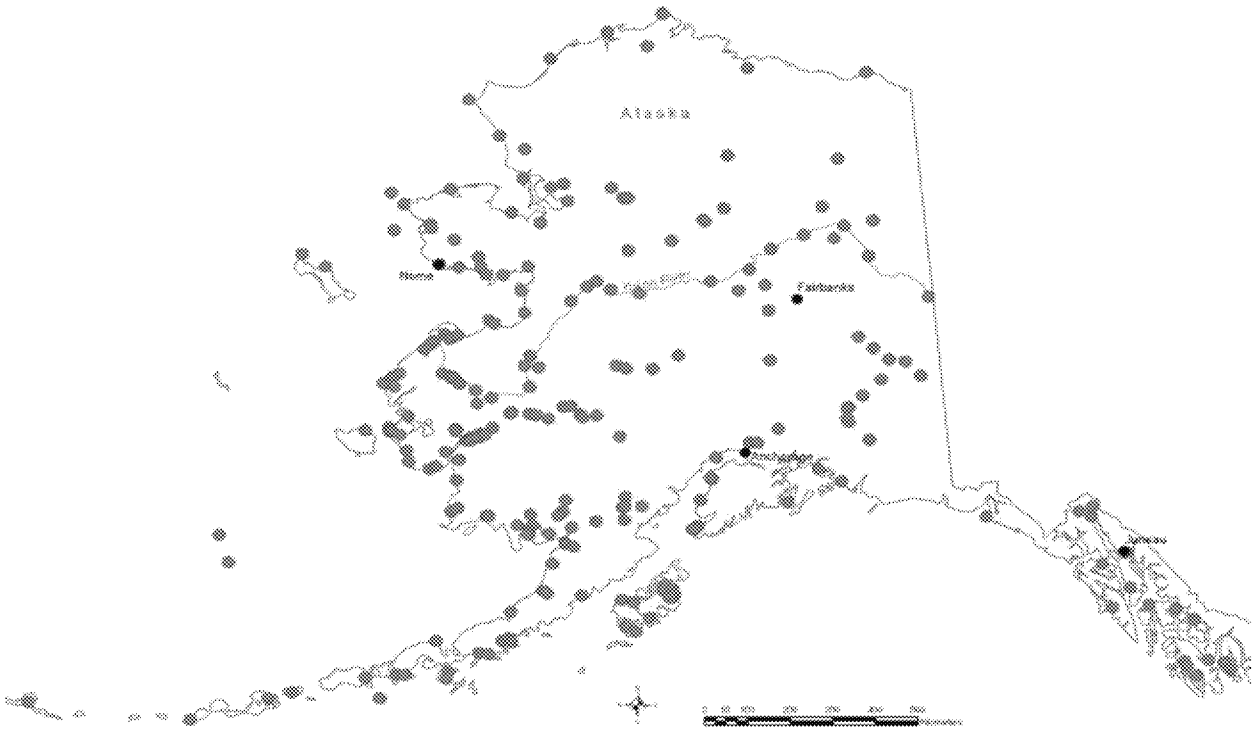
Most tribes in Region 10 receive Indian Environmental General Assistance Program grants for building and establishing environmental programs. Tribal environmental programs face a vast array of issues with little funding, and at varying levels of management capacity. Many tribes in the lower 3 states receive additional EPA funding through competitive media-specific grants, including Clean Water Act 106 Water Pollution Control, CWA 319 Non-point Source Management, Clean Air Act 105 Air Pollution Control, and Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act 128a Brownfield Response.

Washington, Oregon, and Idaho Tribal Governments



- 42 federally-recognized tribes in WA, OR, ID
- Washington (29 tribes)
- Oregon (9 tribes)
- Idaho (4 tribes)
- Treaties
- Boldt decision (WA treaty tribes co-manage fisheries resources)
- Reservation lands ~ 5.7 million acres

Alaska Tribal Governments



- 229 federally-recognized tribes in AK
- 11 major cultural/linguistic groups: Inupiaq and St. Lawrence Yup'ik; Yup'ik and Cup'ik; Unangax and Alutiiq; Athabascan; Eyak, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsmishian
- Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (created for-profit Regional and Village Corporations)
- Native Corporation Lands ~ 44 million acres
- Native Allotments and Townsites ~ 1.5 million acres

Region 10 Tribal Program

Region 10's Tribal Program is led by the Tribal Trust and Assistance Unit in the Regional Administrator's Division. The program is guided by EPA and Region 10 Strategic Plans; EPA's Indian Policy and Region 10's Tribal Strategy; EPA's Policy on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribes and Region 10's Tribal Consultation and Coordination Procedures; and, EPA's Policy on Environmental Justice for Working with Tribes and Indigenous Peoples. TTAU has a Manager and 16 Tribal Coordinators who serve as liaisons to all 271 tribal governments and as Project Officers for more than 240 GAP and Performance Partnership grants. Staff efforts and activities toward building tribal environmental program management capacities and addressing tribal environmental concerns are significant, but limited by the disparity between the numbers of tribes and FTE. Region 10's Tribal Program also includes an Executive-level Senior Tribal Policy Advisor, part-time Tribal Specialists in each of the Program Offices, and a Regional Tribal Operations Committee (RTOC) composed of EPA executives and elected tribal representatives.

Priority Issues Identified by Region 10 Tribes

- upholding trust responsibilities, treaty rights, and protecting subsistence resources
- removing statutory, regulatory, and procedural barriers to environmental protection
- increasing funding for tribal environmental programs
- jurisdictional issues, funding eligibility, and implementation of programs
- improving tribal consultation and "treatment as state" processes
- fish consumption, contaminants, health, and water quality
- safe drinking water and basic sanitation systems
- ambient and indoor air quality, healthy homes and schools
- assessing and remediating contaminated sites, landfills and open dumps
- climate change impacts on natural and subsistence resources
- impacts of resource extraction activities
- application of traditional knowledge and holistic approaches to environmental protection

Hot Issues Relating to Region 10 Tribes

- Interagency Agreement on Tribal Treaty Rights (DOI, EPA, DOJ, DOC, and USDA)
- Treaty Rights at Risk initiative (aligning federal resources toward salmon recovery in WA)
- Joint Statement of Cooperation with Environment Canada and Puget Sound Partnership
- Tribal fish consumption rates and state water quality standards (WA, ID, AK)
- Funding for Tribal Environmental Program development and implementation
  -GAP funding and developing a "Beyond GAP" program
  -GAP and RCRA funding for tribal solid and hazardous waste management
  -CAA Tribal funding and implementing Federal Air Rules for Reservations
  -CWA and SDWA Tribal Set-Aside funding caps
  -CERCLA tribal funding for assessment and cleanup of contaminated sites
- Local Environmental Observers Network (local observers and experts sharing knowledge)
- Coal Trains and Proposed Terminals (WA, OR, ID)
- Oil & Gas development (North Slope and Cook Inlet, AK)
- Transboundary and Large-scale mining
  -Teck-Cominco and Upper Columbia River Tribes
  -Western BC mines and Southeast AK Tribes
  -Yukon Territory mines and E. Interior AK Tribes
  -Red Dog, Green's Creek, Kensington, Usibelli, Ft. Knox, Pogo mines
  -Proposed Pebble, Donlin, Chuitna, and Nixon Fork Mines
- High-profile Superfund sites
  -AK- Salt Chuck Mine, Ketchikan Pulp, Ft. Richardson, Elmendorf AFB, Adak Airstation
  -ID- Gay Mine, Bunker Hill Mine, E. Michaud Flats, Monsanto, Kerr-McGee
  -OR- Portland Harbor, Northridge Estates, Black Butte Mine
  -WA-Duwamish, Hanford, Commencement Bay, Midnite Mine, FMC Yakima, Warmhouse Beach

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