



EPA Region 5 Tribal Solid Waste and Pollution Prevention Program

EPA Mission:

To protect human health and the environment.

EPA Indian Policy:

EPA shall commit to working with Federally recognized tribes on a government-to-government **basis to enhance environmental protection.**

EPA Region 5 Tribal Solid Waste and Pollution Prevention Program Goal

To encourage comprehensive integrated solid waste management and waste reduction practices in Indian Country that are protective of human health and the environment by:

Building tribal capacity for developing and implementing municipal solid waste activities; Developing tribal organization infrastructures; Realizing economic sustainability of tribal solid waste programs; and Building partnerships among tribes, states, and local communities.





1. What are the strengths of your technical assistance program?

Management Support - Supporting tribes' environmental programs is a priority in EPA Region 5's top management. Their support encourages the tribal solid waste program to seek innovative solutions for tribes.

Setting Priorities in Tribal Environmental Agreements - Region's Tribal Environmental Agreement (TEA) planning and budgeting mechanism allows open communication between the tribes and EPA. The TEA process provides an opportunity to explore what the tribes' solid waste needs are and how EPA should provide assistance.

Cooperation with Other Federal Agencies - EPA has active cooperation with other federal agencies in carrying out federal trust responsibilities to tribes. This is done through a regional multi-agency Memorandum of Understanding with other agencies. For the tribal solid waste program, coordinating financial and technical resources with the Indian Health Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs has been critical to achieving success in tribes' solid waste management.

Tribal Liaisons - EPA Region 5 has three full-time field liaisons that serve as the go-between with EPA and the tribes. Their work ensures that communication and work relations between EPA programs and the various tribes are consistent and culturally appropriate.

How did you assess these strengths?

Positive Relationships with Tribes - The TEA process has helped establish close relationships between EPA and the tribes; it has been a national model for other Regions.

Closed Solid Waste Open Dumps - All but two open dumps on tribal lands in Region 5 have been successfully closed. This was possible because of effective ongoing coordination with the Indian Health Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs.





2. What are the opportunities for improving your technical assistance program?

Hire a Circuit Rider - Region 5 is looking into hiring a tribal solid waste circuit rider. A circuit rider typically is a senior solid waste specialist with years of technical and planning experience, working on-site with tribes. The circuit rider would improve EPA's program by delivering one-on-one technical assistance to address the unique needs of each tribal community.

Joint Funding through Federal Interagency Tribal Solid Waste Workgroup - EPA on the national level started a federal interagency tribal solid waste workgroup to address the complex issues of providing long-term solutions to tribes' solid waste problems. They started a joint funding initiative to close high-priority open dumps, leveraging resources from multiple federal agencies. This has helped some tribes in Region 5 receive funding for dump closures that are typically difficult to obtain. We hope to provide more funding to tribes through this initiative and other similar joint initiatives.





3. How does your group work to continuously improve the delivery of your technical assistance program? Do you assess, measure, and trend different parameters associated with your services?

We evaluate how well EPA has helped tribes' solid waste management situations by assessing these parameters:

Progress Made in Solid Waste TEA Priorities

every six months we discuss with tribes' their solid waste priorities and if EPA has met its role in providing financial or technical assistance, and how to resolve any shortcomings. We also measure the tribes' dollar needs stated in the TEAs against EPA's resources and communicate this to our management.

Tribes' Solid Waste Management Systems

look at each tribe's stage of development in each major component of a comprehensive solid waste program: e.g. solid waste management plan, solid waste ordinance, disposal system, recycling program, waste reduction program, education and outreach.

Common Trends in Tribes' Solid Waste Issues

EPA solid waste resource constraints (financial and human) are always a limiting factor, we try to focus our training and technical resources on common trends in tribes' solid waste issues: addressing problem wastes such as from casinos, construction and demolition; illegal dumping; open burning; solid waste enforcement. We try to collect case studies and share



4. In what way does COLLABORATION with other technical assistance providers get factored into your continuous improvement efforts?

Coordinating with Other Federal Agencies

It is very important to maintain collaboration with other federal agencies in carrying out federal trust responsibilities to tribes. Proper solid waste management is inextricably linked with tribes' economic development, natural resource management, housing and community development, and community health and sanitation. Thus EPA must coordinate with the trust responsibilities of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Forest Service, Housing and Urban Development, Indian Health Service, and others.

Leveraging Other Technical Assistance Providers

EPA's role is to facilitate coordination among tribal communities with federal, state, local entities and other technical assistance providers. These may include Rural Community Assistance Programs, tribal-focused organizations, solid waste and P2 providers, etc.

