

Attachment 4: Priority Issues

Top Priority Issues / Concerns / Challenges Identified by Native Participants on day three of December 2-4, 2008, OSWER Tribal Forum¹

Criteria Used in Ranking: (a) issue is within EPA/OSWER jurisdiction; (b) issues relates to implementation of OSWER tribal strategy; (c) issue is of broad concern (e.g., to multiple tribes and Alaska Native villages) OR is of deep concern in at least one geographic area; and (d) addressing issue can be expected to have rapid positive impact.

Participants in Ranking Exercise: 18 Native participants in Day III of OSWER Tribal Forum (see Attachment 5).

Issues in Order of Priority:

1st Priority (17 votes): Better coordination between EPA and tribes, e.g.:

- Assist with tribal staffing shortages and high staff turnover rates
- Tools for tribes to integrate with OSWER
- Flexibility regarding approach to meeting grant requirements
- In-person training for EPA on tribal issues
- EPA visits to tribal lands to understand tribal situations
- Disconnect between EPA and tribes in resources, technology, and funding
- Streamlining access to EPA assistance
- Language barriers between EPA and tribes
- Involve tribes in EPA program design
- How the OSWER strategy aligns with individual tribes' goals
- EPA to be more flexible and trust that tribes will work successfully

2nd Priority (16 votes): Better coordination among federal agencies in working with tribes, e.g.:

- BIA/EPA coordination regarding data collection and inquiries; lack of IHS and BIA involvement in tribal forums
- Tribal input for Natural Resource Restoration negotiations after spill cleanup
- On biofuels policy
- EPA should be cautious about giving away oversight authority to other agencies or to states

3rd Priority (15 votes): Assistance for tribes and native Alaskans in developing economically sustainable recycling programs. (Many tribes cannot develop recycling programs because they are still trying to deal with their solid waste issues. They need start-up funding and how-to help for setting up recycling programs – e.g., how to set it up to be sustainable; marketing recyclables; setting up a workgroup.)

¹ The original list of concerns included three additional issues which were removed prior to ranking the list because Forum participants agreed that they were outside OSWER's purview. These include: (a) clean water issues (e.g., Alaskan villages without running water; raw sewage in rivers, and lack of clean drinking water); (b) safety and crime on tribal lands; and (c) air quality and regulations.

4th Priority (13 votes): More OSWER funding for tribes to allow for sustainability of tribal programs (e.g., in collaboration with ITEP and Tribal Council members).

5th Priority (12 votes):

- Technical training (e.g., NEPA, hazardous waste, emergency response, rural landfill operator).
- Hazardous materials collection, storage, and transportation.

6th Priority (11 votes):

- Tire disposal (e.g., funding mechanisms, state assistance, market options, and liability)
- Open dumping.

7th Priority (8 votes):

- Setting up self-supporting programs for implementing OSWER programs in Indian country and Alaska native villages (e.g., development and implementation of integrated solid waste management plans; support tribal sovereignty)
- Long-term view of solid waste issues (e.g., over generations, not just over a few years).
- How to access and implement new technology to manage solid waste issues.

8th Priority (7 votes):

- Mining sites (uranium and gold mines).
- Burning plastics and electronics (e.g., separation and consolidation of solid waste).
- Basic skills training (e.g., reading, writing, science, math, computers) and career development.

9th Priority (6 votes):

- Enhance UST inspection process to prevent contamination (includes above-ground storage tank program and related inspections).
- Uptake of chemicals (including, but not limited to, pesticides) on adjacent lands into subsistence foods.
- Operations and maintenance funds (e.g., for landfills and transfer stations).

10th Priority (5 votes):

- OSWER-related climate change implications for tribes (e.g., relates to materials management and remediation).

11th Priority (4 votes):

- Food waste and composting.
- Tribal outreach strategies and tools (especially how to engage youth).
- Tribal ownership of risk management decisions.

12th Priority (3 votes):

- Military waste.
- Forestry waste and slag piles (finding a reuse market).
- Coastal erosion as it effects OSWER-related resources (e.g., impacts on landfills).
- Difficulties working with States (Alaska's lack of recognition for tribes).

13th Priority (2 votes):

- Biofuels regulation, storage, and cleanup.
- Development and promotion of tribal Environmental Management Systems.
- Gas and oil exploration and production on tribal lands.

14th Priority (1 vote):

- Construction and demolition waste management.
- Brownfields redevelopment as a tool for community health development.
- Methods and tools to prioritize which toxins and hazardous waste issues tribes should address first.
- Agricultural policy affecting climate change, waste management, and human health.

15th Priority (on list, but received no votes):

- Stormwater best management practices, with respect to OSWER-related resources (e.g., landfill and Brownfields run-off and “run-on”).
- Better use of partnership models (e.g., Brownfields Showcase Community; CARE).
- Clean-up from former activity related to use of controlled substances on tribal lands.

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