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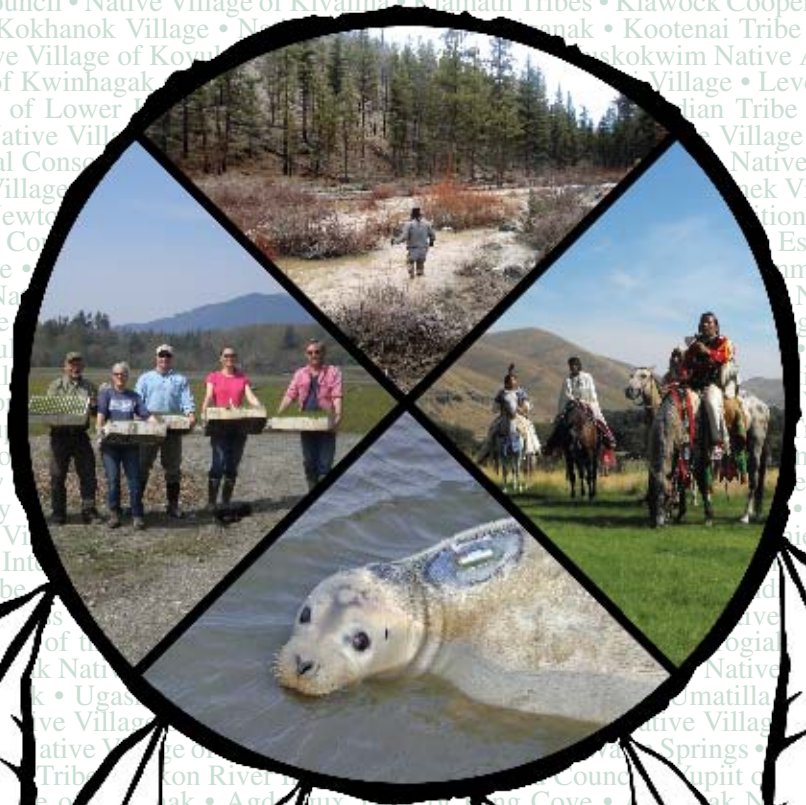
United States Environmental Protection Agency

# The Indian Environmental General Assistance Program

## Region 10: Success Stories from 2009



**Office of Ecosystems, Tribal and Public Affairs**
United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10

**Cover photo credits (from top):**

Water Technician Removing a Data Sonde, by Brenda Sanchez
Tribal Leaders Summit Horse Parade, by Katherine Brown
Tagged Alaskan Seal, by Alex Whiting
Volunteers Prepare for Earth Day Planting, by Chris Gourley

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# EPA's Partnership with Region 10 Tribes

Region 10's Indian General Assistance Program (IGAP) has strengthened our partnerships with tribes significantly over the years. The tribal success stories presented here are just a glimpse of the environmental progress that has resulted. IGAP grants, which provide the foundation for building environmental programs, have reached nearly all of the 271 federally recognized tribes in Region 10. Our partnerships and shared mission of protecting human health and the environment have enhanced tribal communities throughout the Pacific Northwest and Alaska and together we can be proud of what has been accomplished.

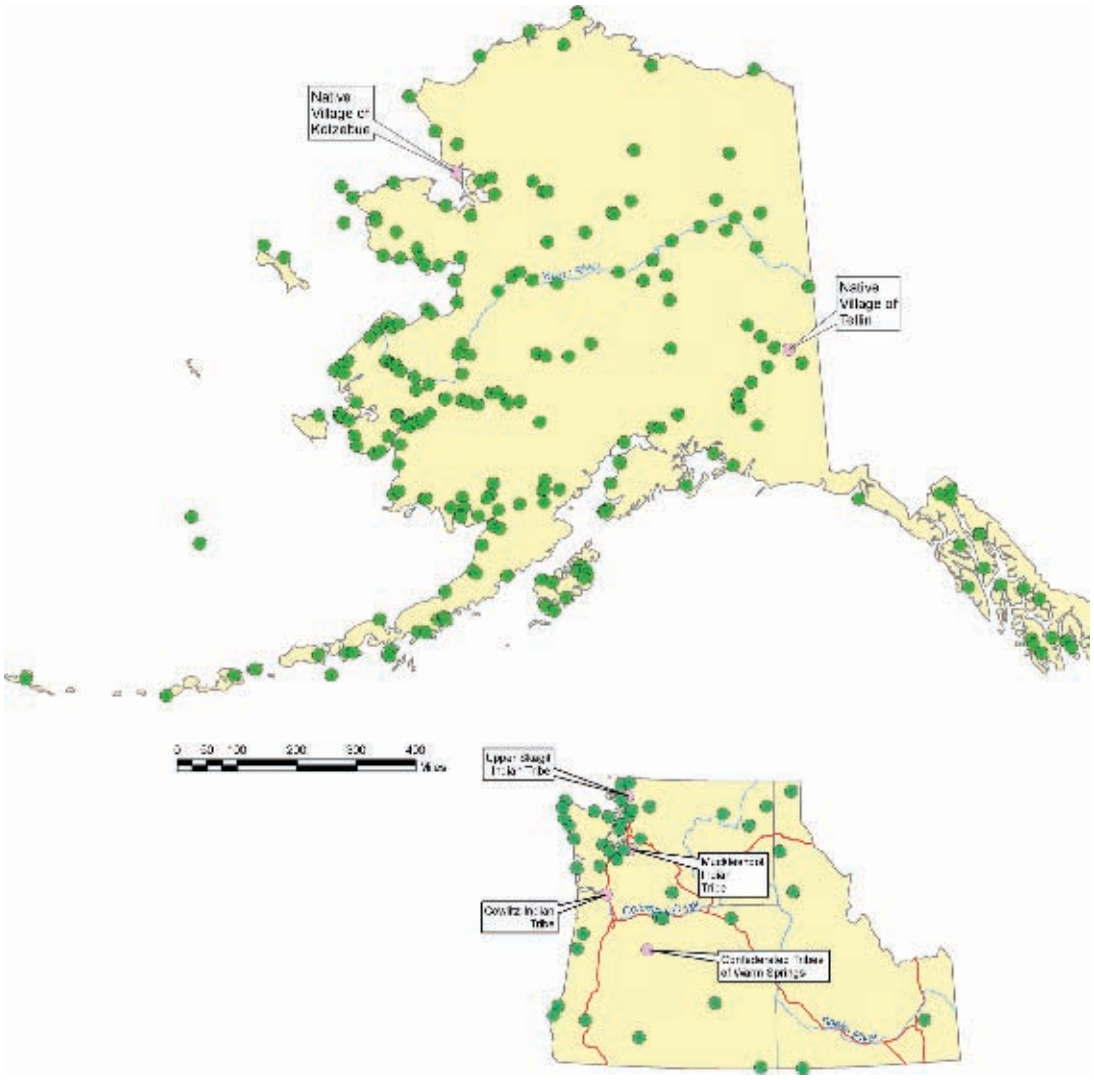
**Dennis McLerran**
*R10 Regional Administrator*

The Indian General Assistant Program (IGAP) continues to be the springboard for so much important environmental work in Region 10. The evolution of tribal environmental programs with the support of the IGAP is a crucial component of EPA's partnership with tribes. I am happy to get to be a part of protecting and sustaining this great place we share.

**Sally Thomas**
*Unit Manager, Tribal Trust & Assistance Unit*

# Region 10 States: Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington

These maps show the relative size of Alaska compared to the lower 48 states in Region 10. Alaska has more ocean coastline than all of the contiguous United States combined. The green dots represent the 271 federally recognized tribes in Region 10. The tribes that are named are featured in this booklet.



# Introduction to the Indian General Assistance Program (IGAP)

The Indian General Assistance Program (IGAP) was created by Congress in 1992 to provide grants for federally recognized tribes to plan, develop and establish core environmental protection programs. The funding is used to build capacity, such as administrative, technical, legal, educational and outreach infrastructure.

During FY2009, Region 10's Tribal Trust & Assistance Unit, located in the Office of Ecosystems, Tribal and Public Affairs, awarded nearly $27 million to 253 tribes and tribal consortia. IGAP funds were also used to implement solid waste programs and support special projects such as the Tribal Leaders' Summit.

EPA's Region 10 (R10) is a culturally and geographically diverse area that includes Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington. Of the 564 federally recognized tribes nationwide, nearly half (48%) live in Region 10:

- Alaska 229
- Idaho 4
- Oregon 9
- Washington 29

The United States has a unique relationship and trust responsibility to federally recognized tribes. As trustees, the U.S. government provides financial and technical assistance to ensure that tribal land and traditional subsistence resources are restored and protected.

The stories presented here range from recycling programs in remote Alaska Native Villages to building capacity for water quality programs in Oregon. These stories reflect environmental accomplishments that R10 tribes have achieved as stewards of air, land and water.

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# Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Oregon

*The Warm Springs Reservation (WSR) is located in north-central Oregon. The three Tribes that make up the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs (CTWS or Tribes) are the Wascoes from the Columbia River region, the Warm Springs who lived along the Columbia's tributaries, and the Paiutes from southeastern Oregon. The reservation is home to over 4,500 tribal members, most live in or around the community of Warm Springs. The tribal economy is based primarily on natural resources, which includes hydropower, forest products, and tourism.*

***By Brenda Sanchez, Soil Scientist***

Success is defined as the achievement of something desired, planned, or attempted. For several years now the Indian General Assistance Program (IGAP) has been pivotal to the understanding of Tribal waterbodies. The WSR is approximately 650,000 acres with over 2,000 stream miles all contained within 15 individual watersheds. The reservation provides cold water habitat for anadromous fish spawning and passage and provides the Tribes with cultural foods and materials. IGAP has been instrumental in building scientific capacity and developing a program which monitors and assesses reservation surface waters. IGAP has provided the necessary funding for staff, training, equipment, and operations.

It has been the desire of the Tribes to fully understand and comprehend the enormous complexity of tribal waterbodies. The first strategy was to begin a water quality monitoring program that recorded in-stream temperatures, dissolved oxygen, pH, and turbidity. These parameters were chosen based on the Tribes designated uses for tribal waterbodies (Ordinance 80). Initially only 23 sites were monitored and over the years has grown to 44 sites; where each of these qualities are measured and recorded every month. Each year the Tribal Environmental Office completes a baseline water quality report and shares this with other CTWS Branch of Natural Resource departments to aid in management decisions.

The Tribes recently completed their first water quality assessment for the years 2000 – 2008. This much anticipated assessment has highlighted stream reaches that are of concern and has also revealed where water quality is exceptional. The results of all these years of monitoring will either drive preservation efforts where water quality is near pristine or restoration efforts where water quality is failing to meet the Tribes water quality standards. Without IGAP funding the Tribes water quality program would not be able to continue and build upon the ever-growing complexity and understanding of Tribal waterbodies.

*Roland Kalama CTWS water technician removing a data sonde from Coyote Creek during a flash event that moves large amounts of sediment downstream into Beaver Creek. This is an area that is highly disturbed from legacy forestry prescriptions and a large wildfire in 2007.*
*Photo by Brenda Sanchez*

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# Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Washington

*The Cowlitz Indian Tribe (currently about 3,700 members) is located within southwest Washington State. The Tribe is landless and does not have a reservation. Our Natural Resources Department works within all aboriginal lands of the Tribe, a rich and diverse region of roughly 3 million acres. The broad floodplains of the Columbia River ascend to prairie and deciduous woodlands, which transition into signature conifer-draped Pacific Northwest mountains. Alpine meadows lie along the crest of the Cascade Range. Descending these slopes are river systems, lifeblood that incises hills into fertile valleys and rich estuaries.*

***By Nathan Reynolds, Ecologist***

The mission of the Natural Resources Department (NRD) is to conserve, protect and enhance the abundance of culturally relevant species and habitats. We accomplish this through a focused program of partnering with federal and state resource management agencies to integrate Tribal goals into species and habitat management. We also develop educational programs for Tribal members and the general public.

The priority of the NRD has been to use IGAP funds to leverage capacity-building efforts. In the short nine years since Cowlitz federal recognition was achieved, the NRD has dramatically expanded its organizational reach. Though the NRD remains a small staff (5 continuous positions with another 4-5 seasonal employees), we have developed excellent relationships with every federal agency within the aboriginal lands of the Cowlitz Tribe, including the US Geological Survey, National Park Service, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the US Army Corps of Engineers. We similarly developed strong relationships with Washington and Oregon state agencies. The Tribe's scientists and NRD staff are well-respected throughout the region for their knowledge, expertise, professionalism and commitment.

In particular, the NRD used IGAP funds to support grant-writing efforts to obtain additional funding from external sources. Those additional grant funds also support the mission of the NRD and are used for habitat restoration, species protection or scientific research within aboriginal lands of the Tribe.

The grant-writing component of the Tribe's previous 3.5 year IGAP award totaled $56,099. More than $1,175,700 in additional funding for the Department was obtained via grants written

*Log structures enhancing fish habitat in the lower Lewis River. Photo by Nathan Reynolds*

using IGAP funds. Representative projects funded in this interval include nearly $200,000 from the US Fish & Wildlife Service to establish a new subpopulation of endangered species Columbian white-tailed deer, and multiple habitat restoration projects focused on endangered species salmonids, with awards ranging between $30,000 and $420,000. During 2009, successes included $75,000 from the PacifiCorp ACC Fund for Lewis River riparian restoration and $34,000 for juvenile salmonid abundance surveys in the upper Toutle River basin.

The IGAP award leveraged significant expansion of NRD capacity, which directly resulted in the persistence of culturally relevant species and habitats, as well as enhanced education to both the Tribe's membership and the larger regional community.

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# Native Village of Kotzebue, Alaska

*Kotzebue is located 550 miles northwest of Anchorage. Average temperatures range from -12 degrees in January to 58 degrees in July. Kotzebue has been the home of Inupiat Eskimos for hundreds of years and subsistence activities are integral to their way of life.*

***By Alex Whiting, Environmental Specialist***

This cooperative project led by the Native Village of Kotzebue (NVOK) compares the behavior of bearded seals and ringed seals in the Chukchi and Bering Seas by satellite tagging 12 individuals of each species. This is the 6th year of seal tagging undertaken by the NVOK and coordinated by Alex Whiting, whose position at the Tribe has been base funded through the U.S. EPA IGAP program since 1997.

Project Objectives:

1. Acquire baseline habitat use and foraging of bearded and ringed seals to guide development in seal habitat, ESA decisions and evaluate effects of climate change.
2. Improve seal co-management between subsistence users, Tribal governments and agencies.

Tribal members were involved in planning, tagging and biological sampling and have received training in previous years. Field operations occurred 10 miles north of Kotzebue. There were two tagging crews operating from September 25th until October 13th. Seals were caught using special nets.

Seals were sampled and released if too small, or tagged if big enough (>50lbs). Skin, blubber and blood samples were taken for genetic, health, and diet testing. Three seals were tagged with the Kotzebue High School Field Biology Class.

11 bearded seals and 12 ringed seals were successfully satellite tagged. Monthly movement maps are posted at **www.kotzebueira.org** under the current projects link.

The NVOK continues to develop and undertake research that emphasizes practical application of combining indigenous and scientific knowledge to produce results that are greater than either one alone produces, while allowing for the education and training of local students and tribal members through direct research participation. This approach also is the most effective way to promote cross cultural understanding and co-management for the purpose of advancing the goals of conservation of critical resources.

**Native Village of Kotzebue**
**P.O. Box 296**
**Kotzebue, Alaska 99752**
**Phone: (907) 442-5303**

*A high school biology class observes the release of a tagged seal. Photo by Alex Whiting*

# Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, Washington

*The Upper Skagit Indian Tribe's land base consists of two physically separate land areas, both located in Skagit County. The western land base is eight miles north of Mount Vernon and the eastern land base, the Helmick Road Reservation, is 15 miles northeast of Mount Vernon.*

***By Lauren E. Rich, Program Manager***
***Environment & Community Development***

For the second year the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, under IGAP and with 319 funding, teamed up with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, Skagit Parks and Recreation, and the Skagit Parks Foundation to host an Earth Day Planting and Celebration at Northern State Recreation Area, the site of the Hansen Creek 140 acre floodplain restoration project. In 2009, the event drew in about 75 volunteers that planted trees and removed invasive blackberries from the park site that would be restored in the summer. In 2010, over 100 volunteers arrived on April 17 to plant and learn about the on going restoration of the site. Wildlands, Inc., the plant contractor for the Hansen Creek Alluvial Fan and Wetland Restoration Project, donated plants above those ordered for the event and helped Tribal staff to stage plants where volunteers would have the best access. After a brief site history and explanation, adults and children donned their new blue Earth Day event shirts and headed to the large wetland and began planting. Working in teams of two or more, volunteers punched holes with bamboo stakes and planted plugs of native wetland rush and sedge species (6 different rush species and 5 different sedge species). In an hour and half of volunteer work time, 16,000 wetland plant plugs were put in the ground! The volunteers have contributed to enhancing the biological diversity of the restoration site. We could not have had such a successful planting without funding, our partners, and most of all our volunteers.

**Upper Skagit Tribe**
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*Volunteers at the Earth Day Planting.*
*Photo by Chris Gurley*

# Native Village of Tetlin, Alaska

*The Native Village of Tetlin is an Upper Tanana Athabascan community located near the headwaters of the Tanana River. Tetlin is a remote village located in the southeast interior region of Alaska, approximately 230 miles south of Fairbanks, and 65 miles from the Alaska/Canada border near the Alaska Highway.*

***By Patricia Young, Tetlin Environmental Director***

The Tetlin Environmental Program is an EPA IGAP funded program that is actively serving the residents of the Native Village of Tetlin to improve the local environmental quality by working together with community leaders, local residents, area businesses, and neighbors to create a clean, healthy, and safe place to live, work, and continue our cultural heritage and traditional ways of life for future generations.

In 2009, Tetlin Environmental Program was able to secure additional resources to address recycling and education in Tetlin through Tetlin Tribal Recycling Project, which was funded by the EPA/RurAL CAP Community Environmental Demonstration Projects Grant. The Tetlin Village Council donated a building, which was renovated to become a storage center for recyclables and hazardous waste; such as lead-acid batteries. Tetlin Environmental Program held numerous educational outreach meetings and distributed can crushers to each household, along with collection bins to sort the recyclables. Through this opportunity Tetlin also collected nearly 100 lead-acid batteries that will be backhauled in fish totes provided by this sub-award. In addition, regular articles were published in the monthly Tetlin Environmental Newsletter educating the community about the positive changes that can result from recycling, reducing, and reusing, along with regular updates regarding the Tetlin Tribal Recycling Project.

The Tetlin Environmental Program collaborates with Tetlin Village Council to pursue outside funding sources to better our local environmental quality. Some of the other funding secured by Tetlin Environmental Program includes support from RurAL CAP Foundation, State and Tribal Response Program, Tribal Solid Waste Management Assistance Project, and ALPAR.

An EPA IGAP funded program has the ability to pursue other funding sources, especially if it is included as a work component within the IGAP work plan.

**Native Village of Tetlin**
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**Tetlin, AK 99779**
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**E-mail: tetlin@earthlink.net**

*Juanita Wilson collects e-waste in Tetlin.*
*Photo by Patricia Young*

*Tetlin resident Harry John trying his new can crusher.*
*Photo by Patricia Young*

# Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Washington

*The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe is a federally recognized Tribe with a 6 square mile Reservation located in Washington State. The Tribe's Usual and Accustomed Area covers all or portions of the Lake Washington/Cedar/Sammamish watershed, the Green/Duwamish watershed and the White/Puyallup River watershed. The Tribe has been working to protect and restore salmon runs in these watersheds for decades.*

***By Nancy Rapin, Water Quality Specialist***

Given the extent of urban and industrial development in the Central and South Puget Sound watersheds and a steadily rising human population, this is challenging but critical work. Habitat and water quality monitoring and protection play an important role in this effort. The EPA Performance Partnership Grant for the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe is comprised of two programs: the Indian General Assistance Program (IGAP) and the Clean Water Act Section 106 Program. Highlights from the four-year PPG period are listed below. IGAP funds either partially or fully covered expenses for the following highlights in staff time, consultant services, supplies and/or training sessions.

- Muckleshoot Indian Tribe Fisheries Division (MITFD) built capacity to evaluate and influence land use proposals with a potential to adversely affect fish habitat. Staff increased the number of project permits reviewed that may affect water quality in the Tribe's Usual and Accustomed Fishing Areas (U & A) over the last four years. Staff provided substantial technical comments and recommendations to various agencies during the environmental review and permitting process that often led to project modifications that increased protection of water quality and other fish habitat parameters.
- MITFD participated in the development of several water quality cleanup plans (TMDLs) with other agencies and increased tribal capacity to evaluate and help develop TMDLs under the Clean Water Act.
- An expert consultant for MITFD developed a water quality model for the lower White River and provided training on water quality models to MITFD staff. The consultant provided technical support to WDOE and EPA for water cleanup plans in several basins by developing, evaluating, documenting, and using TMDL models and providing valuable additional expertise for all agencies involved in the cleanup plans.
- MITFD staff collected water quality data in the White River and its tributaries on the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation lands. These data were used to evaluate water quality in comparison to water quality criteria for fish. These data were shared with other agencies to support land use improvement projects, as applicable.
- MITFD improved the White River monitoring program by adding continuous monitoring of several water quality parameters for critical periods in the White River mainstem. MITFD worked with USGS to build capacity to develop and deploy equipment and refine analytical methods for continuous monitoring.
- MITFD staff completed methods and plans in the MIT Water Quality Lab required for analyzing three water quality parameters. During the grant period, staff worked with the WDOE's Lab Accreditation Unit and in 2009 achieved accreditation for all three methods. MITFD staff built capacity in lab methods and trained a technician in analytical methods.

**Muckleshoot Indian Tribe Fisheries Division**
**39015 172nd Ave. SE**
**Auburn, WA 98092**
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**Fax: (253) 931-0752**

*Lena Chavez, Fisheries Technician, runs analytical methods in the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe's Water Quality Lab. Photo by Nancy Rapin*

# The Regional Tribal Operations Committee

*Indian General Assistance Program funds are also used to support special projects, such as the work of the Regional Tribal Operations Committee (RTOC) and the annual Tribal Leaders Summit.*

EPA has worked in partnership with the Regional Tribal Operations Committee (RTOC) since its inception in 1996. The Nez Perce Tribe in Idaho received the initial IGAP grant to fund coordination of the RTOC, and administered the RTOC grants through FY2009. This past year the responsibility for grant administration went to the Port Graham Tribal Council in the Prince William Sound of Alaska.

The mission of the RTOC is to protect and improve tribal health and environmental conditions in Indian Country. This is achieved by coordination and communication with EPA, Tribal Governments and others -- consistent with the EPA's Indian Lands Policy, EPA's trust responsibility, environmental laws, policies, and guidance.

The primary work of the Regional Tribal Operations Committee is to further tribal environmental objectives at both the regional and national levels. The RTOC advises the National Tribal Operations Committee (NTOC) and advocates for Region 10 priorities.

The Committee is made up of 11 tribally elected representatives and designated EPA staff. Members serve three-year terms and meet quarterly. Tribal members of the RTOC make up the Tribal Caucus.

RTOC successes over the last few years include completion of a Communications Guidance document, an R10 Priorities document, and a Strategic Plan for 2008-2011. The five main strategies of the latter are: respond to emerging environmental issues and needs; enhance outreach and communication between tribes and the EPA; improve RTOC internal procedures; build trust and accountability with clear expectations between EPA and tribes; and build strong partnerships.

Gwendolyn Carter, a member of the Nez Perce Tribe, was co-chair of the RTOC until 2008. She writes: "In all, the RTOC has come a long way and will only get better with the strength of the region, the members, staff, and passion each tribe holds for Mother Earth and all its inhabitants by supporting, exchanging, relating, and ultimately passing the word to the decision makers of our home."

***RTOC Members at the Port Gamble S'Klallam Reservation:*** *Front row, left to right: Gwen Carter, Rosalie Kalistook, Sally Thomas, Michael Stickman, Debra Lekanof (with daughter), Randi Madison, Violet Yeaton. Back row, left to right: Marco Guske, Rick Eichstaedt, Diana Boquist, "JR" Herbst, Rick Parkin, Paul McCollum, Ron Wassillie, Lee Juan Tyler.*

*Photo by Andy Dunau*

# Regional Tribal Operations Committee
# Tribal Caucus Members

## ALASKA

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Violet Yeaton, Co-chair | Native Village of Port Graham | (907) 284-2227 |
| *Alternate*: MaryAnn Porter | Yakutat Tlingit Tribe | (907) 784-3238 |
| Rosalie Kalistook, Vice Co-chair | Orutsararmiut Native Council | (907) 543-2608 |
| *Alternate*: Millie Hawley | Native Village of Kivalina | (907) 645-2256 |
| Michael Stickman, 1st Chief | Nulato Tribal Council | (907) 898-2223 |
| *Alternate*: Kathleen Peters-Zuray | Tanana Tribal Council | (907) 366-7170 |

## IDAHO

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## OREGON

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## WASHINGTON-EAST

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## WASHINGTON-WEST

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# EPA Tribal Coordinators

*Tribal Coordinators of EPA's Tribal Trust & Assistance Unit serve as liaisons for specific tribes throughout the region.*

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