

**Tribal Infrastructure Task Force (ITF) Principals Meeting
January 22, 2026**

Summary of Primary Topics Discussed

Opening and Introductions, ITF Co-Chairs, Yu-Ting Guilaran and Wynne Miller

- The ITF Co-Chairs welcomed new ITF members and announced that Wynne Miller would be retiring from the EPA and, therefore, would be stepping down as ITF Co-chair in February.

ITF Member Updates

- **Indian Health Service (IHS), Rear Admiral Mark Calkins**
 - During the meeting, Rear Admiral Calkins discussed several IHS-EPA coordination efforts, including collaboration on technical assistance for water infrastructure projects, noting the importance of this work in helping move projects forward from Tier 2 to the construction phase, particularly with the Navajo Nation. He also noted that IHS and EPA are exploring opportunities and piloting approaches to potentially reduce administrative burdens for and enable faster administration of funding through interagency agreements (IAs).
 - IHS shared the following resource (<https://dsfc-ihs-gis.hub.arcgis.com/>), a dashboard for exploring Division of Sanitation Facilities Construction (DSFC) Projects that provides an interactive map displaying Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)-funded project locations, descriptions, and phases.
- **Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Amber Hunter**
 - Amber Hunter shared funding updates from HUD, noting that information on FY26 funding is anticipated soon. The primary funding vehicle applicable to the ITF is HUD's Indian Community Block Grant (ICBG) program, which recently closed its latest round of competition. Another grant program is the Indian Housing Development Block Grant (IHDBG) program supporting Indian housing, which focuses on housing, so HUD does not tend to see a lot of water projects funded under this program. However, water-related activities are eligible when they support housing.
- **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Steven Polacek**
 - Steve Pollack shared a number of funding program updates from USDA Rural Development (RD), including the USDA Rural Alaska Village Grant (RAVG) Program, its solid waste management and technical assistance grants, and its decentralized water and wastewater revolving fund program.
 - During the meeting, Steve shared that USDA RD also has technical assistance contracts and grants, noting that providers in a specific state can be reached through USDA's local offices (<https://www.rd.usda.gov/browse-state>). If there are specific questions, ITF members are encouraged to reach out to Steven or Angela.
 - USDA also has a decentralized grant program for TA providers, who then in turn find homeowners who may access a sub-loan or grant through the TA provider. This was

formerly titled the WaterWell program, and the Farm Bill expanded it to also include decentralized waste solutions.

- Steven noted that USDA RD staff in Alaska currently are working to establish an IA and offered that if IHS and EPA are able to identify best practices for IAs, USDA RD would welcome the opportunity to learn more, as it is seeking additional capacity given recent staff turnover.
- **Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Scott Sufficool**
 - Scott Sufficool indicated that he may reach out to ITF partners for technical assistance specifically to help support Safe Drinking Water Act compliance and baseline tribal water system assessments, given impacts to TA efforts from recent staff turnover. Wynne noted that EPA's [WaterTA](#) program is available to assist wastewater and drinking water systems with compliance issues, and Yu-Ting indicated that addressing such compliance challenges is a priority for EPA. EPA staff will follow up with BIA following the meeting.
 - Scott also provided updates on recent BIA infrastructure efforts, including support to ensure that BIA-owned systems provide adequate access relating to Columbia River treaty fishing rights, addressing compliance issues at an Idaho facility requiring a complete system overhaul, and working to address arsenic issues on the Hopi reservation.
- **Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), Nathalie Washington**
 - Nathalie recently joined BOR and is supporting ITF efforts.
 - Nathalie provided an update on the Tribal Drought program and noted that BOR has recently experienced significant recent staff turnover. Additionally, BOR recently closed two funding announcements, and the selection announcements are pending at this time.
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Dr. Maria Paz Carlos and Brian Hubbard**
 - Brian Hubbard discussed CDC coordination with IHS on a health impact measure. Yu-Ting noted that EPA OGWDW would be interested in learning more about the measure and that EPA staff would reach out following the meeting.
 - Brian noted that CDC has detailed staff to the Navajo Nation and have a role in the Navajo Nation Water Access Group. Additionally, CDC has provided technical support for two CDC foundation funded projects, including:
 - A project to supply 400 mini-portable alternative sanitation systems in Alaska, along with an evaluation of that infrastructure, and
 - Support for large capacity loading stations for Navajo Nation to support future truck haul stations.
 - Brian also indicated that CDC has provided Legionnaire's disease support for tribes, with data showing a fairly large disease burden for tribes. Yu-Ting indicated that EPA would be interested in learning more and that staff would follow up after the meeting.
- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Wynne Miller, Yu-Ting Guilaran, and Andrew Baca**
 - Wynne Miller shared updates on the Clean Water Indian Set Aside (CWISA) funding program. She discussed EPA's support for tribal communities through its [WaterTA](#) program, including support provided through the Environmental Finance Centers (EFCs),

EPA's [Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap \(CAWAG\)](#) Initiative, and EPA's [Rural, Small & Tribal \(RST\)](#) grant program. She highlighted EPA's recent coordination with IHS in providing engineering support for over 23 tribal wastewater infrastructure projects. In addition, she mentioned a successful September 2025 technical assistance webinar that was held specifically for tribes, featuring presenters from tribes receiving technical assistance.

- Yu-Ting Guilaran provided an update on EPA's FY25 funding for Tribal drinking water infrastructure and discussed OGWDW's recent technical assistance efforts that provide engineering services to help prepare tribal drinking water systems to receiving funds to implement critical infrastructure construction. She noted that since 2024, OGWDW has supported 24 such engineering support projects, with 12 directly supporting water infrastructure projects that will be implemented by IHS. Finally, Yu-Ting shared a brief update on EPA's 8th Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs and Assessment Survey (DWINSA), with data collection anticipated to begin in 2026.
- Andrew Baca introduced himself as the new Director of EPA's Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery. He shared highlights from EPA's Solid Waste Program, including the Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling Grant Program, which he noted is the first program to provide direct funding to tribes for recycling. To date, the program has supported 60 tribes to date, with EPA working to award an additional \$20M over the next year.

Discussion, Next Steps, Closing, ITF Co-Chairs, Yu-Ting Guilaran and Wynne Miller

- The ITF discussed reconvening later this spring/summer to continue discussions and delve further into ITF priorities.
 - The ITF will look to invite the National Tribal Water Council to its next meeting to continue our engagement with the Council.
 - ITF members that have potential priorities they wish to elevate for ITF consideration are encouraged to reach out to Karen Gude and Matthew Richardson.

Participants:

- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**
 - Yu-Ting Guilaran, Deputy Director, Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water (OGWDW) **(ITF Co-chair)**
 - Wynne Miller, Deputy Director, Office of Wastewater Management (OWM) **(ITF Co-Chair)**
 - Andrew Baca, Director, Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery, Office of Land and Emergency Management (OLEM)
 - Karen Gude (ITF Staff Co-Lead), Gabby Neusner, and Julian Oliver, Tribal Drinking Water Program (OGWDW)
 - Matthew Richardson (ITF Staff Co-Lead) and Rory Hytrek (OWM)
 - Kim Katonica and Denise Roy, Tribal Waste Management Program (OLEM)
 - Abby Cruz (Office of International and Tribal Affairs, American Indian Environmental Office)
- **Indian Health Service (IHS)**
 - RADM Mark Calkins, Director, Division of Sanitation Facilities Construction (DSFC)
 - CAPT David Harvey, Deputy Director, DSFC
- **Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**
 - Amber Hunter, Division Director, Grants Evaluation, Northern Plains Office of Native American Programs (Northern Plains ONAP)
 - Danielle Shoppe, ONAP Environmental Clearance Officer
- **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)**
 - Steven Polacek, Water Programs Director, Water Programs Division, ISDA Rural Development
 - Angela Tilghman, Community Programs Specialist, Water and Environmental Programs, USDA Rural Development
- **Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)**
 - Scott Sufficool, Program Chief, IA Public Health and Safety Program
- **Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)**
 - Nathalie Washington, Native American Affairs Advisor, Native American and International Affairs Office
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**
 - Dr. Maria Paz Carlos, Branch Chief of the Water, Food & Environmental Health Services Branch
 - Brian Hubbard, Team Chief – Safe Water, Division of Emergency and Environmental Health Services

- CAPT Troy Ritter, Water Quality Subject Matter Expert, Division of Emergency and Environmental Health Services