



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

JUN 9 2011

Office of  
International and  
Tribal Affairs

Re: Notification of Consultation and Coordination on EPA's National Tribal Operations Committee's Path Forward and Purpose Statement

Dear Honorable Leader,

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is initiating consultation and coordination with federally recognized Indian Tribes on the proposed *EPA's National Tribal Operations Committee's (NTOC) Proposed Path Forward and "Reinvigorated" Purpose Statement*. These documents reflect changes EPA is proposing to the NTOC process to reinvigorate our interactions with tribes and tribal groups as a method to promote stronger partnerships.

This consultation and coordination process will be conducted in accordance with the *EPA Policy on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribes* ([www.epa.gov/tribal/consultation/consult-policy.htm](http://www.epa.gov/tribal/consultation/consult-policy.htm)). EPA invites you and your designated consultation representative(s) to participate in this process, which extends until July 7, 2011.

As you may know, the NTOC is a Committee of tribal advisors (National Tribal Caucus) and EPA senior leaders, including the Administrator, that provide advice and guidance to the Agency on national policy issues and budget matters that advance environmental protection and human health in Indian country. The NTOC was formed in 1994 and has not undergone any significant changes since its inception, despite the growth in tribal environmental programs and in EPA's tribal programs.

The reinvigoration process began in March 2010 with an assessment to determine if the NTOC process was working well from both EPA's perspective and the tribes' perspective, and if not, what needed to be improved. The assessment gathered input from NTC members, EPA Tribal Program Managers and senior leaders as well as some representatives from other EPA Tribal Partnership groups (e.g., Regional Tribal Operations Committees and Media/Program Groups) and other tribal members. From these findings, the Agency developed recommendations noted in the enclosed *Executive Summary, NTOC's Proposed Path Forward and "Reinvigorated" Purpose Statement*. Both documents have been reviewed by the NTC, EPA's Tribal Partnership groups, and EPA's senior leadership. We have received many constructive suggestions from these groups that are reflected in these current versions. Some groups are still in the process of providing us with their feedback.

The *NTOC's Proposed Path Forward* is organized in a way to focus your input and review. First, we are committed to taking steps to improve EPA's participation by ensuring regular, robust and responsive engagement. Second, there are proposed changes to address complex or sensitive subjects where additional input is needed to move forward in the best way possible. We are interested in all feedback, but your input on the following questions would be particularly helpful:

and Alaska. It is hoped that this reduction in the number of alternates will help streamline communications between EPA and the NTC while maintaining a structure where each Region and members from Navajo Nation and Alaska will have a voice if their member(s) is/are unavailable for a particular meeting. We are interested in getting broader tribal input on the number of NTC members.

The second document included in this package, *NTOC "Reinvigorated" Purpose Statement*, reflects the proposed joint mission of the group and roles of the NTC and EPA to achieve this mission. I anticipate that the content of this document will be incorporated into a revised Charter when other changes to the NTOC are finalized.

I also request your participation in a national conference call, which is being held to answer any questions and to seek your input. JoAnn Chase, Director of the American Indian Environmental Office (AIEO), will lead the call. Call information is included below:

Wednesday, June 22, 2011, 3:00-4:30 pm EDT

Call in number 1-866-299-3188/ Conference code: (202) 564-0279#

The official EPA contact person for this consultation and coordination process is JoAnn Chase or Dianne Briggs, Associate Director, AIEO. Please do not hesitate to contact either JoAnn at [Chase.Joann@epa.gov](mailto:Chase.Joann@epa.gov), (202) 564-0303, or Dianne at [Briggs.Dianne@epa.gov](mailto:Briggs.Dianne@epa.gov), (202) 564-0279, should you have any questions on this action.

I look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Michelle DePass, Assistant Administrator  
Office of International and Tribal Affairs

Enclosures (3)

*This information is also available on EPA's Tribal Portal <http://www.epa.gov/tribal/consultation>*