
AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVES INITIATIVES

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Defense (DoD) made progress towards building collaborative relationships with American Indians and Alaska Natives in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003. DoD forged new partnerships with tribes, created new initiatives that address tribal and DoD concerns, and sponsored forums to address tribal interests. Cooperating with tribes helps ensure the success of DoD's mission.

At the heart of DoD's relationship with tribes is its commitment to the Department's American Indian and Alaska Native Policy, signed on October 20, 1998. DoD developed the policy in close consultation with tribal governments. The policy acknowledges DoD's trust responsibilities to tribes; directs the Department to build stable and enduring government-to-government relationships with tribes; establishes consultation as the key component to successful, meaningful government-to-government relations; and requires DoD to recognize and respect the significance tribes attribute to natural and cultural resources.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ACTIVITIES IN FISCAL YEAR 2003

Since its inception, the American Indian and Alaska Native Policy has provided DoD Components with guidance on how to address tribal concerns and interests apart from their mission. DoD is in the process of reviewing this policy to evaluate how effective implementation has been since its inception. In FY 2003, the Institute for Tribal Government and DoD sponsored a Tribal Leaders' Forum in the Northwest and Southwest regions to discuss implementation of the policy with tribal leaders. Additional forums are being planned. These forums allow DoD to gather input on policy implementation issues at the field level.

Policy Implementation Demonstration Projects

To address tribal issues within the framework of the DoD American Indian and Alaska Native Policy, DoD provided a small portion of the funding from the Native American Land Environmental Mitigation Program (NALEMP) to the Military Departments for development of Policy Implementation Demonstration Projects. The objective of the demonstration projects is to encourage

partnerships between installations and tribes while addressing military environmental impacts to Indian lands and resources. The demonstration projects address barriers to implementing the principles outlined in DoD's policy.

By participating in demonstration projects, tribes are able to take part in cooperative efforts with installations to address issues of concern and to work towards mutually acceptable solutions. In FY 2003, DoD was able to fund four projects, one with the Army, one with the Navy, and two with the Air Force.

The U.S. Army at Fort Lewis has partnered with the Nisqually Indian Tribe to address subsistence threats on Muck Creek attributable to past military activities. Past agricultural practices contributed to the removal of riparian vegetation and colonization by harmful non-native grasses, negatively impacting salmon and trout spawning grounds. Recently, Fort Lewis and the Nisqually Tribe have begun to work cooperatively to address these impacts.

The Navy installations in Manchester, Washington, have partnered with the Suquamish Indian Tribe to address similar impacts on Beaver Creek. The Suquamish Indian Tribe has a reservation immediately adjacent to the Naval Undersea Warfare Station Keyport, Washington, and in close proximity to Puget Sound Naval Ship Yard, Naval Station Bremerton, and the Fleet Industrial Supply Center Manchester Fuel Department. Historically, salmon have spawned and reared in local streams, including sections of creeks around the naval installations. The project will help restore the natural resources that have been depleted due to the effects of urbanization and industrialization.

The 611th Air Support Group will partner with the Loudon Tribal Council in Alaska to address environmental impacts attributable to past Air Force activities. The project will directly address ongoing environmental restoration at the Galena Airport and is intended to facilitate improved consultation and partnering between the Air Force and the Loudon Tribal Council. Both parties will work to develop a consultation plan to better assess the effect of DoD actions on Tribal traditional lands and formalize day-to-day working protocols.

Elmendorf Air Force Base will partner with the Tanana Chiefs Conference to provide workshops and training for Air Force personnel and tribal staff to address the increasing level of military activities in Alaska's interior. Through demonstration projects like this, DoD is seeking new and innovative ways to improve relationships with tribes and obtain information to help resolve other policy implementation issues.

All four of these projects facilitate implementation of the Department of Defense Native American and Alaska Native Policy by helping DoD meet its trust responsibilities to address tribal concerns. They foster a stable and enduring government-to-government relationship and promote the conservation of protected tribal resources while enhancing tribal capabilities.

DoD American Indian Cultural Communication Course

Open and effective communication and consultation is critical to working with American Indians and Alaska Natives. To facilitate greater understanding of tribal culture and Federal policies for working with tribes, DoD offers a course that highlights the requirements of DoD's American Indian and Alaska Native Policy and other relevant laws impacting the Department's relationships with tribes. The course provides DoD military and civilian staff with a greater understanding of diverse tribal cultures and the communication requirements that are essential to successful consultations with tribes. The course includes information on:

- The history of Indian laws and the legal basis for DoD policy
- Federal laws and policies impacting DoD's relationships with tribes
- Tribal concepts and culture
- Cross-cultural communication
- Strategies for consulting with tribes
- Conflict resolution.

In 2003, approximately 200 participants from all DoD Components attended this course. Military locations host a total of four course sessions throughout the country. In addition, approximately 45 senior leaders have participated in an overview of the policy, requirements, and issues involved in communication and consultation with tribes.

American Indian trainers and DoD legal staff teach the course. Each course also includes participation in cultural events with nearby tribes, presentations by tribal speakers, and field trips.

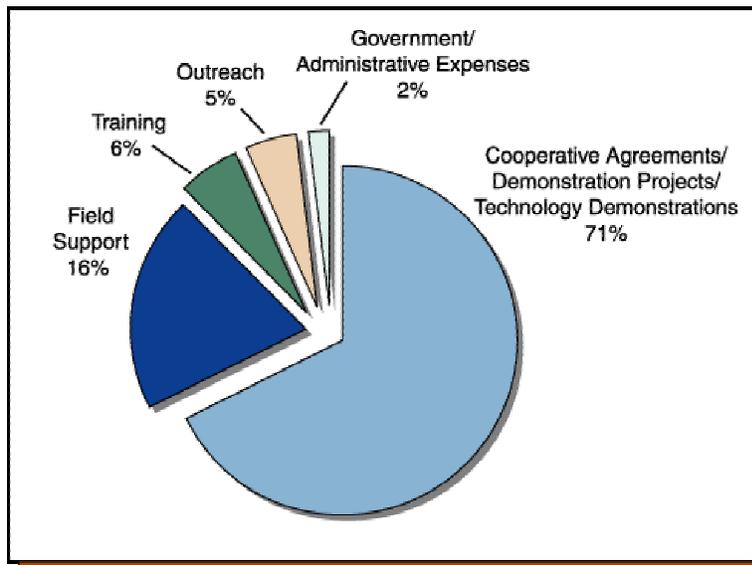
Mitigating Environmental Impacts on Indian Lands

DoD's operational and training activities have environmental impacts on Indian lands and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA)-conveyed properties. In some cases, the residual effects of operations and training include hazardous materials, ordnance, old equipment, unsafe buildings, and

debris. DoD is committed to addressing these environmental concerns and is investigating and remediating environmental impacts.

Since 1993, Congress has included a provision in the DoD Appropriations Act requiring DoD to devote funds to mitigate environmental impacts on Indian lands. DoD addresses this requirement

Figure 27
FY 2003 NALEMP Funding Allocation



through the Native American Lands Environmental Mitigation Program. Since the inception of NALEMP, 480 potential impacts affecting more than 140 tribes have been identified.

In FY 2003, Congress appropriated \$10 million for NALEMP. DoD used over 70 percent of these funds (Figure 27) for environmental mitigation activities, including:

- Cooperative agreements with tribes to address environmental impacts
- Policy Implementation Demonstration Projects
- Technology demonstrations to assess and validate promising, innovative technologies.

The remaining NALEMP funds have helped DoD to:

- Implement its American Indian and Alaska Native Policy
- Sponsor cultural communication courses for DoD personnel to assist them in effectively consulting with tribes
- Design and maintain the Native American Environmental Tracking System (NAETS), which stores and reports information on past and present DoD impacts on Indian lands and ANCSA-conveyed properties
- Conduct educational and outreach activities with tribes to inform them of DoD's American Indian and Alaska Native Policy and provide a forum for tribes to voice their concerns and suggestions for NALEMP improvement.

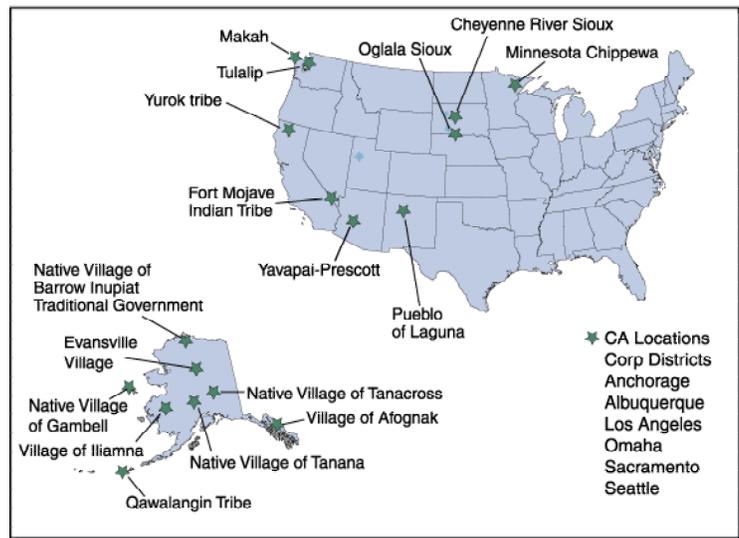
Native American Environmental Tracking System

The Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Installations and Environment) NALEMP Program has developed the Native American Environmental Tracking System (NAETS), an online database used to report, track, and maintain information on potential impacts to Native American Lands. NAETS provides information on reported environmental impacts on Indian lands and resources resulting from DoD activities. NAETS allows DoD, tribal representatives, and the public to access and share information on DoD-related issues of concern on tribal lands. It also provides a historical record of site assessment results, presents a forum to report new suspected impacts, and receives on-line comments about assessments and updates to the status of projects. The system gives DoD an opportunity to track progress on addressing its impacts on tribal lands under NALEMP. Additionally, the system supports program planning and funding decisions related to DoD's NALEMP.

Cooperative Agreements

The NALEMP Program utilizes cooperative agreements to address environmental problems attributable to past DoD activities. Cooperative agreements incorporate “traditional ecological knowledge” into remedial design, directly involve the tribe in project decision-making, develop tribal capacity regarding environmental services, and allow DoD to assist tribes in acquiring technical remediation skills. In FY 2003, DoD entered into 17 new cooperative agreements with tribes to mitigate impacts on Indian lands (Figure 28). Since its inception, DoD has executed over 30 NALEMP cooperative agreements to partner with tribal governments to address environmental concerns.

Figure 28
Cooperative Agreements and Projects



NALEMP uses cooperative agreements with tribal governments as a partnering tool to take advantage of tribal expertise and traditional cultural knowledge concerning environmental restoration activities. Cooperative agreements are DoD's and tribes' preferred method to undertake

environmental cleanup. These agreements maximize the use of both federal and tribal resources to mitigate impacts.