



WESTERN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Tribal Engagement Committee

September 2025

ENHANCING RESILIENCE TO
AVOID CASCADING DISASTER



WESTERN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Today's Agenda



- **Welcome and Introductions**
- **Featured Presentations:**
 - **How the Department of Energy Office of Indian Energy Supports Tribes on their Energy Journey** by David F. Conrad, Acting Director/Deputy Director, Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs
 - **Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma's Emerging Aviation Program: Overview and History** by James L Grimsley / Executive Director - Advanced Technology Initiatives, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
- **Next Steps and Actions**
- **Around the Phone Updates**





David Conrad

*Acting Director/Deputy
Director, Office of Indian
Energy Policy and Programs
U.S. Department of Energy*



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY

- **Acting Director/Deputy Director, Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs, U.S. Department of Energy**
- **20 years of intergovernmental affairs experience** in the energy, environmental, economic development, and natural and cultural resources arenas
 - Served in intergovernmental, legislative, and public affairs positions supporting tribal and local governments
 - Director of the Office of Public Affairs for the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, DOI; managed press relations, digital media, and communications
 - Worked with legislative bodies (federal, Tribal, state and local levels)
 - Held executive leadership positions in the non-profit sector (National Tribal Environmental Council; Council of Energy Resource Tribes)
- **A citizen of the Osage Nation**, oil and gas development on the reservation influenced him to pursue pathways in environmental policy
- **Education:**
 - Master (Environmental Policy and Administration), University of Wisconsin at Green Bay
 - Bachelor (Political Science), Santa Clara University



U.S. DEPARTMENT
of **ENERGY**

Office of Indian Energy
Policy and Programs

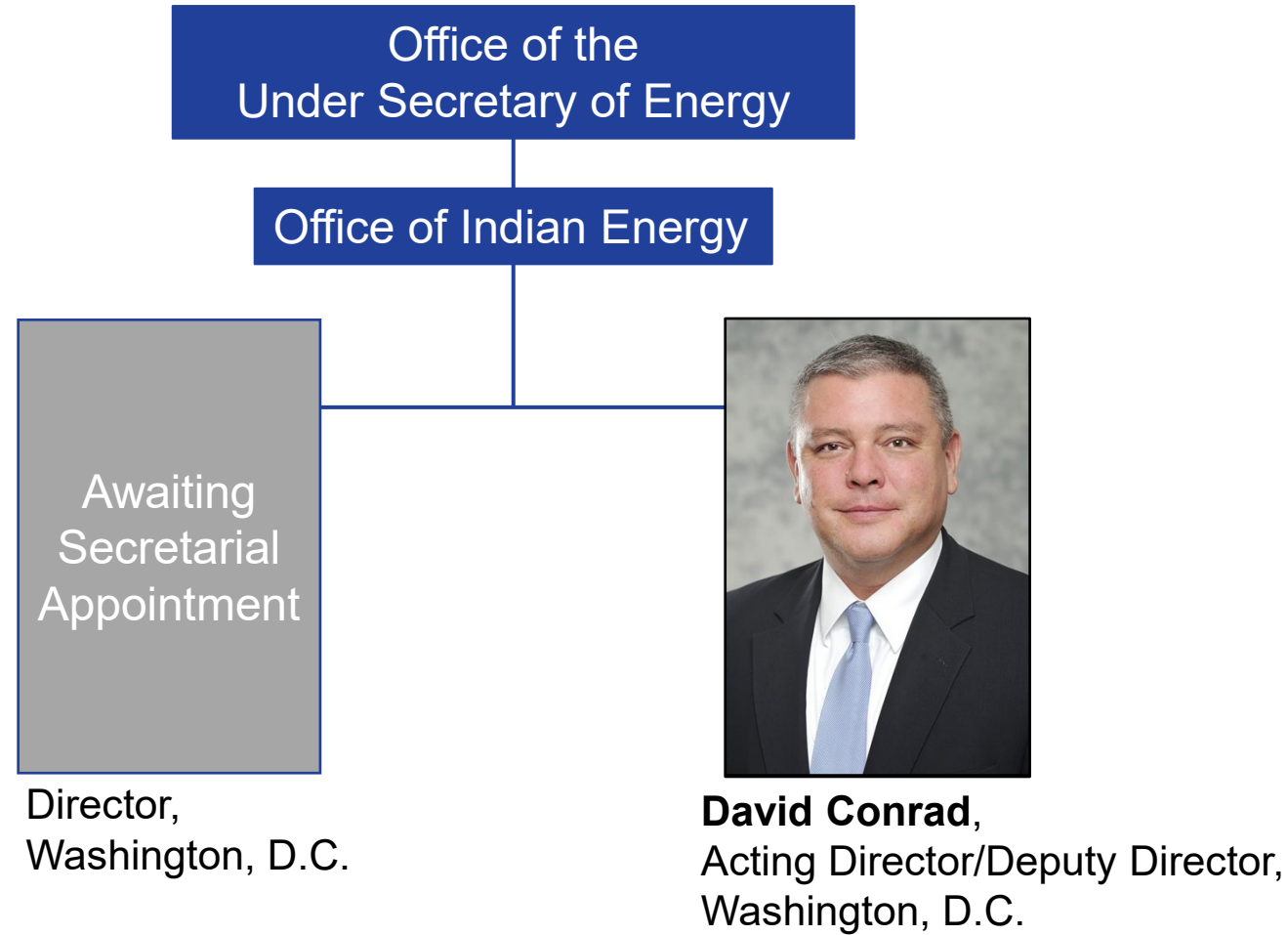
How the Department of Energy Office of Indian Energy Supports Tribes on their Energy Journey

Western Regional Partnership Tribal Engagement Committee

David Conrad, Acting/Deputy Director, Office of Indian Energy

September 26, 2025

Office of Indian Energy Leadership



Office of Indian Energy Mission

The Office's mission is in its Congressional authorizing statute:

- **Promote** Tribal energy development, efficiency, and use.
- **Reduce** or **stabilize** energy costs.
- **Enhance** and **strengthen** Tribal energy and economic infrastructure.
- **Electrify** Indian lands and homes.

The Office of Indian Energy was established by Congress in the Energy Policy Act of 2005 under 45 USC 7144e & 25 USC 3502(b).



U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Indian Energy (IE) Deputy Director, David Conrad, and staff visited the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians in Highland, CA

Access to Affordable, Reliable, Secure Energy

Tribal Needs



Office of Indian Energy Focus

17,000-23,000 Tribal homes still lack access to electricity¹

Access

Expand distribution lines and power homes

The highest energy burden for Tribes is over 4x greater than that of the average national energy burden²

Affordability

Strategic planning for affordable, stabilized energy costs

Tribes experience electricity outages ~6x more often than the U.S. average, with Alaska Native Villages experiencing electricity outages 7.75x more often than the U.S. average.³

Reliability & Security

New generation, microgrids and expanding transmission lines create a more resilient energy system

Energy is Foundational to Tribal Economies

Indian Energy works to **enhance and strengthen Tribal energy and economic infrastructure**

- **Diversified Revenue Streams and Economic Stability**
for local use or export to drive income
- **Meaningful Job Creation and Workforce Development**
construction, operations, and support services provide new career pathways
- **Stimulating Tribal Business and Entrepreneurship**
affordable and reliable energy attracts industries and investment
- **Enhanced Sovereignty and Self-Determination**
energy development aligned with Tribal priorities and local resources

NATIVE VILLAGE OF IGIUGIG



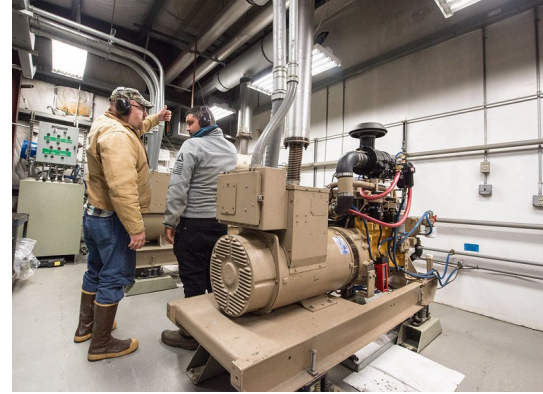
Run-of-river hydrokinetic power system to improve resilience and help stabilize energy costs in one of 250 remote communities in Alaska that rely on isolated, diesel-powered microgrids

Who the Office of Indian Energy Supports

The Office of Indian Energy supports **Indian Country**, specifically:

- Indian Tribes
 - Federally recognized Indian Tribes
 - Alaska Native Corporations
- Intertribal Organizations
- Tribal Energy Development Organizations.

Eligible entities listed under (25 USC §3502(b)(2))



Daniel Rich, Mayor of Ouzinkie, leads a tour of the Village off Ouzinkie on **Kodiak, Alaska**. Diesel Power Plant. (Dennis Schroeder / NREL)

Igiugig, AK installed its first RivGen in 2019 with support from DOE Water Power Technologies Office. In 2021 the Village began installing a second device co-funded by the Office of Indian Energy. Photo from ORPC



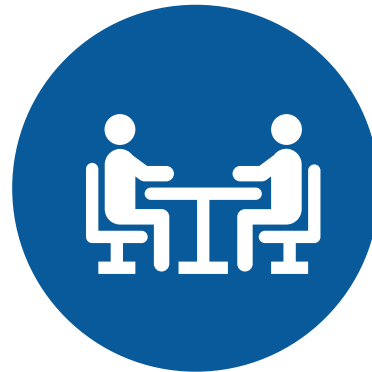
How the Office of Indian Energy Supports Indian Country

Financial Assistance



Cost-share leveraged grant funding to support Tribal energy development

Technical Assistance



No-cost planning, analysis, commerce, and engineering support for successful project outcomes

Capacity Building



Capacity building to enable Tribes to fully participate in unleashing American energy

Financial Assistance



Competitive awards refined over
time to align with Tribes' energy
needs & priorities

Financial Assistance

Since 2005, the Office of Indian Energy has:

Supported over

240

Tribal energy
projects

Initiated saving

\$530M

over the life of the
projects--\$3.38 for
every DOE \$1
invested

Added

63

megawatts
of power
generation to
Tribal lands

The Office of Indian Energy has primarily fulfilled the requirements under 42 U.S.C. § 7144e by providing cost-shared federal funding to Indian Tribes and Tribal entities through competitive financial assistance awards.

Technical Assistance



Advance energy projects and energy commerce with expert support:

- No cost to Tribal recipients.
- Residential, community, or utility scale.
- Supported by experts at DOE national laboratories, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, and other partners.

Request technical assistance via email:

energy.gov/indianenergy/request-technical-assistance



Technical Assistance Types



Community-Wide Strategic Energy planning
to inform vision and goals



Energy efficiency assessments:
Quantify usage and identify cost savings opportunities



Resource assessments:
Quantify energy resources in line with Tribal priorities



Energy project planning:
Modeling, economic analysis, 3rd party independent reviews of energy project documents



Energy governance issues:
Including building code development, utility formation pre-feasibility assessments



Enabling a competitive business environment:
Legal frameworks to enhance energy sector commerce

New Technical Assistance Offering

Enabling a Competitive Business Environment

In partnership with the U.S. Department of Commerce Commercial Law Development Program, the Office of Indian Energy provides legal and regulatory technical assistance to:

1. **Advance high-value energy projects**, such as utility-scale generation, transmission, data centers, or critical minerals.
2. **Evaluate** high-value energy project proposals or deals.
3. **Modernize** legal, regulatory, and contractual frameworks.
4. **Support** Tribal capacity to implement complex energy projects and effectively participate in power markets.



Attendees at the 2015 Community-Scale Renewable Energy Project Development and Finance Workshop. Photo by John De La Rosa, NREL.

Capacity Building



Growing Tribal energy skills and expertise

Capacity Building

The Office of Indian Energy capacity-building activities are responsive to Tribes stated needs and feedback to overcome barriers that hinder needed energy development, reliability, and security.



**Tribal Energy
Navigation
service**



**Targeted
fellowships**



**Growing Native
energy
workforce**



**Peer-to-peer
learning**



**Increased
collaboration
across DOE**



**Webinars,
workshops, and
online tools/
curricula**

Stay Connected!



Office of Indian Energy

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energy.gov/indianenergy



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Thank you!



U.S. DEPARTMENT
of **ENERGY**

Office of Indian Energy
Policy and Programs



James Grimsley
*Executive Director, Advanced
Technology Initiatives*
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



- **Executive Director of Advanced Technology Initiatives for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma**
 - Led the proposal development and capture team for The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma for the FAA's Drone Integration Pilot Program (IPP) and later transitioned into the follow-on FAA program for the IPP called BEYOND.
- Nationally recognized expert on policy and technology related to advanced aviation and aerial mobility, including drones and autonomous systems and has served on:
 - Former Oklahoma Transportation Commissioner
 - Board of Directors and Officer, Commercial Drone Alliance
 - Oklahoma Advanced Mobility Program Advisory Council
 - FAA's Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) Aviation Rulemaking Committee
 - FAA's Advanced Aviation Advisory Committee
- **Previously**
 - Founder of successful technology company startups
 - Founding President, Unmanned Systems Alliance of Oklahoma
 - Non-resident Research Fellow, Noble Research Institute
 - Former Associate Vice President for Research, University of Oklahoma, Norman Campus
 - Division Chief Engineer and later Assistant Vice President with Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC)
 - Civilian Electronics Engineer, United States Air Force
 - Manager of Unmanned Systems Research, Oklahoma Aerospace Institute (OAI)
- **Education:**
 - **Master of Science**, Mechanical Engineering, University of Oklahoma
 - **Bachelor of Science**, Aerospace Engineering, University of Oklahoma
- Inventor of two United States patents for aviation technology concepts



Advanced Technology Initiatives



Emerging Aviation Technology Center Updates



The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



The Choctaw Nation consists of 10½ counties in the southeastern part of Oklahoma. The Choctaw Nation is bounded on the east by the State of Arkansas, on the south by the Red River, on the north by the South Canadian, Canadian and Arkansas Rivers. The western boundary generally follows a line slightly west of Durant, then due north to the South Canadian River.



Choctaw Ranch is:

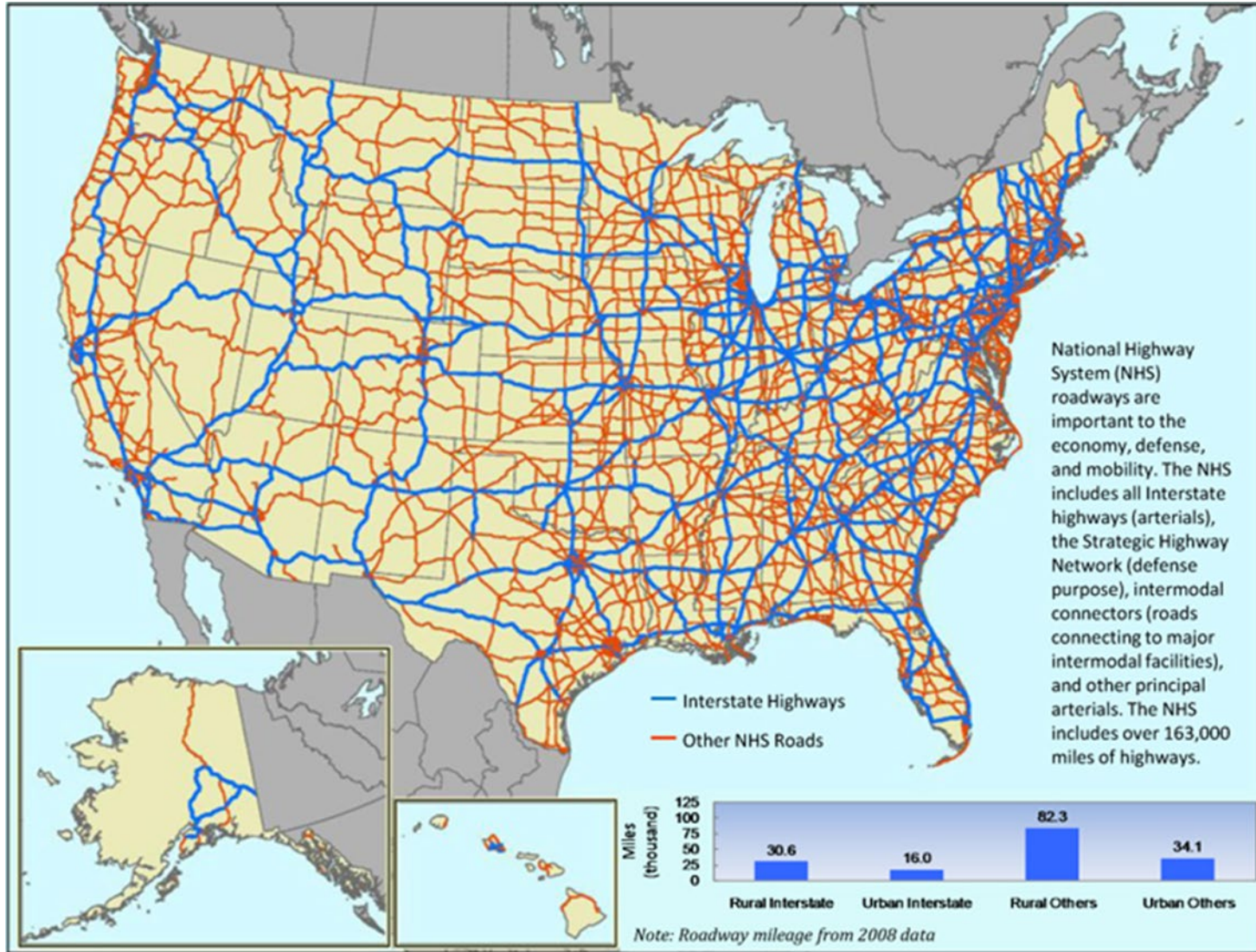
- 135 miles to Plano, TX
- 115 miles to Tulsa, OK
- 118 miles to Ft. Smith, AR
- 150 miles to Oklahoma City, OK
- 155 miles to DFW Airport

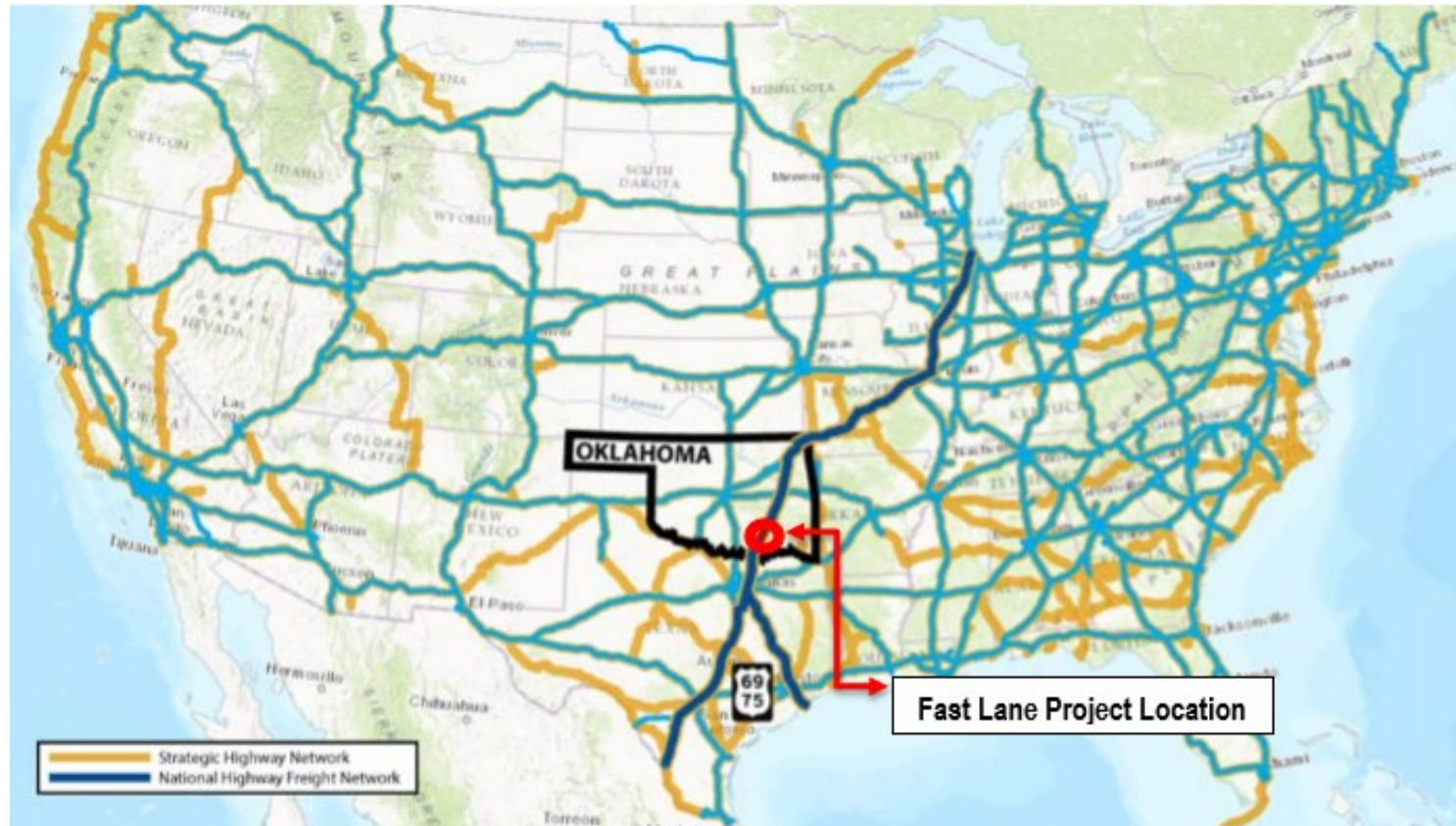




Detailed Overview

- CNO is the third largest federally-recognized Native American tribe in the United States.
- CNO is constructing an advanced aviation testing center located on 44,600+ acres of tribally-owned land in SE OK.
- The test range is 25 miles long and can support a variety of testing scenarios for emerging aviation technology such as safe beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) operations of unmanned aircraft and rapid access to flight testing for electric vertical take-off or landing (eVTOL) systems.
- CNO is making considerable investments in infrastructure (buildings, landing facilities, ground-based radar, communications links, etc.) to support a variety of test activities.
- CNO was the only tribal government selected to participate in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) UAS Pilot Program (UASIPP) and is the only tribal government participating in the follow-on FAA BEYOND Phase II program.
- Package delivery, linear infrastructure inspection and weather research will be our focus during the BEYOND Phase II program.
- Only entity with an FAA Section 920(b)3 waiver capability.

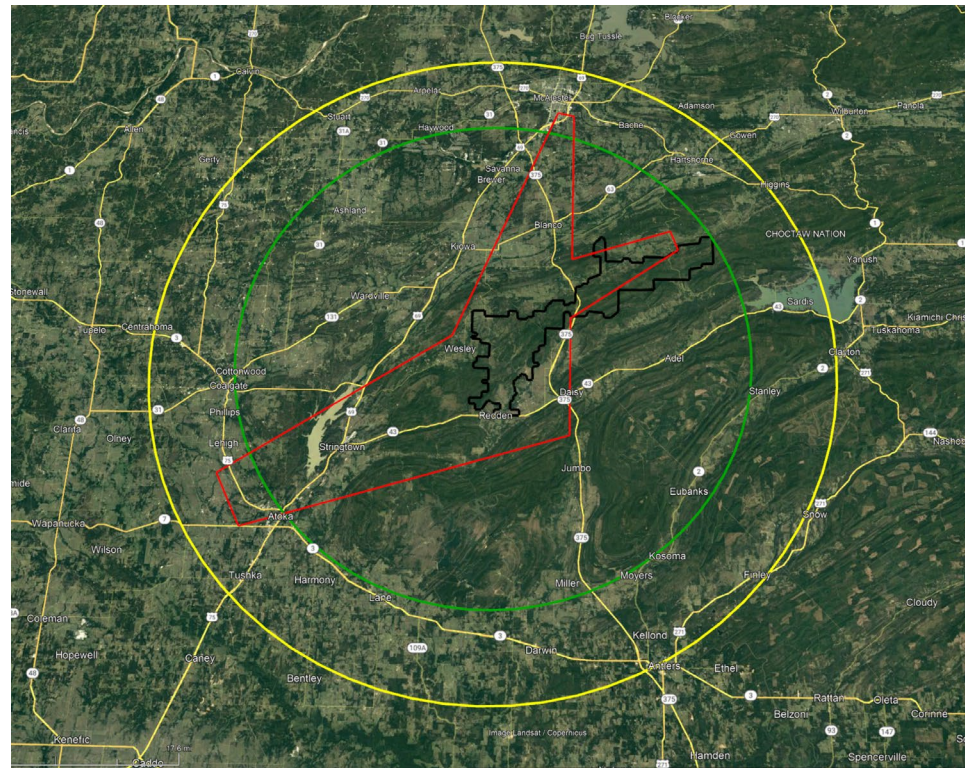




Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Emerging Aviation Technology Center



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- Red outline:
– BVLOS corridor
Black outline:
– Ranch Boundary
Green and Yellow
– Radar coverage

Emerging Aviation Technology Center



Emerging Aviation Technology Center



- 2D doppler shift Detect Harrier radar system
- 3D Fortem phased array radar system
- Network of Ground-Base ADS-B receivers



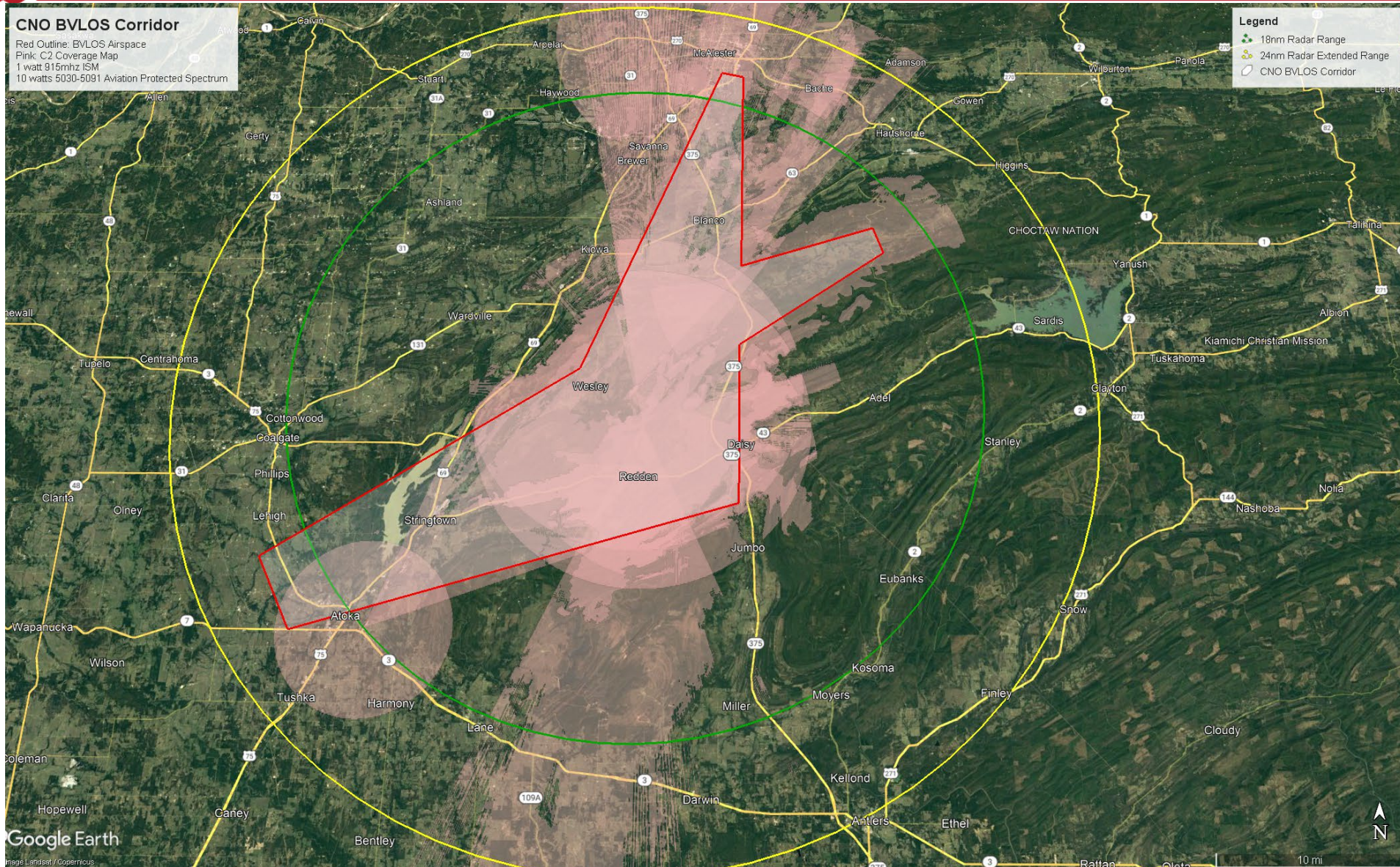
Emerging Aviation Technology Center



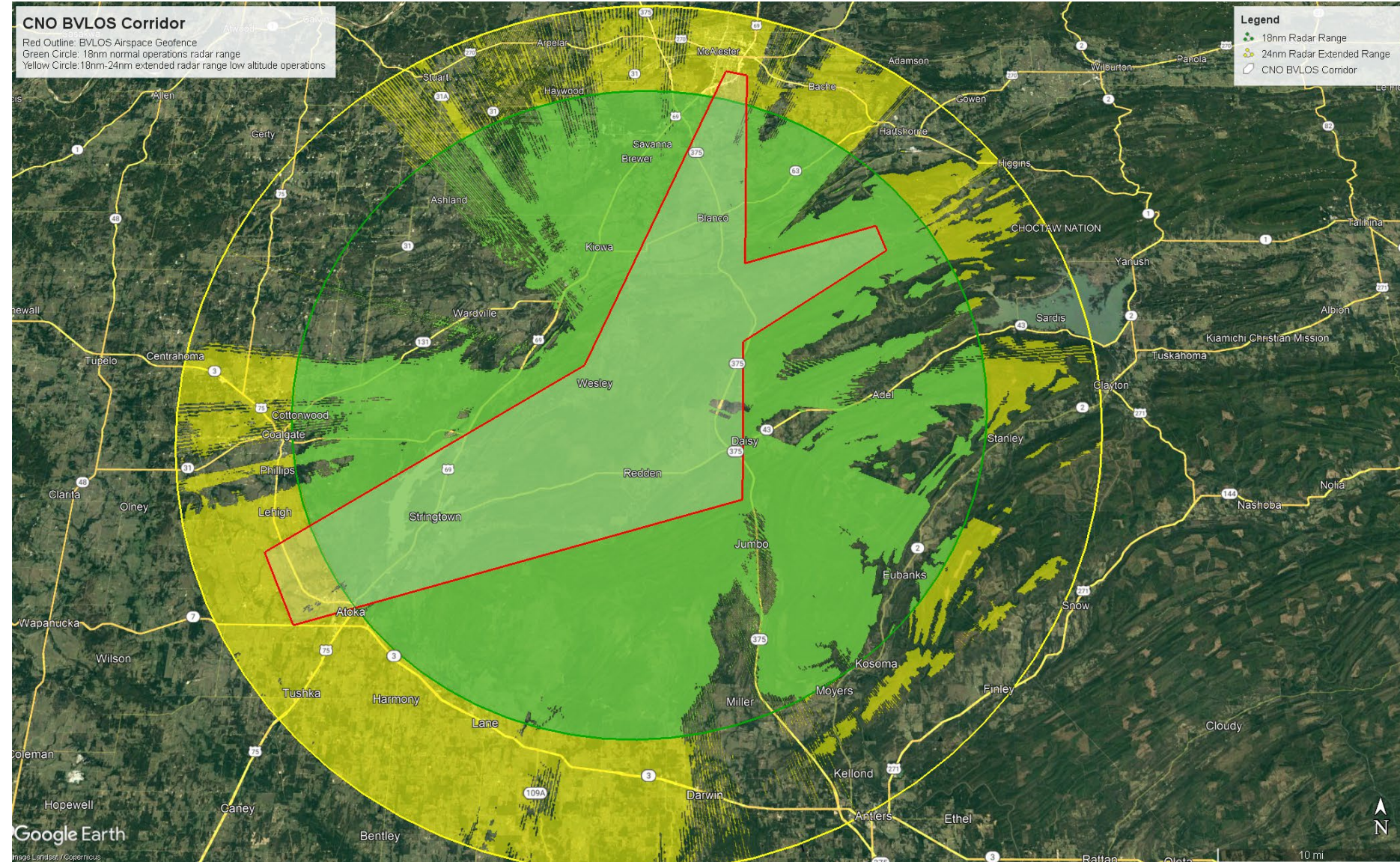
Emerging Aviation Technology Center



Emerging Aviation Technology Center Command and Control Network



Emerging Aviation Technology Center Radar Coverage Viewshed

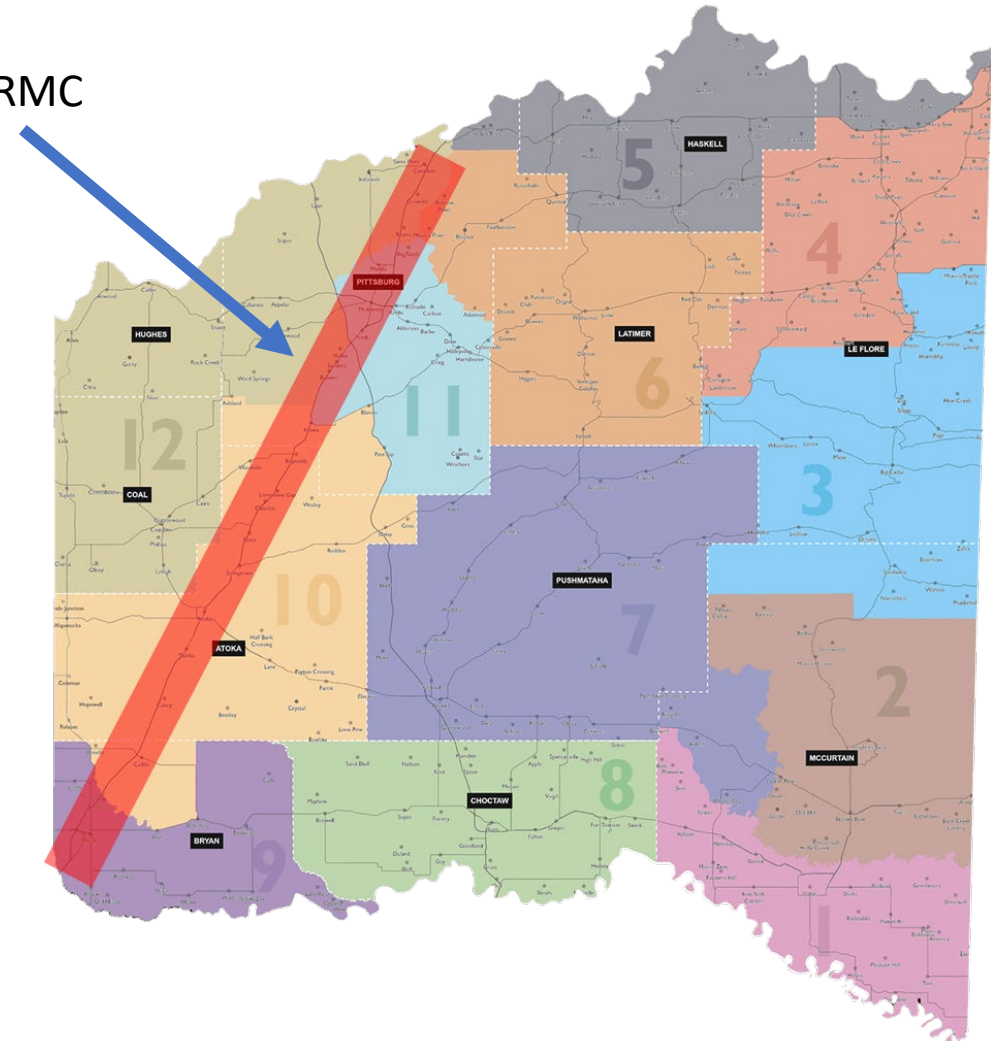




CNO Portion of Advanced Regional Mobility Corridor (ARMC)

- The CNO portion of the ARMC will follow the U.S. Highway 69 multimodal freight corridor and link the cities of McAlester, Atoka and Durant.
- Corridor will leverage existing airports at each of the three cities, the existing rail service parallel to Hwy 69, and the Hwy 69 National Freight Corridor.
- The AMRC is just west and parallel to the Choctaw Nation's Emerging Aviation Technology Center (EATC) test site.
- CNO is working to build out infrastructure (radar, ADS-B receiver networks, C2 systems, etc.)

ARMC



True Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) without visual observers



Operations Trailer for Remote BVLOS Operations, STE(A)M, Etc.





Yakoke!
("Thank You"!)

Email:
UAS@choctawnation.com

Website:
Cnoaa.com





WRP TEC Next Steps

WRP Tribal Engagement Committee Co-Chairs



Will Micklin

- CEO, Ewiiapaayp Band of Kumeyaay Indians

**LeRoy N.
Shingoitewa**

- Hopi Tribal Council Representative

**Floyd W
Velasquez Sr.**

- Emergency Services Administrator, Morongo Band of Mission Indians



Roll up of Action Items



- **Please sign up for a WRP account – wrpinfo.org**
 - Invite/Encourage other Tribal members/liaisons to be part of TEC
- **Please provide input on Tribal Leadership Excel document**
- **Seeking Tribal NR Co-Chair and an additional TEC Co-Chair**
- **Interest in being part of a WRP Deep-Dive:**
 - Water Security/resilience
 - Wildland Fire (response/ prevention)
 - Aviation/ Airspace Needs
- **Please indicate if you:**
 - Are interested in being part of the Outreach Subcommittee
 - Have recommendations on future agenda topics
 - Have additional resources like a study/funding for the good of the team



WRP TEC Calls



Oct 31	▪ Native American Fish & Wildlife Society Update by Dr. Julie Thorstenson, Executive Director, Native American Fish and Wildlife Society ▪ Dr. Joe Hoover, University of Arizona
Dec 5	▪ Update by the National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (NATHPO) by Dr. Valerie J. Grussing, Executive Director, NATHPO ▪ Utah Division of Indian Affairs by James Toledo, Deputy Director, Utah Division of Indian Affairs
Jan 31	▪ Good Data, Stronger Tribes (Overcoming Native American data challenges in Southern California) by Robert Maxim, Fellow, Brookings Metro
Feb 27	
March 27	
April 24	

Discussion items/future items:

- Tribes' land management policies with federal agencies
- How tribes are dealing with removal of tribal historical information from federal buildings

Presentations TBD:

- Mervin Wright: Identifying traditional plants and uses/work in Nevada
- Traci L Morris, Ph.D. American Indian Policy Institute - Center for Tribal Digital Sovereignty update



Around The Phone



California Native American Day

September 26, 2026



- California Native American Day celebrates the distinctive culture of the Native American people indigenous to California and calls attention to their triumphs and struggles that comprise their rich history.
- Celebration of distinctive cultures of California Native American people featuring traditional bird songs, music, art and food. This is a free event that is open to the public.
 - **Time:** 6 PM – 9 PM
 - **Location:** California State University, San Bernardino
- Virtual Programs can be viewed at:
<https://www.nativeamericanday.org/>



Funding Opportunities

Bureau of Reclamation - Native American Affairs



Emergency Drought Relief Funding Opportunity

The Program's objectives are to assist eligible Tribes to develop, manage and protect their water and related resources to mitigate the adverse impacts of drought.

To be consistent with the purposes of the Act, proposals should meet one or more of the following objectives:

- Mitigate drought impacts
 - Increase drought resiliency
 - Reduce reliance on declining water sources
 - Increase the efficiency of water deliveries
 - Mitigate the loss of water and related Tribal trust resources
 - Address drinking water shortages
- Cost Share: No Cost Share
 - The NOFO closes on **Tuesday, October 14, 2025**.
 - The maximum Reclamation funding will be \$2,000,000 per grant or cooperative agreement (no more than \$2,000,000 to any one applicant).
 - Reclamation anticipates that total funding available will be approximately \$9,000,000; funding is contingent upon the availability of funds.
 - Eligible recipients are federally recognized Tribes impacted by a Reclamation project, located within the 17 Western States.
 - Applications will be accepted through Grants.gov, paper copy, and email; please see NOFO for submission details and for the applicable nature of projects and evaluation criteria for this program

Technical Assistance Funding Opportunity

- Maximum Award per Applicant: \$2,000,000; \$1,000,000 per proposal
- Cost Share: No Cost Share
- Closing Date for Applications: **October 28, 2025**, submitted no later than 4:00 p.m. MT
- Eligible Activities May Include, But Are Not Limited To:
 - Water need and infrastructure assessments
 - Water management plans and studies
 - Short-term water quality or measurement data collection and assessment to inform new management approaches
 - Training for tribal staff and managers in water resources development, management, and protection
 - Drilling domestic or stock watering wells
 - On-the-ground activities related to riparian and aquatic habitat aimed at maintaining or improving water quantity or quality, such as:
 - Restoring wetlands
 - Controlling erosion
 - Stabilizing streambanks
 - Constructing ponds
 - Developing water basin plans
 - Distinct, stand-alone water-related activities that are part of a larger project.

Please note that if you are requesting funding for a phase of a larger project, you should only describe the work reflected in the budget and exclude descriptions of other activities or components of the overall project.

Additional information is located on the Reclamation website for the Native American Affairs Technical Assistance Program: <https://www.usbr.gov/native/programs/TAPprogram.html>

Questions? Contact: Kerri Denhalter (kdenhalter@usbr.gov, Office: 951-695-5310, Cell: 951-428-9059), Water Resources Specialist at Bureau of Reclamation



WESTERN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP



John “JC” Coffey

*Executive Director
Uncrewed Systems (UXS)
Cherokee Federal*



- ***Executive Director, Uncrewed Systems (UXS) at Cherokee Federal***
 - Leads Cherokee Nation's uncrewed systems program supporting the Office of Naval Research, several inter-agency and industry organizations advancing autonomous systems in worldwide operations
- **Additionally:**
 - Chairman, AUVSI Board of Directors
 - Founder and Executive Director, Federal UXS Tribal Interest Group
 - Retired Naval Aviator and DOD Acquisition Professional
 - Kentucky Colonel
- **Education:**
 - Master, Business Administration and Management, Embry-Riddle University
 - Masters Certificate in Government Contracting, The George Washington University School of Business
 - Bachelor, Electrical Engineering, University of Notre Dame
 - Defense Acquisition University
 - FAA Certifications - ATP, Flight Instructor and Remote Pilot

Thank you!

