

WESTERN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Tribal Engagement Committee

April 2026

ENHANCING RESILIENCE TO
AVOID CASCADING DISASTER



WESTERN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP



Today's Agenda



- **Welcome and Introductions**
- **Featured Presentation:**
 - **Avoiding the next digital divide: Defining digital sovereignty for Tribal Nations in the AI Age** by Dr. Traci Morris, Executive Director of the American Indian Policy Institute (AIPI) and Research Professor at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University
- **WRP Updates**
 - 2026 WRP Principals' Meeting
 - DRAFT 2026-2027 WRP Strategic Priority
 - WRP TEC Next Steps and Actions
- **Around the Phone Updates**





Traci Morris, Ph.D.

Executive Director
American Indian Policy Institute &
Research Professor
Sandra Day O'Connor College of
Law, Arizona State University



**Arizona State
University**

- **Executive Director of the American Indian Policy (AIPI) Institute and a Research Professor at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University**
- **Leading architect** of Tribal Digital Sovereignty, through which Tribal Nations assert authority over their digital ecosystems.
- Relocated AIPI to ASU Law and co-founded the Center for Tribal Digital Sovereignty with the National Congress of American Indians.
- Tribally driven policy analysis, capacity building through the Indigenous Leadership Academy, and expert testimony before the FCC and on Capitol Hill.
- Scholarship efforts include:
 - Guest editor of Journal of Community Informatics, "*Charting Sovereignty in the Digital Age*"
 - Contributed articles defining TDS and documenting four decades of tribal telecommunications advocacy.
 - Co-author of Brookings Institution paper "*Avoiding the Next Digital Divide: Defining Digital Sovereignty for Tribal Nations in the AI Age*"
 - Earlier research includes Tribal Technology Assessment (2019) and editing Native American Voices: A Reader.
- **Member** of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma.
- **Education:**
 - **Ph.D. and M.A.**, American Indian Studies, University of Arizona
 - **B.A.**, Liberal Arts, Colorado State University

Avoiding the Next Digital Divide

Defining Digital Sovereignty for Tribal Nations in the AI Age

Dr. Traci L. Morris
Executive Director and Research Professor

AIPI, based at Arizona State University, proactively addresses AI's opportunities and risks for communities, prioritizing equity, privacy, and human-centered design.

Our work ensures solutions deliver social benefit, uphold Tribal rights and dignity, and reduce inequities. We are firmly committed to defending Tribal sovereignty, consent, and self-determination in technology-related federal policymaking. *We encourage and support Tribal Nations in developing comprehensive plans for digital sovereignty, honoring each Nation's right to determine its digital path.*

We monitor policy, amplify Native voices, and offer research-driven recommendations to ensure technology respects and strengthens Tribal sovereignty. We also provide research, practical solutions, model codes, diverse speakers, and guidance to support Nations in creating or refining their strategies.

Bridging the digital divide on tribal lands

Center for Tribal Digital Sovereignty

ASU American Indian
Policy Institute
Arizona State University



Why AI? Why Now?



Tribal Nations are already Impacted

Infrastructure is already being placed near Tribal lands

Some Tribes are investing in Data Centers on Tribal lands

Types of AI: Narrow AI

- Task Specific
- Limitations
- No creative abilities
- Recognizes patterns and predicts
- Widely in use today

Types of AI : Generative AI

- Creating new and original content
- Capable of creative output
- Rapidly emerging
- Generates new content from patterns
- AI trained on massive datasets that generates human like responses or text—LLM

Tribal Digital Sovereignty, NCAI Definition

The **umbrella term** that encompasses the **exercise of sovereign authority** over **physical** and **virtual network infrastructure** and the intangible, virtual **digital jurisdictional aspects** of the acquisition, storage, transmission, access, and use of data, including policy developments that impact a **Tribal Nation's digital footprint** in both real-world and virtual spaces. Tribal Digital Sovereignty encompasses all aspects of a Tribal Nation's digital plan and footprint, such as Tribal codes, managing data protection, digital equity, network infrastructure, development of funding sources, education, healthcare, public safety and law enforcement, economic and community development, and capacity building.

5 values of Tribal digital sovereignty



[Download the TDS Guidebook](#)

ASU American Indian Policy Institute
Center for Tribal Digital Sovereignty
Arizona State University



Data is kin



Steward and govern the
digital world as we do land



Innovation and tradition in
balance



Community-centric digital
futures



Digital resilience across
Nations

Opportunity for Leadership

- Tribal Governments regulate AI
- Build AI policy and governance through digital sovereignty planning
- Enforce rights through consultation, FPIC, and other legal tools

Examples of Tribal Digital Sovereignty in Practice

- Cherokee Nation AI Policy
- Language Revitalization using AI
- Cultural Protocols guiding good data use

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Cherokee Nation Information Technology Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

Site: Cherokee Nation Government	Version: 1.0
Approver(s): Signed by: Paula Starr	Date Approved:
Effective Date: 6/25/2025 9:26 AM CDT	Next Review Date: Yearly
Principal Chief Hester August 21, 2025	

Printed copies are for reference only. Please refer to the electronic copy for the latest version.

1. Overview

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an integral part of modern technology, offering significant benefits across various sectors. However, its implementation must be governed by clear policies to ensure ethical use, data protection, and transparency. This AI Policy outlines the principles and guidelines for the responsible use of AI within Cherokee Nation.

2. Definitions

Artificial Intelligence (AI) - a set of technologies that enable computers and machines to simulate human learning, comprehension, problem-solving, decision-making, creativity, and autonomy. AI can perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as understanding and translating spoken and written language, analyzing data, making recommendations, and more.

Generative AI - sometimes called gen AI, is a type of artificial intelligence that can create original content such as text, images, videos, audio, or software code in response to a user's prompt or request

Large Language Model (LLM) is a type of artificial intelligence designed to understand and generate human-like text based on the patterns and structures it has learned from vast amounts of language data. These models are trained using advanced machine learning techniques and are capable of tasks such as answering questions, generating creative content, summarizing text, translating languages, and more. Examples include AI systems used for

Questions for the Future

- What does a sovereign Indigenous AI look like?
- How do we balance innovation with tradition?
- What laws, codes, and protections do we need?



**American Indian Policy Institute
Center for Tribal Digital Sovereignty**
Arizona State University

Avoiding the Next Digital Divide

Defining Digital Sovereignty for Tribal Nations in the AI Age

Dr. Traci L. Morris
Morgan Gray



2026 WRP Principals' Meeting

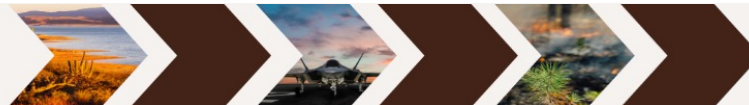


WRP Principals' Meeting Agenda

May 28-29, 2026 ♦ Deer Valley, Utah



- **Welcome and Opening Remarks**
 - Posting of the Colors
 - Tribal Invocation (Larry Cesspooch, Ute Spiritual Leader)
 - State Welcome
 - Introduction of Principals
- **Remarks by WRP Co-Chairs** (Utah, DOW, and DOI HQ)
- **WRP Overview and WRP SC Recommendations and Business Session**
- **Keynote Speakers**
- **Three Plenary Sessions:**
 - Water Security/Resilience
 - Wildland Fire (Response/ Prevention)
 - Aviation/ Airspace Needs

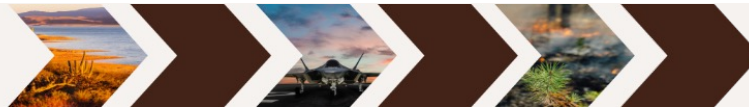


2026 WRP Report

DRAFT attached



- Report Outline:
 - Introduction to WRP
 - Executive Summary – not drafted yet
 - Summary of WRP Deep-Dive Efforts
 - WRP Working Definition of National Security
 - WRP Wildland Fire (Response/Prevention)
 - WRP Aviation/Airspace Needs Deep-Dive
 - WRP Water Security/Resilience Deep-Dive
 - WRP Tribal Engagement Committee – see attached
 - WRP Sentinel Landscape Temporary Working Group – not drafted yet
 - Acknowledgements





DRAFT 2026-2027 WRP Strategic Priority



WRP Mission Statement



WRP provides a proactive and collaborative framework for senior-policy level **Federal, State and Tribal** leadership to identify common goals and emerging issues in the states of **Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah** and to develop solutions that support WRP Partners and **protect natural and cultural resources, while promoting sustainability, homeland security and military readiness.**



2026-2027 WRP Strategic Priority

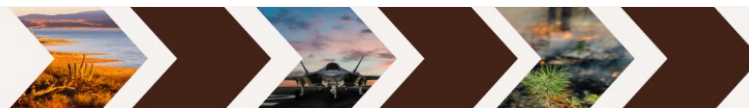
Proposed – Seeking Input



National Security for the West

Statement of Purpose:

The priority of “National Security for the WRP Region” is critical and timely. There are many issues of importance such as emergency management, preparedness for larger catastrophic events caused by fire, floods, etc., securing sufficient energy and water needs, importance of protecting critical assets from disaster, and supporting infrastructure needs. Other potential focus areas could be permitting reform, streamlining regulations, and other governmental efficiencies to better leverage and maximize efforts. The WRP Region has both significant resources and critical needs. Agencies are facing great challenges and success will depend on greater collaboration among state, federal, and tribal entities.



National Security for the West - Please rank the top 4 issues impacting or anticipated to impact your mission (1 is most important):



Ranking	Issue	Description
	Aviation/Airspace Needs	Increase collaboration, communication and collaboration among aviation users and regulating authorities on such items as: Airspace Modernization; adapting to new technologies; maintaining a safe and reliable aviation airspace infrastructure; and better Anti-Drone Tech/Counter-UAS Authorities.
	Cybersecurity and Critical Infrastructure	Sharing information/best practices on such issues as infrastructure hardening; best ways to deter and disrupt.
	Energy Security/Resilience	
	Frequency Spectrum Interference/Availability	
	Permitting Reform/Streamlining Regulations	
	Water Security/Resilience	Data Centers as they are an emerging and substantive resource challenge, especially water, for the West
	Wildfire Response and Emergency Management	Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, Recovery, Coordinated Wildfire Response to protect critical assets and infrastructure.
	AI/Technology	Review best practices on how governmental entities can more fully harness the power of technology to meet mission requirements.
	Other	



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 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



Policy Changes/Updates



- 'Energy dominance' agenda sidelines tribes
- FUNDING OPPORTUNITY: Energy Department Announces \$50 Million Investment to Advance Affordable, Reliable, and Secure Energy for Tribes. Applications are due July 24, 2026, at 5 PM ET
- \$6.6 Million Awarded in Tribal Wildlife Grants to Advance Shared Conservation Goals
- President Nygren, NTUA Meet with DOE Dominance Team to Advance Tribal Energy Financing and Expand Employment Opportunities
- Reclamation announces \$6.3 million in technical assistance to tribes
- Regional Roundtable 8: CEC Order Instituting an Informational Proceeding on Tribal Affairs and Tribal Energy Sovereignty (25-OIIP-01) – Center Valley Area. May 4th 9AM - 4PM, In-person only.
- The 2024-2026 National Ecological Drought & Tribal Webinar Series seeks to raise awareness of ecological drought, share actions that strengthen ecosystem resilience and mitigate the impacts of droughts, and highlight advancements in integrating interdisciplinary research and management needs for future drought planning and preparedness.
 - Ecological Drought: Integrating Ecological Drought Considerations into Restoration Efforts and Natural Resource Management Thursday, **April 30** at 11 a.m. PT [Register](#)
 - Ecological Drought: Collaborative Planning, Response, and Decision-Making, Wednesday, **May 13** at 12 p.m. PT [Register](#)
 - Ecological Drought: Drought Dashboards to Improve Drought Monitoring, Inform Tribal Resilience, and Preserve Ecological and Cultural Resources Tuesday, **May 26** at 11 a.m. PT [Register](#)
- NATHPO's 26th Annual Conference & Sacred Places Summit will take place **August 24-28**, 2026, will take place at the Hotel Albuquerque



WRP TEC Calls



May	▪ <i>Vacating call due to WRP Principals' Meeting</i>
June 26	▪ Update on WRP Principals' Meeting ▪ Making Interactive Media for Indigenous Communities - It's as easy as writing a blog by Dr. AnnMaria De Mars, President, 7 Generation Games
July 31	
August 28	▪ Working with the Government Accountability Office: GAO's Role and How It Relates to Tribes and Agencies by Anna Maria Ortiz, Director of Native American and Tribal Issues and Leslie Pollock, Assistant Director of Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Government Accountability Office
Sept 25	
Oct 30	



Around The Phone





Thank you!

2026-2027 WRP Strategic Priority

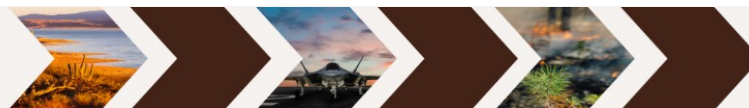
Expected Outcome



Note: The success of this effort depends on the availability of WRP Partner input and dedicated WRP resources. WRP Steering Committee and WRP Committee Co-Chairs will work throughout the year to support this Strategic Priority.

The 2026-2027 WRP Strategic Priority will seek to provide the following through webinars, monthly updates, maps, factsheets, and reports as appropriate:

- Identify national security issues impacting Federal agencies, States, and Tribal missions.
- Identify specific tools and resources needed by WRP Partners to better support issues of national security in the West and determine areas of commonality in which WRP Partners can leverage existing tools and resources or to develop necessary new tools and resources.
- Highlight best practices and approaches to leverage existing tools and resources.

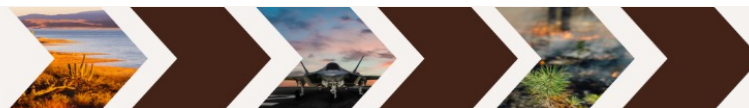


2026-2027 WRP Strategic Priority

2026-2027 Strategic Priority Project Phases



- **May 2026:**
 - Strategic Priority approved during 2026 WRP Principals' Meeting.
- **Summer 2026:**
 - Principals/WRP Leadership to submit the survey (Attachment A). To the extent possible, federal agencies are asked to please coordinate across any management regions so that the entire WRP geography (AZ, CA, CO, NM, NV, and UT) is included.
- **Through March 2027:**
 - WRP Steering Committee and WRP Committees will review input provided, conduct follow-on analysis, synthesize data, develop draft recommendations, facilitate additional agency coordination, and establish mutually agreed-upon actions and priorities to demonstrate progress.
- **Fall 2026:**
 - WRP Steering Committee and WRP Committee Co-Chairs will review analysis at their annual planning meeting. SC members will apprise their respective WRP Principals on progress.
- **April 2027:**
 - Final report with analysis and recommendations will be circulated in preparation for presentation and discussion at the 2024 WRP Principals' Meeting.
- **May 2027:**
 - Presentation and discussion of findings at the 2027 WRP Principals' Meeting.



2026-2027 WRP Strategic Priority

Draft Survey



Please complete the following by July 17, 2026, and submit to amyduffy@westernregionalpartnership.org All input will be consolidated and circulated among WRP Steering Committee and WRP Committee Co-Chairs for action.

- **Contact Information:**
- **Name of (State, Federal or Tribal) Entity:**
- **Contact Information:** Individual Completing this Form/Point of Contact for Questions or Follow Up (Name, Title, Email and Phone Number):

