

Responses to Summer 2022 RTOC Action Items

	Action Item	Tribal Contact	EPA Contact	Comment
1	Request Fiscal Training (NPETE). Request EPA to provide a link for the Fiscal Training material.	Nina Hapner	Kerry Drake/ Angela Mendiola	EPA does not have a contract with NPETE. The Grants Branch will request the Office of Grants and Debarment (OGD) to provide any updates on agency-wide fiscal training, during our Grants Session at the upcoming Annual EPA Tribal Conference. OGD does offer the EPA's Grants Management Training for Applicants and Recipients, an online training course designed to introduce EPA grant applicants and recipients to key aspects of the entire grant life cycle, from preparation of an application through grant closeout. Additionally, Region 9 has invested in guidance, training, and site visits for grant recipients. In 2020, the Region 9 Grants Branch created the "EPA Region 9 Grants Handbook" to address the needs of grant applicants and recipients by providing information on key topics related to applying for, managing and closing-out an EPA grant in an easy to understand, fun and reader-friendly format (see attached). The Grants Handbook complements the information provided in the EPA's Grants Management Training for Applicants and Recipients training modules and helps establish a solid foundation for understanding EPA's grant requirements. Annually, the Grants Branch assesses the need for updating the Handbook based on any changes in grant regulations, policies, etc. (Shared with Nina on 8.8.22)
2	Request 8-hour HAZWOPER Refresher Training	Eugenia, Navajo	Brian Davidson (ITCA)	ITCA will be hosting a virtual 8 hr HAZWOPER on September 6. Please contact Brian Davidson (brian.davidson@itcaonline.com) if you are not on his email distribution list or to ask him about registration. (Information shared with Eugenia on 8/8/22)
3	Request training on how to request and administers a PPG	Lisa Gover	Kerry Drake	Tim Wilhite, Howard Kahan, and Angela Mendiola (R9 PPG Workgroup) will be providing the training at the R9 Annual Tribal EPA Conference during a PPG session on Tuesday, October 25 at 2:45 in the Sand Harbor II Room.
4	Tribal Travel Budget; request EPA to provide an update on tribal travel budget, there are concerns because it is near the Annual Conference and there might not be enough funds available. Timing of not funding this budget is unacceptable, due to inflation costs. Tribal Caucus request that the budget be restored.	Tribal Caucus	Ruben Mojica Hernandez	Ruben Mojica Hernandez responded to this concern on 7/27/22 during the Response to Action Items session of the meeting and provided further details and clarifications at the GAP Workgroup meeting on 7/28/22. At both sessions Ruben clarified that no new money was added to the travel fund for FY23, but that \$26,000 still remains available. This is because EPA has prioritized using GAP funds to support GAP workplans, which most (if not all) include travel costs like the conference, RTOC, trainings, etc. EPA does however recognize this as an important resource for Tribes, and is aware that the travel fund will soon need to be replenished because \$26,000 is low. EPA hopes to use unobligated funds or new funds, to add to the travel fund soon. EPA would also like to note that if you are in need of travel costs for the upcoming conference, please submit your request to use funds from the travel fund as soon as possible. (Emailed to Mervin and team on 7.29.22)
5	Inflation and EPA budgets. Request that EPA share their thoughts on how Tribes can manage their ongoing programs in light of sky-high inflation and stagnant funding levels.	So Cal (Rob Roy)	Kerry Drake	Kerry Drake discussed during the Summer RTOC that EPA's appropriated funding has been relatively flat for years, and that when adjusted for inflation, we face many of the same challenges managing ongoing programs. He generally described the federal budgeting process, that the President submits a budget to Congress, and that ultimately, it is Congress's decision regarding what is appropriated. In FY22, Congress appropriated fewer funds to EPA than the President requested. Congress is now considering the President's FY23 budget request (Emailed to Rob Roy and team on 8.5.22)
6	What does the recent Supreme Court decisions mean to the EPA?	Tribal Caucus	Gretchen Busterud	Gretchen Busterud provided a presentation during the Summer RTOC. ORC will be presenting at the Annual Conference covering the Oklahoma v. Castro-Huerta case and providing more insight on EPA's perspective. The session will be taking place Thursday, October 27, 2022 from 2:30 pm – 3:30 pm.
7	Drought: how can EPA assist Tribes with drought issues/concerns. (this was previous RTOC Action Item. The response did not answer the question/request as what can the EPA do to assist Tribes.); Want to know what EPA is doing to check in with tribes and help them prepare for the drought situation this year. Have you worked with IHS to identify critical tribes? Additional tribes needing water hauling assistance? Not meeting compliance because of drought situations? Heard HABS mentioned, etc.	Nina Hapner	Tomas Torres; Jason Brush; Loretta Vanegas	During the prior period of drought the EPA, USDA, and Indian Health Services partnered to assess which Tribes would be most affected. A drought panel is scheduled for the annual conference on Tuesday afternoon October 25 (1:30 -2:30 / 2:45 -3:45) as Loretta proposed at RTOC. Several federal and State of California partners are on the panel to discuss funding and assistance for drought related concerns affecting drinking water systems on Tribal land as well as the participation of Nina Hapner, Environmental Director from Kashia Band to share her experience working with federal/state partners on drought related projects. The Region 9 Tribal Drinking Water Team has been meeting monthly with Indian Health Service, SWB Tribal Affairs Program, CA DWR to discuss assistance for Tribes in California.
8	Kelcey -concern about lack of EPA travel; GAP PO was hoping to do a site visit; No one from R9 will attend the air conference; She wants to have face to face contact with EPA and is disappointed that this isn't a priority for the agency, especially post-COVID	Kelcey Stricker	Kerry Drake, Elizabeth Adams	Kerry Drake and Elizabeth Adams discussed at the Summer RTOC. Kerry: This issue relates to the action item on flat budgets, above. During the beginning of FY22 the Agency knew that staff travel would be lower during COVID, so a portion of the travel funding that would normally be allocated was used for other Agency priorities. As travel has picked up, we have been able to help divisions find money for travel priorities, and in FY23 we expect to have a more normal travel budget for EPA. Elizabeth: We will be glad to see the funding level for this go back to normal. Right now we're at 30% of where we had been in the past. We've gone back to HQ and asked for more funding, so we will be able to support this action item.