The National Tribal Forum on Air Quality is a yearly gathering of air-management professionals to explore tribal air issues, gain new skills and build networking support. This year’s NTF takes place May 19–21 in Battle Creek, Michigan, at the Firekeepers Casino Hotel and Conference Center, owned and operated by our host tribe this year, the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi. We look forward to another productive gathering with the tribal air community to share information and ideas, expand networking opportunities—and have a whole lot of fun.

Much has changed at the forums since the first one took place 16 years ago. “Precursors” of the NTF took place in the early ’90s. Those were actually listening sessions, held in Chicago, Denver, and San Francisco. At those gatherings, EPA and ITEP staff listened and learned about tribal air-management needs, EPA encouraged tribes to enter the air-management community, and experienced agency hands shared information with tribes on how to establish and fund air programs.

The first official forums expanded on those basics; they focused heavily on the newly promulgated Tribal Authority Rule, addressing ways that tribes could use the rule to develop air programs and gain delegated authority to the extent they were willing or able to do so. ITEP co-founder Bill Auberle remembers the first NTFs as “humble affairs, organized on a shoestring” and sparsely populated by the relatively few tribes who had air programs, were developing programs, or wanted to know more. EPA officials did much of the presenting at those events. Much of their role was to explain details of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, describing their relevance to tribes, EPA officials did much of the presenting at those events. Much of their role was to explain details of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, describing their relevance to tribes, see FORUM on page 5

Nottawaseppis: Our NTF ‘15 Host Tribe

“it isn’t how many people you have but who you have,” says John Rodwan, Environmental Director for the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi. He’s referring to the tribe’s five-person environmental team, who oversee a vigorous program of environmental protection and cultural enhancement for their growing community. “We’re proud of what we’ve accomplished with our small, high-capacity department. It’s been a tremendous

The “Three Sisters,” corn, beans and squash, are fundamentals of the traditional Nottawaseppi diet and are grown on the reservation.

Native rights activist Winona LaDuke is a featured speaker at this year’s Tribal Forum.

see NTF HOST on page 3

see FORUM on page 5

IN THIS ISSUE
p. 1: National Tribal Forum ‘15
p. 1. NTF ‘15 Host Tribe
p. 2. From the Exec. Director
p. 4 Air Quality Course Update
p. 4. Natl. Tribal Air Assoc.
p. 5. Air Pollution Tech Course
Happy Spring, everyone! This year’s National Tribal Forum on Air Quality is just around the corner, and we’re gearing up for what will surely be another memorable event. Soon participants will be greeting old friends, making new ones, and sharing in the learning and networking opportunities that each NTF provides. This year’s forum, co-organized by ITEP and the National Tribal Air Association, is hosted by the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomis in Battle Creek, Michigan. We’re honored that the tribe has invited us into their community and grateful to the Nottawaseppi Tribal Council and Tribal Environmental Advisory Committee for laying out a warm welcome mat for this year’s attendees.

I want to offer my special thanks to Winona LaDuke, our keynote speaker this year. Winona is a powerful spokesperson for Native rights and environmental progress, and I know her talk will energize and inspire us all. She is also a dedicated farmer, and I’m especially grateful to her for taking time during the planting season to join us in Battle Creek.

I would also like to thank the National Tribal Air Association (NTAA) Executive Committee (EC), Janet McCabe, Jane Nishida, and the other EPA officials who will be joining us at this year’s forum. Some of the highest ranks from EPA’s air division have taken the time for several years running to join us and discuss issues of importance to the tribal air community. I believe their attendance is a gesture of respect, and I’m grateful for their presence.

Our staff at ITEP and members of the NTAA EC have done wonders—again—in shaping this year’s proceedings, another thoughtful mix of trainings, speakers and networking events. Special thanks to Lydia Scheer who is spearheading this year’s events, and thanks to all whose hard work have gone into this year’s gathering. I’m sure your efforts will be much appreciated by all.

I look forward to meeting with you at the forum. We’ll see you soon.
success story, and we feel like it’s important for us to connect with the larger environmental community.”

The tribe (sometimes referred to as the “Huron Potawatomis”) will take a giant step in that effort when they host this year’s National Tribal Forum. The event takes place May 19-21 in Battle Creek, Michigan, at the tribe’s newly opened hotel and convention center. The hotel and meeting space are an expansion of the NHBP’s Firekeepers Casino, now in its fifth year of operation and a significant driver for the tribe’s economic and environmental advancement.

Rodwan says the Nottawaseppi’s Tribal Environmental Advisory Committee, which guides his department’s initiatives, has done great work gearing up for the NTF. Under the TEAC’s direction they’ve launched a cooperative effort among tribal departments that includes environmental, transportation, communication and cultural. “Once we got the forum hosting role,” he says, “we created a budget, but it quickly became apparent that the early budget wasn’t sufficient. So tribal council stepped things up with additional funding. We’re very proud of our community, we’ve got a lot to show people, and we’re taking the event very seriously.”

Attendees can participate in a guided tour of the community one evening during the forum. Seventy tribal members now live on the Pine Creek Reservation just south of Battle Creek. After having scattered over the years, largely into urban environments, tribal members began returning to the reservation after the federal government re-recognized the tribe in 1995.

At that time, says Rodwan, the community faced serious economic challenges. After federal re-recognition, a steady program of economic development was initiated that continues and has already yielded impressive results. The launch of the Firekeepers Casino in 2009 accelerated the tribe’s development, for example helping to support construction of numerous energy-efficient, single-family dwellings into which many returning NHBP members have settled. “HUD is really happy with what we’ve done here,” Rodwan says. “These are not high-density homes but single-family, and we’re building them LEED-certified, energy-efficient with good thermal design.”

Indoor air quality is the major focus of the tribe’s one-person air department, a response to high rates of asthma and the need to protect the general health of the tribal community. Ambient air quality management, says Rodwan, “is on the horizon, but that’ll probably be some time off—we don’t have any industrial emitters nearby, and right now we’re heavily focused on IAQ.”

A “healthy community” focus is also shared by other tribal government staff, including departments of Planning, Housing, Cultural—and of course a Health Department—all of whom influence the health of the community. Not only are newer homes at Nottawaseppi LEED-certified and radon-monitored/mitigated, but older homes have been refitted to reduce radon exposure, a concern on the reservation.

Evacuation fans, airflow designs, and, in older homes, the use of “sump pumps and other creative solutions” are some of the solutions they’ve developed to reduce radon exposure. “Everyone’s interested in radon mitigation on a shoestring,” Rodwan notes. “We’ve been able to mitigate a bunch of houses for $1200 a pop, which is pretty good.” Other IAQ issues, such as moisture control and mold reduction, are also addressed in new and existing housing.

At some point tribal structures will be “greened” even more through an innovative pilot project by the tribe that has already proven its worth. Thermal solar panels (the panels heat liquid for energy rather
Upcoming AIAQTP Courses

Intro to Tribal Air Quality  June 2–5  Flagstaff, AZ
Climate Change Webinar Series
  May 29  “About the Local Environmental Observer (LEO) Network”
  June 24  “Impacts of Climate Change on Tribal Health”
  June 26  “Extreme Weather Events and Climate Change”
  TBA    “Climate Change Impacts on Fish and Wildlife”
Treatment As a State (TAS)  Sept. 1–3  TAMS, Las Vegas, NV
Air Pollution Modeling  Sept. 22–24  Denver, CO

Dates and locations can change. For updates, visit: www4.nau.edu/itep/aq/training_aq.asp

The National Tribal Air Association: Co-Sponsor of the National Tribal Forum

In recent years ITEP and its Tribal Air Monitoring Support (TAMS) Center have partnered with the National Tribal Air Association to organize and facilitate the National Tribal Forum. Since its founding in 2002, the NTAA has been a leading voice for tribal air-quality issues, programs, and policies. Its membership roster now numbers 94 member tribes.

Andy Bessler, ITEP’s NTAA Project Director, says of the 2015 NTF, “This is a really special place and time for everyone to come together and share information, to talk about what's important to them.” In that spirit, the NTAA’s executive committee has pursued two main priorities for this year’s forum: developing meaningful topics for participants at every level, and strengthening the two-way sharing process between tribes and U.S. EPA.

The organization’s executive committee has worked hard to help shape the agenda for this year’s forum, drawing on the input of member tribes to determine air-management needs in Indian country. Some of the NTAA’s Executive Committee (EC) members are doing double-duty at this year’s NTF, serving as presenters on various agenda topics, including mining issues and climate change adaptation. NTAA members will also present at a plenary session on regional and national air quality priorities, determined via consultation with NTAA member tribes.

To help keep the lines open between tribes and U.S. EPA, the EC has invited each of EPA’s regional representatives “to come and hear the tribes’ priorities and engage in conversations on those issues.” Andy says he’s heartened that high-level EPA officials have chosen to attend the NTF year after year. Officials such as Janet McCabe, Acting Assistant Administrator of EPA’s Office of Air and Radiation; Jane Nishida, Acting Asst. See NTAA on page 9.
TRIBAL FORUM - from front page

and pointing to funding opportunities for tribes who chose to assume air-management responsibilities and, for some, sovereign authority, over the environmental management of their lands.

Over the years, as tribal air quality professionals have developed programs and gained expertise, the shape and character of NTF gatherings has changed to reflect that development. These days NTF attendees represent a mix of highly knowledgeable tribal air staff who mingle with newcomers. The mix includes staff from single-person air programs to those representing advanced programs with multiple employees who handle a variety of air quality tasks.

Training sessions and other activities these days cover not only basic air-related concepts but detailed discussions of complex issues such as methylmercury pathways, indoor-air measuring technologies, ambient monitoring and its challenges, and federal air rules that impact tribes.

Tribal air staff now instruct many of the breakout sessions, and top-level EPA staff consistently visit the forums to engage staff, including members of the TAMS Steering Committee and the National Tribal Air Association, the latter a tribal collective whose 94 member tribes contribute heavily to each NTF agenda.

In recent years four main tracks have shaped the NTF agenda: technical-skills development; federal rules and regulations; indoor air quality (a topic of growing importance as tribes recognize the need to maintain healthy air in homes and offices); and climate change, an issue on which tribes have really led the way nationally.

The forum has grown to be a valuable social resource for tribal air staff as well. Each year’s gathering is “old home week” where long-term attendees catch up, share laughs, and invite incoming air-program staff to create support networks that will help to solve problems and develop new skills.

Each National Tribal Forum is a celebration of the progress tribes have made in protecting the health of their communities and ecosystems. We look forward to gathering with you this year, and we hope NTF 2015 provides you with new ideas, skills, partnerships, and progress in all your efforts. 😊

Visit ITEP’s website for the NTF agenda and more information on forum presenters, vendors, speakers, and events:

www4.nau.edu/itep/conferences/confr_ntf.asp

TAMS at the Forum

At NTF ’15, ITEP’s Tribal Air Monitoring and Support (TAMS) Center, a technical training and support program based in Las Vegas, Nevada, will provide a comprehensive look at TAMS services to the tribes.

TAMS co-directors Chris Lee and Farshid Farsi will provide an overview of TAMS services. TAMS technical expert, Glenn Gehring, will present on Ozone Design Value GIS maps he developed for the NTAA’s State of Tribal Air Report. Melinda Ronca-Battista, who with her colleague Angelique Luedeker handles much of the Center’s data-management training and support, will present on the Tribal Data Toolbox 3.0, TAMS-developed AQS support videos, and TurboQAPP, a tool to help tribal air staff more-easily produce Quality Assurance Project Plans. The Center’s staff will also have a table at the Ecocafé and will maintain an information booth throughout the forum.
ITEP’s latest Air Pollution Technology (Tech) course took place March 2–5 and drew attendees from Minnesota to southern California to the training site at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. As its name implies, “Tech” is a “Level 2” course (moderate complexity) that addresses technical issues of air-quality management, such as monitoring methods, data-management principles, emissions inventory tools and skills and meteorological factors in air pollution transport.

Eleven tribal staff attended the four-day course, utilizing NAU facilities that included a conference room, an engineering lab, and a computer-equipped technology center to explore course topics.

Darold Wallick was one of eleven tribal air staff attending the course. An Air Quality Technician for the Pala Band of Mission Indians in southern California, Darold says he’s involved in “every aspect of air monitoring at Pala. I deal with the equipment, the data, uploading.” He’s also gotten involved in regional tribes’ efforts to form a Primary Quality Assurance Organization (PQAO), a collective designed to provide mutual support for data management. “There are so many tribes in southern California,” he says, “and we’re in the process of trying to form the PQAO to help each other out and maybe save EPA some money.”

Darold has a strong background in technology, with eight years in an IT position. That background has been helpful as he extends his skill set into air-quality management. He’s attended numerous ITEP courses since signing on with the tribe last July, “to get as familiar as possible with my work.”

To date he has attended the Tech course as well as Introduction to Tribal Air Quality, Air Quality Computations, and the GIS for Air Quality course, held at ITEP’s TAMS Center in Las Vegas, Nevada. “Some of this course,” he says of the Tech training, “is review, but in every course I’ve learned something new, and I’ve definitely learned new things here. For example, we were testing [vehicle] emissions in the parking lot, which was new to me. We’ve done lab work—I kind of knew what happens with air samples, but actually getting the hands-on was great experience; it really helped to open my eyes on what’s going on on the ‘other side.’”

He plans to further expand his air knowledge by attending the National Tribal Forum in May, “and there’s a State Implementation Plan course I might be taking as my next ITEP class.”

Darold notes that ITEP has assisted him in other ways beyond classroom instruction. “I borrowed someone from ITEP for a week, which turned my workspace into a classroom. Glenn Gehring [an ITEP technical staff member who works with tribes via the TAMS Center] worked wonders with me; it was an awesome experience. He makes sure that people [he assists] are very hands-on—he wants you to work with the equipment yourself, while he stands by, supervises, quizzes you on what you’re doing. It was definitely worth the time. I try to tell people, especially those who aren’t familiar with air work, not knowing much yet, that this is a great program for helping folks out and getting them up to speed.”

Melanie Lawson, an Air Quality Technician for the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, also attended the March Tech training in Flagstaff. Like Darold, she says ITEP’s courses and assistance have been a big help since she took her present position last July, after graduating from the
Nottawaseppi’s small environmental department also addresses water quality, land and habitat issues; despite their compact staff roster, they’re able to accomplish a great deal, partly through the seasonal use of tribal employees. The tribe has 106 Treatment as a State (TAS) status for pollution control, and they’re working on TAS 319 for stormwater management. “We’re looking at generating our own water-quality codes,” Rodwan says, “and we should be there shortly.”

Brownfields management is another focus of the tribe’s work, through its Lands division. “We’re building a lot of our environmental capacity through brownfields grants, such as hazardous-waste handling codes and waste management. We do recycling as well.”

The tribe’s wildlife division is heavily involved in cultural reinvigoration through programs such as wild rice, maple syrup and black ash management; they also promote community gardens for tribal members. “All these earth-based, culturally relevant programs are centered in and managed through our natural resources. We do a lot of cultural outreach through our natural resources.”

Rodwan says Nottawaseppi is gratified to be hosting this year’s NTF and is proud to showcase their community and its accomplishments. “I think attendees will see a small tribe that has generated a high-capacity ability to protect the environment, live in a sustainable manner, and recognize traditional lifestyles.”

2010 Enbridge Oil Spill

On July 26, 2010, a 30-inch oil pipeline owned by Enbridge Energy Partners ruptured near Marshall, Michigan, 25 miles NE of the Nottawaseppi reservation. More than 840,000 gallons of oil flowed into nearby Talmadge Creek and eventually reached the Kalamazoo River and its floodplains. The massive spill devastated wildlife populations, land, water, recreation, vegetation and other resources, including resources under the jurisdiction of the NHBP.

U.S. EPA managed an extensive cleanup program for four years before turning the responsibility over to the state of Michigan. The work continues. “The tribe is participating as a stakeholder and has a seat on the Natural Resources Damage and Assessment Council,” says Nottawaseppi Environmental Director, John Rodwan. “Although much progress has been made, cleanup is not complete.”

Basket-making is a traditional practice of Potawatomi people. Black ash, the source for these elegant creations, is at risk due to damage by the Emerald Ash Borer.

TECH COURSE – from page 6

University of Oklahoma with a Bachelor’s in Environmental Sustainability.

“We have a 103 grant,” she says. “There are four of us in the environmental department. I’m the air department. When I started the job, they were pretty much still gathering information [in preparation to launch an air program]. Since then I’ve done a Level 4 emissions inventory and worked on indoor air quality. I also work on recycling and do outreach to the community. I’ve had some educational get-togethers with Headstart-aged kids, talking to them about IAQ, asthma, carbon monoxide. It’s maybe a little above their education level,” she adds with a laugh, “but it’s a learning process—and they’re adorable. We’re just trying to plant some seeds in their young heads: Bad air hurts your lungs, etc. They received it well.”

The need to get up to speed in her air work, she says, began the moment she arrived. “I walked in the first day and I was already behind—they’d already filed for an extension on the workplan. So I started doing classes with Melinda [Ronca Battista, a data-management specialist with the TAMS Center] on compiling an EI, because that was my first task. Without knowing really anything about air, I just jumped in and did the EI. It worked out great, though I basically broke the TEISS [emissions inventory software designed for tribal air staff] because Choctaw Nation is so large; we cover parts of three states. It was a lot of data. Thank God for Melinda and Angelique (Luedeker)—I couldn’t have done it without them.”

Since then Melanie has attended “a ton of training with ITEP. After I did the EI, I just jumped into indoor air quality. I did a lot of classes with Mansel [Nelson, a member of ITEP’s teaching staff]. If anyone has an IAQ issue, they call me. I also distribute carbon monoxide detectors to tribal members.”

Her attendance at the Tech course partly reflects a desire by the Choctaw environmental department’s to extend its reach into ambient air concerns. For example, earlier, the tribe’s location north of Texas oil and industrial sources compelled them to set up ozone monitoring on the tribe’s southern edge.
“The monitor has been closed down for two years,” Melanie says, “and there’s a data gap. I decided, looking at prevailing winds coming up from north Texas, to look at that.”

They’ve submitted a grant proposal to restart the ozone monitor. “If that gets approved, we’ll be running a monitoring station down in Choctaw County.”

She says the Tech course has informed and inspired her. “It’s shown me a lot about the technical side of ambient air. I have a pretty good grasp now on the wind rose, and the MiniVol [particulate monitor]. Actually, given our EI data, PM monitoring in our area probably wouldn’t be a bad idea. And I’ve learned more about the chemistry. And learning about the numbers behind the data—the real numbers—has given me a much rounder picture of what’s going on.”

Melanie is energized by her work in air quality. “I come from a sustainability background, and air was a natural path for me. If you’re thinking about sustainability and you widen your view, it’s clear that what goes into the air trickles down and has a wider impact on all systems, on biodiversity, etc. I didn’t realize it at the time I started this, but I’m much more aware now of how much air impacts what happens on the ground.”

Ben Benoit is a member of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and a former chemist who came to his tribe’s air department last October. He attended the University of Minnesota and lived in the Twin Cities before taking the Leech Lake job and returning to his tribe’s rural setting. Ben’s work at Leech Lake includes air tasks centered on monitoring, site management, outreach, and IAQ assessments, as well as assistance with radon-related activities. He’s also the tribe’s Underground Storage Tanks Coordinator and is learning skills in that realm as well.

He says before working in air quality management, he hadn’t realized “how big the world of air quality really is. You can go global or focus on someone’s bathroom—those are the kinds of problems you’re asked to look at. And you have to know your stuff on either one of them. That’s a lot of information to take in.”

To help narrow the information gap, Ben has embarked on a crash course of sorts, an effort aided by his previous education and experience in the technology sector. His skills development process has included online training, including webinars in IAQ, and mentoring by Brandy Toft, a Leech Lake Air Quality Specialist and a longtime air pro. The Tech course was his first ITEP training.

Ben says a big reason for attending the course relates to some of his present work challenges: “We have all this data, and we’re trying to figure out what to do with it. ‘How can I make this data work for me? Why is it important?’ Those kinds of questions.”

The course, he says, has helped him in that effort and extended his understanding to other areas of his work. “A lot of the modeling stuff has been helpful,” he says, adding that he would like to expand on that topic by taking ITEP’s Air Pollution Modeling course (ITEP will offer a Modeling course in September). “It’s also been good going over all the different aspects of cleaning the air in a facility—scrubbers, electrostatic precipitators, that sort of stuff. And some of the chemistry.”

Ben believes the course’s focus on source-related technologies and systems will help him reduce his research time when he’s reading and evaluating air permits. “Before, I had a rudimentary understanding of the technologies and concepts they were talking about, and I’d have to gather a lot of background information. I’ll still have to do some of that, get down to specifics, but having taken the Tech course will make it a lot easier to go through a permit. And I think I’ll have a lot better questions to ask and comments to make.”
Administrator of International and Tribal Affairs; Mike Flynn, who heads the Office of Radiation and Indoor Air; Matt Tejada, Director of the Office of Environmental Justice; and Pat Childers, Senior Indian Program Manager, will be on hand this year to listen to tribal staff and share the agency’s perspectives on the EPA-tribal partnership.

Andy notes that direct benefits have accrued from prior EPA visits to the forum. For example, he says, Jane Nishida “came to the NTF last year, heard about some tribal air issues directly, took that information back to EPA and actually addressed some of those issues.” Another example: During an NTF visit several years ago, former OAR Assistant Administrator (and now Administrator of U.S. EPA), Gina McCarthy, learned about process issues that were hampering tribal efforts to obtain air grants. As a result, she sent out an agency-wide memorandum to grant-overseers to take new approaches to the grant-application process, to help “level the playing field.”

**NTAA’s Ongoing Initiatives**

One of the NTAA’s primary efforts is to keep abreast of national policies that impact tribes and tribal air programs. NTAA executive committee members meet regularly by phone to discuss upcoming policies and develop strategies to bolster tribal influence on air quality and climate change policies. From those conversations, NTAA staff (including ITEP Research Specialist Sr. Cristina Gonzalez-Maddux) develop Policy Response Kits that go out to tribes; the packets describe potential policy impacts, provide fact sheets and template documents on how to submit comment letters, and otherwise serve as tools to enhance tribal influence on policy development.

NTAA recently formed a IAQ workgroup and will be meeting at NTF this year to learn more about a “conceptual agreements” between HUD and the BIA to generate support for tribal indoor air quality efforts, through the federal Healthy Homes initiative. EPA officials, Andy says, recognize the existing support and funding gap for tribal IAQ (EPA has no enforcement authority and little funding to address indoor-air issues). The agency, he says, is making an effort to fill that gap by “spreading their influence to other agencies to help generate tribal IAQ funding assistance, code development in tribal housing,” and other approaches. At this year’s forum, NTAA members will present on the workgroup’s effort, including a developing program to support training opportunities for tribal IAQ grant writers and project managers.

NTAA will also be presenting the Status of Tribal Air Report (STAR) at NTF and providing copies for all attendees on flash drives. The STAR provides a snapshot of tribal air programs across Indian Country and spells out specific policy and funding recommendations to EPA and other governmental leaders on how best to support tribal air programs to do what they do best: help their tribal communities breathe easier.

**NTAA Mission and Goals**

The mission of the NTAA is to advance air quality management policies and programs, consistent with the needs, interests, and unique legal status of American Indian Tribes and Alaska Natives.

**GOALS**

- Advocate and advance tribal environmental, cultural, and economic interests in the development of air policy at all levels of government (tribal, federal, state, local, and international).
- Promote the development, funding, and capacity building of tribal air management programs.
- Promote and facilitate air quality policy and technical information that may include research and scientific and medical studies.
- Advance the recognition and acceptance of tribal sovereign authority by conducting effective communication and outreach to state, local, federal, and international agencies, and the general public.
- Encourage and support appropriate consultation with all tribal governments in accordance with tribal structures and policies.