Tribal Air Monitoring Support (TAMS) Center—On Solid Ground

When we discussed the Tribal Air Monitoring Support Center for this article in late April, co-directors Chris Lee and Farshid Farsi were busy preparing for the 2017 National Tribal Forum on Air Quality, fielding questions, shipping monitors and otherwise coordinating and getting technical information to presenters in the forum’s Technical and Outreach breakout sessions. A few days later they would be heading out to the Pascua Yaqui Reservation near Tucson, Arizona, where they would contribute their expertise to assist hundreds of tribal air staffers who attended the event.

In a way those busy few days represent in miniature the kinds of support the TAMS staff offers to tribal air professionals year-round. The small but robust staff at TAMS assists tribes with

2017 National Tribal Forum on Air Quality

This year’s National Tribal Forum on Air Quality—a three-day gathering (with a fourth optional day) of tribal air professionals, federal officials, academics, air-technology vendors and nongovernmental organization staff—was one of our largest forums yet, with 206 attendees as well as tribal leaders, presenters, EPA and state environmental staff, vendors and others. The 2017 event, held May 1–4, was hosted by the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, whose land, casino and hotel are located on the western edge of Tucson, Arizona.

We would like to thank Chairman Robert Valencia and the tribe for providing forum-goers with a warm and welcoming environment. We’re also grateful to our partners, the National Tribal Air Association and the Tribal Air Monitoring Support (TAMS) Center, for orchestrating this year’s exceptional event.

As with a number of recent forums, NTFAQ 2017 centered around four topic tracks, guided by the needs and preferences that tribes have expressed to the TAMS Steering Committee, the National Tribal Air Association, ITEP course instructors, EPA staff and others. Sessions on those topics—AQ Technical & Outreach, Indoor Air Quality, AQ Policy & Regulations, and Climate Change—were organized and led by experts from tribes, government and academia, offering forum-goers the high

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Summer is here in all its glory, and many of you are probably planning your getaways. For those taking time off, I wish you a wonderful break from all your hard work and that you return refreshed and eager to continue serving our communities.

At ITEP, our classroom air courses for this fiscal year are winding down with an Introduction to Tribal Air Quality classroom course in June and a mid-July course, New Source Review and Title V Permitting, in Fargo, North Dakota. The Air Team is also planning for next fiscal year’s roster of courses.

ITEP’s Environmental Education and Outreach Program (EEOP) has been busy organizing summer events for tribal youth and overseeing its yearly internship program.

In early May, we enjoyed another great National Tribal Forum on Air Quality (NTFAQ). Organized in partnership with the Pascua Yaqui Tribe (PYT), the Tribal Air Monitoring and Support (TAMS) Center, the National Tribal Air Association (NTAA) and EPA, this year’s event has garnered numerous positive reviews from attendees. We’re grateful to our partners for their tremendous work organizing the forum. Over 200 participants attended our 2017 gathering at the PYT’s beautiful hotel-casino-golf course complex outside of Tucson, Arizona. In this issue, we take a look at NTFAQ activities and bring you lots of photos of the event. To see even more NTFAQ photos, visit Flickr by clicking the following link: TribalForumPhotos.

Most of us are aware of discussions in Washington DC regarding potential funding cuts for federal environmental program support. No one knows yet how that might impact tribal air funding, but here at ITEP, we are already developing strategies to continue providing you with the best possible support for your air-quality work. Regardless of what the next budget round may bring, we will continue to be here for you. I will update you with some of our strategies in the next Native Voices. If you have suggestions, please contact me.

Lastly, I am honored to announce and invite all of you to ITEP’s 25-Year Anniversary on September 11, 2017, in Flagstaff, Arizona. We will honor all of you who are serving our tribal communities, those who served, our leadership, partners and staff. The legendary Winona LaDuke will inspire us as our keynote speaker. The event will be held in collaboration with Northern Arizona Universities’ Biennial Conference of Science and Management on the Colorado Plateau and Southwest Region (CLICK HERE for a link to the conference website). Limited travel scholarships are available for those who wish to attend (email nikki.cooley@nau.edu for scholarship information). I welcome you to join us in person. If you cannot, please join us through your words. Send your written thoughts and impressions on ITEP, to be included in the institute’s “Book of Memories," to Ann-Marie.Chischilly@nau.edu.

ITEP’s 25-Year Anniversary is a milestone, a time of reflection on where we, as Indigenous Peoples, have come from and to envision where we will be in the future. No matter the challenges, we are resilient and we will endure, as our ancestors did. My blessings to all of you.
TAMS – from front page

loanable air monitoring equipment and other hardware for both indoor and ambient air analysis; consults with tribal staff on data management and submissions to various databases; provides an information conduit between tribes and federal staff; organizes and instructs classroom courses on complex technical aspects of managing air quality on tribal lands; acts as a liaison between tribes and a contracted filter-weighing lab; provides a wealth of learning resources via a video and technical-documents library; and responds to any and all technical needs of tribal air pros.

It’s a tall order for an onsite staff of three (one position is vacant, and three other TAMS staff work from remote locations), but their passion and commitment have earned widespread respect for TAMS throughout Indian country. “Whatever the request is,” Chris assures those who might draw on their services, “the TAMS Center will make every effort to provide help with whatever project you’re working on. If TAMS lacks the expertise in-house to address a request, the TAMS Center will seek outside expertise to assist. The TAMS Center will make an effort to not turn tribes away.”

TAMS, launched in 2000, is a joint partnership between ITEP and EPA and is co-directed to reflect that partnership. Farshid Farsi is co-director on the EPA side. His work encompasses most aspects of TAMS operations, but he is especially focused on funding issues, overseeing the equipment-loan program (including hiring a new equipment manager after the former staffer, Kent Bartholomew, resigned in April), and acting as a communication conduit between TAMS and EPA staff who reside in the building and throughout the country.

Chris Lee, who co-directs TAMS on the ITEP side of the partnership, plans, assists and sometimes instructs classroom trainings. He also responds to requests from tribal staff for professional assistance, which is generally provided by one or more of ITEP staffers Melinda Ronca-Battista (data management), Angelique Luedeker (data and specifically emissions inventories), and Glenn Gehring (air-monitoring hardware operation and maintenance). Chris is also the primary contact point and support for the TAMS Steering Committee, for whom he organizes meetings, provides input and otherwise assists wherever he’s needed.

Administrative Associate Darlene Santos handles the sometimes voluminous paperwork at TAMS, arranges travel for staff and course participants, and manages much of the logistic work performed at the Center and in the field.

TAMS is located in the EPA National Center for Radiation Field Operations office building near the campus of the University of Nevada Las Vegas. The EPA operation, headed by Director Dr. Ed Wilds, is a national staging center for field work on efforts such as the two radiation-contamination projects they’re now pursuing on the Navajo Nation. The TAMS Center is loosely involved in that particular effort, having loaned EPA staff three AlphaGUARD continuous radon monitors to use in one of the projects. Chris, a member of the Navajo Nation, is also helping as a liaison to the tribe.

Although TAMS and the NCRFO have separate missions, they do provide mutual support; the federal unit draws on TAMS whenever their work involves Indian tribes, and the TAMS Center draws on the support of the NCRFO whenever tribes require assistance that involves radiation assessment.

LAB WORKS

“The Lab is alive again,” says Farshid. He’s referring to a new level of stability that has settled in at TAMS after an uncertain few years during which EPA moved some operations from what was the Radiation and Indoor Environments National Laboratory in Las Vegas and reorganized the facility into its present configuration. In 2013, more than a decade after TAMS was born and housed at the University of Nevada Las Vegas campus, all analytical functions at the national lab were removed from the NCRFO. With those departures and the subsequent reorganization, the future of TAMS at the federal facility was for a time in doubt.

Some of the federal functions at the lab were especially important to tribal air programs. They included a radon-canister program, whose customers, Farshid says, were “about 85% tribes. That was an environmental justice program.” A few months after the radon program shut down in spring of 2013, EPA shut down its gravimetric laboratory, disrupting a service on which tribes had long relied. New leadership came to Las Vegas, and the lab was rechristened the National Center for Radiation Field Operations.
Course planning for FY18 is still underway. For updates, visit:
http://www7.nau.edu/itep/main/Training/training_air

ITEP Celebrates 25 Years!

On Sept. 11, ITEP will celebrate a quarter-century of service to tribal environmental professionals. ITEP’s anniversary event will take place in Flagstaff, AZ, in conjunction with the Biennial Conference on Science and Management on the Colorado Plateau. You’re invited! We welcome ITEP alumni and others to join us.

Financial assistance is available for tribal citizens or environmental staff associated with tribes located in the SW or Great Basin regions who are attending all four days of the conference (contact: nikki.cooley@nau.edu).

To learn more about the conference, visit: http://nau.edu/merriam-powell/biennial-conference/

U.S. EPA Tribal Air Contacts

To contact U.S. EPA’s Tribal Air support staff, visit the web at:
https://www.epa.gov/tribal-air

Introduction to Tribal Air Quality

In early June in Flagstaff, AZ, ITEP held one of its final air training courses for FY17, Introduction to Tribal Air Quality. Below are images from one lab portion of the course, in which participants learned about CO2 and pH.

“Intro” features a combination of lab and classroom study.

Instructor Pat Ellsworth (R) assists Feliciano Cruz and Eunice Brower on a pH experiment.

Mike Taylor (red shirt) and Brian McGaughey explore pH concepts.
The number of tribal experts increases with each forum; they bring years of experience and cutting-edge knowledge on air-related topics, from new monitoring devices to bedbug treatments to climate resiliency planning.

This year’s NTFAQ featured several new elements: the inclusion of tribal students; a “Tribal Air Quality Big Ideas” event, modeled after the popular TED Talks, in which speakers shared their observations on topics that included health, social justice and working in the tribal air field; and a repeat of the “Tribal Air Quality Talk Show” (first introduced at NTFAQ 2016 to popular acclaim) in which experts explored various air-related topics. All were well received and will likely continue in future forums.

Pre-NTFAQ Optional Sessions

Four optional sessions presented the day before the official start of the forum offered early arrivers additional learning opportunities. The all-day classes included Smoke-Ready Tribal Communities, Radon Technical Training, and Identifying IAQ Programs. A fourth pre-session addressed the recent Volkswagen Settlement, which will bring $60 million to tribes to support pollution-reduction programs.

One of four NTFAQ pre-sessions focused on the Volkswagen settlement. After creating “cheat devices” to deceive pollution-testing equipment, the company was caught and agreed to pay restitution. Some $60 million of that penalty will go to tribes to fund pollution-reduction programs. The session addressed both settled issues in the case and questions that linger, such as how the funds will be allotted and what projects can be funded under the agreement. Several experts, including federal agency lawyers and EPA diesel-program staff, were on hand to discuss the settlement.
NTAA Annual Meeting and Luncheon

The National Tribal Air Association, an advocacy group for tribes and tribal air programs, held its biannual person-to-person meeting at a lunch on the patio of the Pascua Yaqui Hotel and Casino. Over 120 tribes are now members of the organization, and more than 60 representatives from NTAA member tribes attended the event.

The NTAA is tribal air’s chief advocacy group, and part of its mission is to apprise federal staff on air-related issues and needs in Indian country. A highlight of the meeting was the annual hand-off of NTAA’s Status of Tribal Air Report to EPA representatives. Some of the issues of primary importance identified by tribes in this year’s STAR report included sovereignty and consultation, funding and resources, support for new tribal air programs, indoor air quality support, and many other issues.

Networking Sessions

An informal-but-moderated networking event brought forum participants together to explore a variety of air-related topics, including indoor air quality, program funding, data management, air quality modeling and federal policy. One table was reserved especially for newcomers to the air quality world.

The annual presentation of NTAA’s Status of Tribal Air Programs report to EPA officials took place at the NTAA’s annual meeting and luncheon at the forum. Shown here, L to R: Andy Bessler, NTAA Project Director; Andrew Baca, U.S. EPA; Pat Childers, EPA; Wilfred Nabahe, NTAA Chair; and Elaine Wilson, ITEP/NTAA Program Coordinator Sr.

More than 60 representatives from NTAA’s 120+ member tribes attended the association’s annual meeting and luncheon on the patio of the Casino Del Sol Resort, where they caught up on NTAA business, shared a meal and got the chance to meet and catch up with friends.

Attendees at the networking tables listened to short presentations by topic experts, asked questions and shared their own experiences with other air staffers.
and tasked with handling emergency response and other fieldwork.

After the reorganization, TAMS continued to offer much of its previous support to tribes, but questions around the center’s future location and its partnership with EPA hovered for more than a year.

Stability has since returned to the TAMS Center. Its mission is clear again, and its support from EPA has been reaffirmed. Predictability is a crucial factor in TAMS’ ongoing operations, both for tribes and for the operation itself. Chris says much of the credit for the Center’s renewed stability goes to the TAMS Steering Committee.

**TAMS Steering Committee—Crucial Links**

The two co-directors laud the work of the TAMS Steering Committee, a volunteer group of tribal air professionals who give their time and expertise to guide the center’s work and keep TAMS, EPA and ITEP’s air-training program staff informed on tribal air needs across Indian country. Each steering-committee member is an air-program staffer representing her/his region, and each keeps abreast of regional needs.

During the EPA lab’s transition, Chris says, “EPA could have disinvested in the TAMS Center collaboration. But I think largely because they heard regularly from the steering committee, support for the TAMS Center was reaffirmed. The steering committee provides an invaluable service in getting the word out to EPA leadership and people who control the funding.”

Composed of a rotating membership, the steering committee is an integral part of the TAMS structure. Chris and Farshid have both spent time on the committee and have witnessed up-close the evolution of the TAMS Center and its steering groups over the years.

Farshid recalls, “Fifteen years ago, most of the training and support from TAMS revolved around particulate monitoring. That was most of what we did until around 2006.” From the beginning, The steering committee relayed news from Indian country on air needs and worked to ensure that resources were available to meet those needs.

Chris says in the earlier years, steering TAMS in a particular direction was a difficult endeavor. Although committee members understood tribal air needs in their regions, the committee hadn’t yet developed a national strategy other than to try to address EPA goals for a given year, while also responding to every tribal request they could reasonably handle.

Responding to tribal needs, Chris and Farshid agree, has always been the point of TAMS Center support—giving tribes what they want and need rather than simply fulfilling a federally defined role. Sometimes the work has aligned with federal efforts and other times less so. Tribes have always lauded the help they’ve gotten from TAMS, but as tribal air expertise has expanded at its own rate, the needs of tribal air programs have not always dovetailed with yearly federal directives. Also, EPA’s requirements for states sometimes did not represent the best fit as tribes grappled with their unique needs, often hampered by lack of funding, staff turnover, and other challenges.

“Around 2009,” Farshid says, “the steering committee began to explore a broader implementation plan.” As tribal air expertise expanded and tribal air tasks grew more complex, the committees sought to incorporate into their decision-making a better-defined picture of yearly needs in Indian country. By 2016, a comprehensive survey of tribal air needs of scores of tribes was in place. Now the “TAMS Technical Needs Assessment” is a tri-annual TAMS product, and a summary of survey responses is now a regular feature of each year’s National Tribal Forum on Air Quality.

By including broad-based survey information along with input from EPA into its deliberations, the TAMS Technical Needs Assessment arms the steering committee with a solid base for planning their support for tribes from year to year. At the same time, TAMS staff continue to respond to individual requests for air-quality technical assistance, regardless of the topic or how much it fits with defined priorities.

Some of the broader needs expressed by tribes in recent years have included increased monitoring expertise and access to hardware and equipment loans, indoor air quality training, funding support, data management training and support, and a host of other needs. Though the TAMS staff is small, they’ve been able to meet a large portion of those needs—and the TAMS support structure expands more each year in tandem with the swelling numbers of tribal air professionals who come up through the ranks—those experts can often be enlisted to assist other tribal air staff. “If we don’t have the expertise in-house,” Chris says, “we will definitely search elsewhere for the resources they need to get that help.”
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TAMS funding, Farshid notes, has now been solidified. A revised funding strategy allows yearly support to TAMS, as opposed to the Center’s long practice of approaching funders (including EPA’s Office of Radiation and Indoor Air, Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, and EPA Headquarters) with requests to fund particular tribal needs.

From their early work on particulate monitoring—still an important part of the effort—the TAMS staff has built a program that provides expert assistance on a wide range of tribal air needs, from performing a Level 4 (basic) emissions inventory to calculating pollution trajectories and performing high-level data analysis.

Air Quality Technical Training

Most of ITEP/TAMS technical air-training courses are held at the Virgil Masayesva Environmental Learning Center in Las Vegas. The state-of-the-art classroom at the TAMS Center, with computer stations and a modern broadcast and communications setup, provides space for courses that include Fundamentals of Air Monitoring, Indoor Air Quality Diagnostic Tools, GIS for Air Quality, and others (courses vary from year to year depending on tribal input).

The courses are instructed by TAMS staff as well as by tribal, EPA and other experts. Some less-technical courses, such as those addressing air-program management, are also occasionally presented at the Virgil Masayesva Learning Center at TAMS.

The Center’s online training, most of it produced by staff data experts Melinda Ronca-Battista (based in Phoenix, AZ) and Angelique Luedeker (working from Sedona, AZ), is available in two modes: ongoing courses that are self-paced and include support, when necessary, from TAMS and other ITEP staff; and instructor-led courses that run for specified periods and include webinar-style instruction. Glenn Gehring (based in Wooster, OH), TAMS hardware expert, has recently launched his own series of training videos on topics related to setup, usage and maintenance of air-monitoring and related equipment.

A new course for next year addressing wildfire smoke represents one of ITEP’s new approaches, “hybrid courses” that feature both online and classroom components. The use of hybrid courses may expand with expected EPA budget cuts.

Professional Assistance

Tribal air staff working on specific issues—i.e., an emissions inventory, a data submittal to an EPA database, installation and calibration of an air monitor, or an indoor-air home inspection project—can find help from TAMS Center staff and a supportive cast of experts. Melinda Ronca-Battista provides phone, online, and face-to-face support for data management, including quality control/assurance; Angelique Luedeker also addresses air-data issues, with a primary focus on emissions inventories. Glenn Gehring is the Center’s hardware person; he travels extensively to educate and assist tribal air staff on monitor installation, operation, troubleshooting and maintenance; Glenn also provides extensive online and phone support. (Native Voices will cover TAMS Professional Assistance in greater detail in the next issue.)

Equipment Loan Program

TAMS has amassed an impressive collection of air-monitoring and related equipment that tribes can borrow for varying periods. The IAQ diagnostic equipment loan program, in particular really came into its own, says Farshid, after Jed Harrison—former director of what was previously the R&IE Lab—moved from that position into an EPA role focusing on tribal indoor-air quality (Jed has since retired from EPA but continues to assist on some TAMS projects). “Our equipment-loans had been developing for several years,” Farshid recalls, “but around 2013 Jed was able to arrange for funding and new equipment, and the loans started going out like hotcakes.” Loaner equipment now includes both ambient and indoor-air and equipment along with a variety of supporting hardware such as flow transfer standards and other NIST traceable standards (thermometers, pressure sensors, etc.) that tribes can borrow.

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Breakout Sessions

NTFAQ participants had ample opportunities to explore areas of interest by attending their choices of breakout sessions led by tribal, academic, federal and other presenters. Sixteen breakout sessions were held over the forum’s three days, many of which featured multiple speakers and topics, related to the four NTFAQ tracks: ambient air/technical & outreach, indoor air, federal policy & regulations, and climate change.

Breakout topics included sessions on road dust, technical monitoring issues, current federal rules and regulations, school indoor air, bed bugs in Alaska, poly-aromatic hydrocarbons, renewable energy, streamlining Treatment as a State applications, data validation, funding strategies, and developing partnerships and more—something for everyone.

EcoCafe

Each year the forum offers attendees the chance to visit dozens of information booths in a single session, where they can learn more about a wide range of environmental topics. Representatives from tribes, government entities, academic institutions, air-quality technology companies and others gather for the annual EcoCafe and welcome visitors for informal conversations on air monitors, environmental programs, air studies, federal programs and much more.

Left: AIAQTP Curriculum Specialist, Dr. Pat Ellsworth, answers questions about ITEP’s air training program.
Right: EcoCafe booth staffers enlightened forum attendees on a variety of programs, environmental issues and air-related technologies.
Tour of The University of Arizona’s “Solar Zone”

One group of climate-change session attendees spent an afternoon traveling to the southeastern edge of Tucson to tour a world-class solar-research facility. The University of Arizona Tech Park is a 1345-acre patch of desert landscape housing some 6000 employees in two million square feet of office space, surrounded by sprawling acres on which ten utility-scale solar technologies are being tested. The facility fleshes out cutting edge solar concepts, examining them for technological and economic viability in partnerships with government and private and public-sector industries.

The tour began with a talk by UA Tech Park director and renowned solar expert Dick Powell and his colleagues. Dr. Powell described some of the Park’s ongoing activities, including research on multi-stacked solar cells that capture different solar frequencies and hold the potential to increase electrical generating efficiency from its present 20% to an astounding 50%. Dr. Powell pointed out that if the nation had an efficient transmission web (a capacity that is likely far in the future) and some of the new technologies were exploited fully, all of the nation’s electrical needs could be satisfied via solar generation from Arizona alone.

After a Q & A session, attendees moved to the field to observe solar arrays and spent up-close time with a compact solar concentrator now being tested. Its relatively compact mirrored reflector focuses 1000 times the intensity of sunlight onto a solar disk the circumference of a softball, generating 800 watts of electricity—a major step forward in harnessing the power of the sun to replace outdated power technologies and help usher in a cleaner, healthier future for all.
Virgil Masayesva Tribal Air Program Excellence Awards

Each year at the forum the tribal air community honors tribal air staff and programs that have performed exemplary work for their communities and beyond. The awards are named after Virgil Masayesva, ITEP’s co-founder and first director.

This year's awards went to Jason Walker (right), Director of Air Quality with the Northwest Band of Shoshone Indians; and to the Northern Cheyenne Tribe’s air program (represented by Program Director, Jay Littlewolf [blue shirt on left], and staff member Scott Williams, center). The dinner and ceremony included a performance by members of the Tohono O’odham Nation’s NO:LIGT Traditional Singers and Basket Dancers (center and bottom images).

Jeff Mears of the Oneida Nation was one of several colleagues who shared warm memories of the award’s namesake, the late Virgil Masayesva.
In a new forum event modeled on the popular TED Talks, speakers representing tribal air quality, law, politics and health spoke on topics that don't necessarily fit neatly into NTFAQ's technical-information-sharing format. In a session moderated by ITEP's Ann Marie Chischilly, they spoke their passion, offering their thoughts on issues that reach beyond day-to-day struggles with environmental protection.

Sally Ann Gonzales described her humble upbringing at Pasqua Yaqui and how it taught her the value of conservation, sharing, and “fighting for what is right.” As an elementary school teacher, she saw the impact of government policy on the children she taught and decided to run for office. Now an AZ state representative with 10 years under her belt, she works to realize those insights that began to develop in her earliest years. She also advocated for direct action to advance tribal progress: “Join school boards, run for political office—we need advocates to support healthier lives in our communities.”

Joe Hostler, a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, works with the Yurok Tribe in northern CA in both air quality and climate change adaptation planning. “I work not just for us,” he said, “but for the future. Seven generations, I was taught—three generations past, the present, and three into the future. At Yurok we do lots of work with youth, gathering native plants, suicide prevention. If our environment isn’t healthy, we’re not healthy.”

A. J. Salkoski works with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium to further the health needs of the Alaska’s indigenous communities. “How can we step outside the box?” he asked the audience. “Waste, air quality, health—right now, for example, privacy rules prevent health workers from telling us about a person’s lung problem. So we don’t know to go fix the house. We need more connectedness. What if air quality people could refer people for healthcare, or if healthcare workers could refer to housing? Fixing homes before a child is born, based on a prenatal home evaluation—why isn’t that a prescription? We need a holistic approach to our support systems.”

Pilar Thomas is a tribal law attorney with extensive experience in federal agencies, including the Energy and Interior Depts. “I’m a recovering fed,” she told the audience. “I think about how the federal government works: Salmon in the NW go through five federal agencies!” She noted the sometimes ponderous progress tied to the federal approach. “Tribes have focused on the wrong things, ignoring state and local partnerships with industries that are doing the right thing. We need to make common cause with people with whom we don’t normally interact. It’s time to do corporate outreach with those leading the charge, the ‘corporate white hats.’ We need to take off the blinders and get out of our usual lanes. And run for office. Run for public utility slots—they make crucial decisions on where pipelines are sited, on green portfolios. Leverage the laws or don’t complain.”

Kris Ray manages the environmental department at the Colville Tribe in WA state. He recalled starting the work in 2009 “knowing next to nothing about air quality. I began monitoring, moved the monitor to the ground to avoid the danger of snowy roofs. Now we’re operating three BAM 320s, one FRM monitor...” To quickly develop his skills, he told the crowd, “I took advantage of the tools out there, I looked at emissions inventory software, got training, learned everything I didn’t know. I had to stabilize the program before I could expand the work. Now my activities have evolved to working with the National Tribal Air Association, the Western Regional Air Partnership, to TAMS. I want to bring to Indian country all the things I’ve learned, to share my expertise locally and nationally. Tribes have made huge strides and are doing a superior job on air issues, better than a lot of states. There’s a lot of knowledge out there to be shared.”
Optional Outings

An important feature of the NTFAQ is the opportunities it provides for fun. Each year attendees can take advantage of a forum’s location to get to know members of the host tribe, visit local sites and explore unique aspects of the community and region. NTFAQ 2017 was no exception: forum-goers found ample opportunities to get out, stretch their legs and indulge in some off-hour good times.

Softball, Volleyball and Basketball Games

A number of forum attendees and Pascua Yaqui tribal members took part in community sporting events. The Pascua Yaqui Tribe generously welcomed forum-goers to games that are a regular, important part of the community’s traditions. Tribal members and forum participants took these opportunities to make new friends and share in some spirited action.

Birding Tour

Regardless of the forum’s location, the birding tour has become a yearly event. This year’s nature exploration was especially notable, as forum attendees happened to be within an evening’s reach of a world-renowned birding spot, Madera Canyon in the Santa Rita Mountains of southern Arizona.

ITEP editor, Dennis Wall, led the group of 19 on the tour. They began their canyon exploration with a short hike to Madera Creek, where they were serenaded by Colorado River Toads and spotted numerous bird species, including a rare Mexican gnatchatcher. Participants then visited two other canyon locations that teemed with wildlife, including more than 20 species of birds, a feeder-robbing coatimundi, mule deer, a flock of wild turkeys, and a nesting Elf Owl who delighted the group with her emergence from a nest hole at dusk.

Breath of Fresh Air 5K Run

Forum attendees and tribal members donned shorts and running shoes to take part in a tribally sponsored “Breath of Fresh Air” 5K run/walk along the trail through the resort’s Sewailo golf course. Proceeds from the race went to support the tribe’s environmental efforts.
In 2009, TAMS staff, steering committee members, EPA staff and others embarked on a bus tour, visiting five Southwestern tribes to learn more about their challenges and needs. This photo was taken amid a radiation-contaminated landscape near Church Rock, NM.

**TAMS: On Solid Ground**

After a period of transition and uncertainty, the TAMS Center again rests on a firm foundation. Its mission to provide air-quality technical training and support will continue to expand to address more-varied and complex challenges on the technical side of air quality management.

Chris believes the TAMS approach—flexible and focused solely on tribal needs—provides an effective “template” for any mode of air-program support effort. “We offer the help that tribes need,” he says, “without the heavy requirements that are often part of the federal approach.”

The TAMS team does encourage tribal air professionals to work closely with EPA grant officers, as often projects are funded solely through the agency’s support. The TAMS approach, they note, is somewhat different: “We don’t tell tribes that we can’t help them because they don’t have the required documentation; rather, we ask if they need help developing that documentation along with the rest of the project. We help them develop their projects along every step of the process. I think we serve as a good model for the rest of the agency to follow.”

**Other Support**

The TAMS co-directors have many years of experience working with tribal programs. Drawing on that experience they can offer additional support as a part of TAMS’ Professional Assistance program. Chris says, “Because of our experience in the past with Shoshone-Bannock (Farshid Farsi), Southern Ute (Chris Lee) and the Navajo Nation (Chris Lee), we can answer inquiries from tribal professionals on drafting comments and reviewing proposals. We’ll work with tribal staff to help them understand the process. In addition, we can provide guidance and suggestions on most program-management topics.”

Complementing that support is ITEP’s recent reintroduction of a training course—funded through a grant from EPA’s Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards and supported by that office’s Laura Mc Kelvey and Regional EPA staff—a course titled Reviewing New Source Review and Title V Permits training was held in Fargo, North Dakota, in mid-July and might be offered again in FY18.

**Video Instructional Library**

Over the past decade, Melinda and Angelique have created a trove of instructional videos on topics ranging from creating Quality Assurance Project Plans to performing emissions inventories and submitting data to the National Air Quality System database. The videos are available via YouTube, and some are used in TAMS online training. Tribes lacking adequate wifi to stream the videos efficiently can also request a DVD of course videos. (For more on this topic, see the previous issue of Native Voices.) Hardware expert Glenn Gehring is creating another video series addressing the hardware side of air monitoring.

**Gravimetric Lab Contractor Services**

Although EPA closed the onsite “grav lab” in Las Vegas several years ago, tribal support for filter weighing is still available through TAMS, utilizing a contract gravimetric laboratory service. Stricter rules than in the past have been instituted for this support, limiting tribes in most cases to one year of filter-weighing services, after which they are asked to make direct arrangements with a lab for future work. Presently two tribes are using the contractor service.

**TAMS Listserv**

In discussions with TAMS staff and the steering committee, the idea of developing a tribal air program equipment/information exchange was born. All tribal professionals who have taken a course at the TAMS Center within the last four years have initially been added to the listing. Thus far, several tribes have shared information about unused equipment and have found tribes who needed and were willing to take ownership of the equipment.

**Additional TAMS Support**

TAMS staff have created, solo and in cooperation with other experts, software programs that include the Tribal Emissions Inventory Software Solution, TurboQAPP, and the Tribal Data Toolbox. They’ve also assembled a compendium of documents on technical issues and policies. Visit the TAMS website at www.nau.edu/itep/tams for information, software and staff assistance, or call TAMS at 702-784-8264.