



File Code: 1560

Date: April 08, 2004

Dear Tribal Chairperson:

We would like to take this opportunity to inform you and your tribal government about a new watershed restoration program recently passed by the 108th Congress. The short title of this act is "Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA)." The introduction to the act reads, "To improve the capacity of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects on National Forest System lands and Bureau of Land Management lands aimed at protecting communities, watersheds, and certain other at-risk lands from catastrophic wildfire, to enhance efforts to protect watersheds and address threats to forest and rangeland health, including catastrophic wildfire, across the landscape, and for other purposes."

Specifically relevant to Indian tribes, Title III, Section 303 of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act entitled "Tribal Watershed Forestry Assistance" (TWFA) provides for the Forest Service to work directly with Indian Tribes to "provide technical, financial, and related assistance to Indian tribes for the purpose of expanding tribal stewardship capacities and activities through tribal forestry best management practices and other means at the tribal level to address watershed issues on land under the jurisdiction of or administered by the Indian tribes." The TWFA program has an authorized annual appropriation of \$2,500,000.00 though the Fiscal Year 2008 although the provision of any funding is up to the Congress.

At this time, tribal and Forest Service representatives are being identified and asked to participate in a TWFA team with the task of developing guidelines. The tribal participants represent Tribes from across the United States. A primary partner in the establishment of the Tribal Watershed Forestry Assistance team is the Intertribal Timber Council. It is the intention of many TWFA representatives to have an initial meeting in late April 2004 at the annual Symposium of the Intertribal Timber Council in Ocean Shores, Washington. We encourage all interested Indian tribal representatives to join us at the meeting tentatively scheduled for 4:00pm on Thursday, April 29, 2004.

We are excited about our new authority to work directly with tribes and will work collaboratively with tribal representatives to develop guidelines to implement and manage this program.

Initially we are implementing several means of keeping interested Indian tribes informed and engaged:



- To electronically monitor our progress, please access our website at www.fs.fed.us/cooperativeforestry/ then click the Watershed Forestry Assistance link.
- To access the entire Healthy Forest Restoration Act, including the text of the Tribal Watershed Forestry Assistance program in Section 303, navigate to our website address www.fs.fed.us/projects/hfi/ then click the Healthy Forest Restoration Act link.
- For more in-depth communication and consultation regarding this new program, contact the Regional Tribal Relations Program Manager or the local Forest Supervisor in your area. See attached list. If your tribe is interested in more direct involvement, please let us know. We will try to accommodate all those interested in participating in the Tribal Watershed Forestry Assistance team.
- To receive specific information about the HFRA Tribal Watershed Forestry Assistance team, contact Susan Johnson, Tribal Relations Lead, Forest Service, at 303/275-5760 or sjohnson08@fs.fed.us; or Karen Solari, Cooperative Forestry, Forest Service, at 202/205-1274 or ksolari@fs.fed.us; or Mark Phillips, Washington D.C. representative for the Intertribal Timber Council, at 202/546-1516 or markpeai@aol.com.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide you information related to HRFA. We value your knowledge and expertise in the area of watershed management and look forward to working cooperatively with you to implement this Act.

Sincerely,

/s/Dale J. Kanen
DALE J. KANEN
Director, Office of Tribal Relations

Enclosure