

**REGION 3 - SOUTHWEST  
APACHE-SITGREAVES NATIONAL FOREST  
WHITE MOUNTAIN APACHE TRIBE INTERN PROGRAM**

<b>SUBMITTING REGION/AREA</b>	<b>SUBMITTING DISTRICT/UNIT</b>
Region 3, Southwestern region	Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests Lakeside RD with benefits to Springerville and Black Mesa RDs

**CONTACT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROPOSAL:**

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**Brief Description of the proposal:**

The Apache-Sitgreaves NF has entered into a Participating Agreement with the White Mountain Apache Tribe to hire and train tribal members as interns. The interns are hired by the tribe and funded by the Forest Service, to further their development in leadership skills, natural resources education (including firefighting), and contracting.

The purpose of the P.A. is to work with the tribe to identify tribal members with good potential as future employees or contractors, and develop their skills with the involvement of the tribal forestry and fire personnel. This program should help with the problem that some tribal members have with applying for Forest Service jobs or reaching out beyond the tribal boundaries.

Interns will have a 'Safety Net' to transition to employment or contractor outside the reservation. The Tribal Natural Resources Department has formed crews of fire-ready tribal members who are also trained to do fuels work, fire rehabilitation and BAER work and other services. This agreement will help train some of the promising members of the crews to move up to be leaders, F.S. employees, or contractors who can successfully bid on F.S. contracts, including fire-related contracting work.

Due to the Rodeo-Chediski Fire which gutted the tribal timber program, 48% reductions in hiring fire and fuels employees in the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other economic problems, unemployment on the reservation is 56%. The Tribal Council indicated to me that there are 500 young tribal members wanting jobs but unsure how to go after them.

**What is the total contribution being requested from F&AM for this proposal?**

The A-SNF is asking for the support of salaries for 3-5 interns (reimbursement to tribe), vehicle FOR and a salary for a seasonal crew supervisor for 4 months annually. This would also cover training, PPE, and tools. We are requesting \$46,800 each year for at least 2 years.

**If you have funding levels within the proposal, provide that information:**

With \$50,000 annually we could fully finance the program:	
Each intern hired for 4 month = \$8000, 4 interns for 4 months	= \$32,000
GS-7 Crew Leader (existing fire technician) for 4 months	= \$10,800
Vehicle FOR and mileage for 4 months	= \$2,500
Training, tools, and PPE	= \$1500
Total	= \$46,800

**The Regional/Area Fire Director's signature certifies concurrence**

**PHONE #:**

District Ranger (if appropriate): /s/ Edward Collins, Lakeside RD	928-368-5111
Forest Fire Program Manager (mandatory): s/s Bill Van Bruggen, A-SNFs	928-333-6318
Forest Supervisor (mandatory): /s/ Elaine J. Zieroth, A-SNFs	928-333-6300
Regional Representative to F&AM WDC (mandatory):	
Regional/Area Fire Director (mandatory):	

**1. Workforce Diversity Management:**

The program addresses workforce planning, outreach, recruitment and hiring. We have had problems for years recruiting employees and contractors from the White Mountain Apache Tribe, whose reservation borders the Apache-Sitgreaves NF. The Bureau of Indian Affairs and Tribal Forestry program train and field Type I and II Wildland Firefighting Crews, and in recent years have trained some crews to do project work (thinning, Rx burning, fire rehabilitation, BAER work), as fully qualified firefighters, to extend their employment season. But it has been difficult to get tribal members to leave the security of the reservations to successfully apply for Forest Service jobs or bid on contracts.

Working with the Tribal Forestry and BIA Fire/Fuels Departments, this program will help tribal members make the transition since they would be "interns" who are hired by the tribe and work for the Forest Service. In their work as interns, they would be trained and learn various aspects of fire, fuels and other project work. If they are interested in becoming contractors, they would also be provided assistance with registration through the Central Contractors Registry which is a government-wide registry of organizations that seek opportunities to do business with the federal government. Contractors will also be provided assistance with obtaining their Small and Disadvantaged Business Certifications under the 8A program.

The desired outcome is that successful interns would become more confident, skilled and afforded the opportunity to partner with the Forest Service to apply for jobs or to take advantage of socio-economic programs that allow them to obtain contracts set aside exclusively for Small Disadvantaged Businesses.

We have the commitment from the tribe and Tribal Natural Resources and BIA departments to help the tribal members make the transition. Mary Stuever of Tribal Forestry and I are also participating in forestry technician training and recruitment programs that will be sponsored by Northland Pioneer College and Arizona Department of Commerce. Under this program we are designing technician training and education programs that can lead to AA or BA degrees in forestry to try to fill the employment needs not just of the tribe and Forest Service, but of the industries and contractor supporting the White Mt. Stewardship project which needs loggers, mill workers, and foresters.

**2. Management Support:**

The program was initiated by the Forest Supervisor Elaine Zieroth and then acting Deputy Forest Supervisor Deb Beighley, with further support of the WO Tribal Relations Program (Bryan Mercier who recently transferred and Fred Clark, Director). The Region 3 Civil Rights Director James Maes is also in full support of the project. The Participating Agreement has already been signed and approved by the Tribal Chairman Ronnie Lupe and the Forest Supervisor. The Lakeside and Black Mesa Ranger Districts are closest to the Tribal communities and the district rangers support the program. In addition, the Forest Fire Management Officer is fully committed to outreaching to the White Mountain Apache Tribe to train and recruit tribal members for fire and fuels positions.

**3. Scope and Sustainability:**

The Apache –Sitgreaves NF is in a position to recruit and hire tribal members as employees and contractors who could in the future move up to positions on other forests within the system (recognizing that many tribal members have strong ties to their land and people and can be reluctant to move far away). The White Mountain Apache people have a history of support for vegetation management, including aggressive thinning and burning programs, so the tribal members have an interest in such work.

In addition, there was million of dollars in contracts let each year for fire rehabilitation, BAER work, thinning, Rx burning, fire construction, hazard tree removal and other tasks that the tribal contractors could bid on. The Forest Service has a goal of having at least 2% of all contracting performed by Native American contractors; but there is a limited pool of existing contractors available. The Forest is also using the Tribal Forest Protection Act to enter into non-competitive contracts with the Tribal Natural Resources Department to complete some rehabilitation work along our borders after Rodeo-Chediski Fire.

**4. Partners & Shared Funding/Resources:**

Under the existing Participating Agreement, the White Mt. Apache Tribe contributes to the agreement by providing personnel services to recruit, interview, employ and support the interns. The tribe will also cover any overhead or administrative costs and insurance and provide a liaison to the program at their expense.

**5. Integration with Civil Rights and Human Capital Management Professionals:**

The Apache-Sitgreaves NF has sustained a stable temporary and permanent workforce with employment of American Indians in the last 15 years. For 2006, the representation of American Indian males on the A-S has been slightly above parity of 1.7 per cent within the overall Arizona civilian labor force, with American Indian females being slightly below parity.

However, the five counties that are home to the A-S (Apache, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, and Navajo), have an average American Indian population of about 33 per cent. Thus, although the CLF figures are based on the overall Arizona population, American Indians where the A-S is located have a larger CLF average than 1.7 per cent. It is imperative for the forest to be able to develop creative methods to attract more American Indians into the temporary and permanent workforce. This proposal supports the forest initiatives to increase the employment of American Indians to more effectively

reflect the American Indian population within its area of service.

Through implementation of this proposal, it would allow the A-S to employ a substantial number of American Indians and maintain a higher representation in both the temporary and permanent workforce to mirror the communities within the forest.

#### **6. Management Directive (MD) 715:**

As noted in the MD-715 report for the Southwestern Region for 2007, the Regional Forester monitors diversity efforts for each of the forests in the region. The region coordinates a Civil Rights recruitment and outreach effort to identify candidates for STEP/SCEP opportunities for the Regional Office and the Forests within the Region. The Region monitors and evaluates results of outreach and recruitment processes, and through the SEPMs, provides outreach and recruitment at educational and career fairs within the Region.

Within the past two years, the Regional Forester has expressed the need for each individual forest to take a pro-active approach to improving diversity. Through this proposal, the A-S is taking the initiative to develop a systematic “pipeline” approach to developing American Indians for both employment and contracting opportunities with the forest. The end result after this project is completed is that the forest will be able to consider a wider applicant pool for STEP/SCEP and temporary employment within the forest.

Although these interns will be employed by the tribe, the end result is that, with appropriate training, they will be able to qualify for employment with the forest. The proposed action will address the following barriers that have prevented the American Indians within the service area of the A-S from obtaining employment with the forest:

- lack of appropriate education to qualify for specialized employment;
- lack of transportation to be able to attend classes and/or to report to work;
- lack of self confidence to be able to achieve the results from the proposal; and
- lack of a support element to assist the students as they complete the training course.

#### **7. Measurement of Success:**

We propose using the program to hire 3-5 interns for 2 field seasons (FY08 and 09). At the end of each field season we will conduct “exit interviews” with each intern, involving the tribal liaison person, to determine whether the intern has gained sufficient knowledge, experience and confidence to apply for future Forest Service jobs or bid on contracts.

These interviews will help us evaluate the effectiveness of the training and mentoring and determine if the program is successful in helping tribal members move towards off-reservation employment. Adjustments in the program can be made based on follow-up. Interns who have a good work record can then be given a letter of recommendation that should assist them in applying for jobs. The true measure of success is whether any of the interns come back as employees and/or bid on contracts.

Even interns who decide not to pursue these career options may still help us identify and recruit other tribal member through “word of mouth”. True success would be to have interns also bid on contracts and/or apply for jobs beyond the A-SNF area.