

## **Tribal Coordination: Vision Statement**

“Within five years, the MT/Dakotas BLM will be an organization exercising an active tribal consultation process that emphasizes respectful, proactive collaborative engagement. This collaboration will insure tribal input and involvement early in our decision making process, while also striving to cultivate partnerships with tribal governments in the management of natural and cultural resources of importance to the health and welfare of their tribal membership.”

### **Goals for Tribal Consultation and Coordination**

- 1) Assure that federally recognized tribal governments, whose traditional uses of public land might be affected by a proposed BLM action, will have the opportunity to participate in the decision, and that the decision maker will give tribal concerns proper consideration early in the decision-making process.
- 2) Foster a good working relationship between the BLM and tribes through the identification of opportunities for collaboration and partnership in the management of public land resources.
- 3) Insure that BLM Line Officers and Staff clearly understand roles and responsibilities for tribal consultation, and have a rudimentary understanding of the history, customs and culture of the tribes they will be consulting with.

### **Guiding Principles**

- 1) Tribal consultation efforts will continue to acknowledge and support tribal sovereignty, self government, and self determination. Establishment of meaningful consultation and collaboration with tribal officials will strengthen the government-to-government relationship between the United States and American Indians and Indian tribal governments.

Meaningful government-to-government relationships will be developed and nurtured by initiating the following actions:

- Creating an atmosphere which fosters mutual respect and accountability;

- Attending tribal meetings when invited and agency presence is appropriate;
  - Attending tribal events and ceremonies on behalf of BLM when requested;
  - Development of outreach and educational programs;
- 2) In government-to-government consultations with tribes, the appropriate line officer with decision making authority (in most cases the Field Office Manager), will be identified as the individual representing the Bureau of Land Management in those efforts. The BLM Tribal Coordinator will ensure that any Montana / Dakotas BLM actions or initiatives affecting tribal partners will be proactively coordinated with the respective Field Offices to the degree appropriate.
- 3) The special government-to-government relationship with tribes and the legal requirements of tribal consultation demand more effort and attention than routine public participation. Meaningful tribal consultation involves the development of a dialogue between BLM managers and tribal governments regarding BLM actions, with the intent of securing tribal input and involvement early in the decision making process. While public land decisions are necessarily based on multiple-use principles and a complex network of legal responsibilities, engaging in meaningful discussions with tribes is an important element of the decision making process.
- 4) It is to the benefit of the BLM, tribes, and the tribal consultation process to actively seek opportunities for developing cooperative partnerships with tribes to assist in the management of public land resources.
- 5) BLM recognizes that tribal governments must address a variety of issues, both on and off the reservation. These issues may also have differing levels of interest and urgency. Therefore, it is in the interest of all parties to create an efficient and effective process for identifying interests and concerns on BLM lands within a context that allows meaningful consultation.

Emphasis will be placed on ensuring that tribal consultation efforts include combinations of the following:

- formal consultation,
- use of facilitated work groups,
- submission of written updates,
- informal conversations,
- sponsoring small regional meetings, or large intertribal summits as appropriate
- participation of BLM managers at tribal/state meetings, summits, and conferences discussing tribal issues

- development of protocols with each tribe to provide overall consistency in consultation efforts and approaches
  - development of BLM and tribal training opportunities to facilitate collaborative consultation efforts
- 6) Where possible, work with tribal partners to develop protocols and agreements for effective and efficient consultation that will assist BLM managers in making informed decisions.

## Definitions

**consultation:** the process of identifying and seeking input from appropriate tribal governing bodies, considering their issues and concerns, and documenting the manner in which the input affected the specific management decision(s) at issue.

**government-to-government relationship:** the formal relationship that exists between the Federal Government and tribal governments under United States laws. Tribal governments are considered dependent domestic sovereignties with primary and independent jurisdiction (in most cases) over tribal lands. Concerning proposed BLM plans and actions, at least the level of consideration and consistency review provided to State governments must be afforded to tribal governments.

**Indian tribe:** any Indian or Alaska Native tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or community that the Secretary of the Interior acknowledges to exist as an Indian tribe. (See Public Law No. 103-454, 108 Stat. 4791, 25 U.S.C. 479a. See also .08.)

**tribal government:** the formal representative governing body of a recognized tribe (as defined in 25 CFR 61 and published annually in the Federal Register).