



# TRIBAL PRIORITIES FOR SOLVING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

The Congressional Action Plan for a Clean Energy Economy and a Healthy, Resilient, and Just America.



Photo Credit: ATNI

## SUPPORT CLIMATE RESILIENT TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Community resilience is the ability to prepare for anticipated hazards, adapt to changing conditions, and withstand and recover rapidly from disruptions. Indigenous Peoples are increasingly grappling with extreme events: flooding due to sea level rise and severe storms, drought, and catastrophic wildfire. Such climate-amplified events frequently damage or destroy infrastructure, which disrupts social-economic systems.

Some Tribes are being forced to consider community-wide relocation to move to safer ground. Yet Tribes and Indigenous communities generally have limited capacity for resilience planning and implementation, due to decades of chronic under-funding.

Also, several factors constrain Indigenous leaders' opportunities to participate in state and national training and initiatives, access funding and technical assistance, and network with other Indigenous leaders. Constraints include: insufficient workforce capacity of Tribal governments; lack of access to modern telecommunication infrastructure; and distance from training opportunities.

For Tribes, community resilience involves more than infrastructure alone. Essential components of resilience include access to traditional resources, such as traditional foods and medicines, and the opportunity to engage in cultural practices. These opportunities are important because of the foundation in kinship, spirituality, and Traditional Knowledges.

Climate change threatens to disrupt Tribal relationships with lands, waters, and traditional foods and medicine. The range, season, quality, and quantity of traditional resources have shifted with changing climate conditions. These trends are likely to continue as climate impacts become more pronounced. Indigenous communities may need to develop co-management agreements with nearby land managers to ensure continued access to traditional resources.

To strengthen Tribal community resilience to climate change impacts, the federal government must adopt policies that respect Tribal sovereignty and uphold the federal trust responsibility. Traditional Knowledges and scientific research about resilience to disasters highlight the importance of Tribally- and community-based decision-making. Federal funding and technical assistance must support a Tribally-led approach.

Disaster preparedness planning can avert catastrophic financial losses and human suffering. Up to the present however, funding has been most readily available only after a disaster has occurred, with most assistance going to more affluent property owners. Mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that communities have what they need to preempt damage, and when unavoidable, respond to and build improved infrastructure after disasters.

### **TRIBAL PRIORITIES THAT CONGRESS SHOULD CONSIDER:**

- > **Uphold the Federal Trust Responsibility, Treaties, and commitment to formal Government-to-Government relations.**
  - **Ensure Government-to-Government relations** in planning and implementation of disaster preparedness, relocation, and managed retreat.
- > **Promote environmental justice while upholding Tribal sovereignty.**
  - **Support community-led planning and decision-making.**
  - **Provide federal support for Tribally-led relocation and resettlement.**
  - **Floodplain Management:** expand authorities for agencies to employ a collaborative approach to floodplain restoration. Prioritize standards for ecological protection and restoration. For instance, strengthen the requirements for the National Flood Insurance Policy (NFIP) to document compliance with the Endangered Species Act.
  - **Implementation funding for Tribes:** expand funding for Tribes to participate in the implementation phase, rather than only planning, of infrastructure protection, such as of coastal road protection from sea-level rise.
  - **Account for multiple dimensions of resilience:** promote policies with flexibility to address more than physical infrastructure alone. Essential elements of social resilience include: traditional values and knowledges, community health (including mental, behavioral, and physical health), inter-generational interaction, leadership, and community stability. Promote the use of nature-based solutions. Accommodate criteria other than those of conventional cost-benefit analysis. Alternative criteria might include: jobs created, elders served, or youth engaged in traditional activities.
- **Support urban Indigenous Peoples** through policies and programs that support the health and well-being of urban Indigenous communities.

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### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

[ATNI Tribal Review of the Congressional Action Plan](#)