



Summary of Nationwide Listening Sessions with Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations regarding ACHP's Tribal and Native Hawaiian Sacred Sites and Historic Properties Action Plan

Background

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's (ACHP) [*Climate Impacts to Tribal and Native Hawaiian Sacred Sites and Historic Properties: Plan for ACHP Actions*](#) (Action Plan) began development in 2020. The Action Plan was initially developed to address longstanding issues associated with disasters and emergency response actions and their impacts to historic properties that were previously identified by Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations.

Since that time there have been three major developments that have influenced the ongoing development of the Action Plan:

1. On January 27, 2021 President Biden announced [Executive Order 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad](#) and directed all agencies to develop Climate Action Plans.
2. The ACHP responded to EO 14008 by developing an agency-wide [Climate Plan](#) and by convening the inter-agency Climate Change Task Force (CCTF).
3. In 2021 the [White House Council on Native American Affairs](#) (WHCNAA) convened an interagency Climate Adaptation Subcommittee (Subcommittee) to address climate change.

Consistent with Executive Order 14008 the Action Plan was updated in 2021 to focus on climate change impacts more broadly; the Action Plan was also updated to create space for collaboration with the Climate Change Task Force and the WHCNAA Subcommittee.

In February 2022 the updated draft Action Plan was shared with Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations (NHOs) in preparation for a pair of nationwide listening sessions. These listening sessions were designed to welcome Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations to provide comments, direction, and seek collaboration opportunities in conjunction with the Action Plan. Two sessions took place in March 2022 that lasted for approximately 2 hours each. During that time ACHP leadership was able to speak directly with Tribal and NHO leadership or their designated representatives to learn and gain insight on the needs and challenges. A wealth of information was shared with the ACHP that helped to refine existing priorities and expand the scope of the Action Plan be more inclusive.

ACHP's efforts to update and inform the Action Plan will continue through 2022 including ongoing collaboration with the WHCNAA Subcommittee and the CCTF in addition to coordinating with Indian Tribes and NHOs directly. While initially focused on historic properties of religious and cultural significance, following extensive outreach and coordination the ACHP has expanded this Action Plan to include broad consideration of Sacred Sites and Indigenous Knowledge among other areas of interest expressed by Indian Tribes and NHOs.

Listening Sessions

The following summary highlights several broad themes from the listening sessions. Overall, participants stressed the importance of recognizing that natural resources are cultural resources and that both are intimately connected to lifeways and practices. Participants felt that this foundational understanding necessitates advanced identification and documentation efforts by agencies so that historic properties can be considered during both planning and emergency response. Many shared that green energy and green infrastructure may still impact cultural resources and should be reviewed and consulted on, to the same degree, as any other undertaking. The incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) into federal decision was also identified as a priority along with providing increased clarity regarding agency efforts to protect such information from unauthorized disclosure. Funding for Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations to develop climate plans specific to cultural resources was also identified as a priority.

The Knowledge and expertise of Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations should be actively incorporated into federal decision making. The Indigenous Knowledge held by Tribal and Native Hawaiian people reflects their understanding of their lifeways and practices. This knowledge is often necessary for federal agencies to consider during their decision-making process to account for a project's impact to resources or practices important to Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations. Referred to in different terms (e.g., Indigenous Knowledge, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, etc.), this knowledge has been repeatedly identified by Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations as undervalued and insufficiently integrated into decision making by federal and state agencies, applicants, and contractors. Additional concerns include the ability of a federal agency, or other party, to understand the sensitivity of the information provided and to ensure that information is not subject to disclosure through inadequate record management or release through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Participants also shared concerns that actions taken in response to climate change should not restrict access by cultural practitioners; Indigenous Knowledge and interaction with place are part of the healing process for the land and people. Native Hawaiian participants shared examples of sea wall construction inhibited by federal regulatory permitting processes and asked that cultural practices be exempted from modern regulatory processes. Other participants noted that cultural practices—including placing fire on the land—should not only be exempted but could help address climate impacts. Several participants also wanted to see space made in these discussion and related guidance for Indigenous Peoples from other locations, including Guam, American Samoa, and Puerto Rico.

Case Studies. Per participant requests the ACHP will work to develop a series of case studies, examples of Indian Tribe and Native Hawaiian Organization experiences with climate change, that can serve as a resource to further identify best practices, serve as training resources, and form the foundation of an information paper. ACHP is working with Salish Kootenai College to acquire an intern who will advance this effort in the summer of 2022.

Natural landscapes are cultural landscapes. Many participants stressed this fundamental premise. In what today is the United States, Indigenous people have existed as part of the landscape since time immemorial. There are no areas unknown to the Tribal and Native Hawaiian people, either through direct interaction or through their cultural and spiritual connection to the landscape. It is therefore imperative that climate planning documents acknowledge that the protection or impact of one often directly equates to the protection or impact of the other; climate change impacts more than place and resource, it impacts practice and lifeway.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN DRIP). The ACHP has long promoted the incorporation of the UN DRIP articles into federal decision making. Per participant request, the ACHP will incorporate references to UN DRIP into products, training, and other resources aimed at advancing consideration of cultural resources and practices into climate change management and response.

Planning and Preparation. Participants identified federal agency planning as a key opportunity to increase consideration and protection of historic properties in climate change and emergency response actions. Having agencies specifically identify cultural resources in climate planning documents creates space for a conversation to take place and coordination and consultation to occur. Federal agencies also need to actively work to identify and document locations that have cultural significance (e.g., historic properties, sacred sites, traditional cultural places, etc.) so that these are known and can influence advanced planning and emergency response actions.

Participants noted that funding needs to be allocated to Indian Tribes so that they can develop their own climate adaptation plans specific to cultural resources that addressed both on-reservation and off-reservation resources. Similarly, a need for the federal government to create a compendium of available resources to support this work that is accessible in one digital location was also requested.

Resources for Emergency Response and Climate Change. Many participants noted that resources, including funding and human capital (e.g., time, full time employees, etc.), are not adequately allocated by federal agencies to coordinate with and consider the knowledge of Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations. Funding also needs to be inclusive of Tribal and Native Hawaiian Organization priorities, including infrastructure (e.g., taro patches, irrigation systems, etc.) and restoration of place (e.g., fishing locations, burial areas, etc.).

Additional concerns included the need for federal agencies to review granting and other funding mechanisms to increase accountability of funding recipients, including states and counties, to conduct early coordination with Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations. The ability for funding to be provided directly to Indian Tribes during emergency declarations was also identified as a major hurdle to efficient response and effective consideration of Tribal values in emergency situations.

ACHP Planning and Management. Many participants requested greater consideration of climate change throughout the ACHP's guidance and training resources. The ACHP recognizes the cross-cutting nature of climate change across disciplines and resources and intends to advance consideration of climate change into existing and developing resources to assure that climate change is considered at all levels of planning and action.

Summary of Outreach and Actions Taken

Advancing consideration of climate change is not an effort that can be undertaken by a single agency or department, it requires a concerted effort by several motivated and dedicated partners. The ACHP is committed to coordinating with a full range of partners to advance this effort; similarly, the ACHP commits to providing updates to Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations regarding our efforts. Below is an outline of ACHP efforts to develop and advance the *Climate Impacts to Tribal and Native Hawaiian Sacred Sites and Historic Properties: Plan for ACHP Actions* in fiscal year 2022.

- Feedback and recommendations from Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations (ongoing)
- Coordination with Salish Kootenai College, the WHCNAA, federal agencies, Indian Tribes, and the Native Hawaiian community (ongoing)
- [ONAA Climate Change webpage](#) development (ongoing)
- Panel discussion during *NATHPO's 22nd annual conference* (February 2022)
- *Climate Impacts to Tribal and Native Hawaiian Historic Properties: Plan for ACHP Actions* draft provided to Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations for comment (February 2022)
- Coordination with ACHP's Native American Affairs committee (February 2022; May 2022)
- Updates to ACHP's Climate Change Task Force (February 2022; May 2022)

- 2-hr nationwide listening session for Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations (March 17, 2022)
- 2-hr nationwide listening session for Indian Tribes and Native Hawaiian Organizations (March 21, 2022)
- Briefing to WHCNAAs Climate Adaptation Subcommittee (April 2022)
- Panel discussion at the *CalTHPO-SHPO Summit* (May 2022)
- Summary of nationwide listening sessions shared with Indian Tribes and NHOs (June 2022)
- *Climate Impacts to Indian Tribe and Native Hawaiian Sacred Sites and Historic Properties: Plan for ACHP Actions* updated draft shared with Indian Tribes and NHOs (June 2022)
- Participation in BIA's *Lower-48 Community Led Relocation Pilot* review process (June 2022)
- Inventory of federal agency climate adaptation plans for incorporation of historic properties, sacred sites, and/or Indigenous Knowledge (June 2022)
- Development of case studies on climate change (August 2022)
- WHCNAAs *Tribal Science Series* on climate change (Fall/Winter 2022)
- Incorporation of climate change into ACHP Policy Statements (ongoing)

June 28, 2022