

**Region 9 regional Tribal Operations Committee (RTOC)
Future of RTOC
Concept Paper**

10/13/10

Purpose

The purpose of the concept paper is to summarize the issues and provide a concept for consideration and discussion during the RTOC Tribal Caucus meeting on October 18, 2010, and a subsequent larger discussion at the full RTOC meeting on October 19, 2010, regarding refinement of the RTOC meeting process. The idea of a concept paper was agreed to by the small RTOC Workgroup that was formed at the direction given during the July, 2010, RTOC meeting. Workgroup members include representatives from the Tribal Caucus and EPA, and the purpose of the Workgroup is to help streamline the RTOC meeting process.

Background

For more than a year, members of the RTOC have engaged in discussions to identify ways in which the RTOC meeting process can be modified to better meet the needs of tribes located in the Pacific Southwest and Region 9. The issues and concepts for implementing changes to the RTOC process included in this paper were compiled using input received during the facilitated sessions at the April and July 2010 RTOC meetings. The overall goal of restructuring future RTOC meetings is to increase participation by tribal leaders and senior agency staff (including EPA as well as other federal agencies) and create opportunities for more focused and strategic discussions on specific issues and processes among RTOC members. The specific goals for this process are identified below.

Major Goals Identified by Tribal Caucus and Agency Staff

- Structure meetings so discussion can occur regarding strategic issues i.e. national and regional budget, programmatic efforts and planning;
- Create opportunities for discussion among multiple agencies and tribes to allow for networking/partnering/leveraging.
- Increase opportunities for tribal leaders to engage with other tribal leaders and with managers and staff from EPA and other federal agencies;
- Increase participation of senior managers from the Agency and by tribal leaders;
- Increase participation in the RTOC process of key federal agencies;

Concept to Achieve Goals

The following proposal and rationale are put forth for consideration and discussion by the Tribal Caucus and the full RTOC. Based on the discussions that will occur at the October 19, 2010, RTOC meeting, the Workgroup will provide an overall recommendation and identify next steps in a subsequent paper.

» **January/February:** In-person meeting or conference call, focusing specifically on strategic planning and budget development.

Rationale: This very focused working meeting or conference call will provide an opportunity to do strategic planning and budget development for EPA programs in preparation for the full RTOC budget meeting in April. The meeting would take place after public release of the President's proposed budget.

Participants: Tribal Caucus representatives or designees (Budget Workgroup members), with support by conference call or in-person from EPA to answer questions or clarify issues.

» **Late March/Early April:** Full RTOC meeting, with the location continuing to be in San Francisco, and to include a tribal leaders summit with senior representatives from various federal agencies (e.g. BIA, USDA, IHS, DOE, HUD).

Rationale: This full RTOC meeting will continue to include the Tribal Caucus session, work group breakout sessions, and a full RTOC meeting, with a summit as an integral part of the full meeting. The discussion during this meeting would focus on budget recommendations for the federal budget, and programmatic priorities to advance core objectives of protecting the environment and public health. The late March/early April timeframe aligns with the federal budget planning process and the National Tribal Operations Committee budget discussions.

Participants: Tribal leaders, senior staff from federal agencies, tribal environmental staff, and EPA staff.

» **July:** In-person meeting or conference call, as determined jointly by media offices and workgroups. Media offices with topics to discuss will work with relevant workgroups to determine the format and content of this meeting.

Rationale: The format of the meeting will be developed jointly by the media program, the appropriate RTOC workgroup, and the Tribal Program Office (e.g. once a joint determination is made that a Grants-focused meeting should be held, then the RTOC Grants Workgroup, the Grants Management Office, and the Tribal Program Office will work together to plan and design the meeting).

Participants: RTOC Workgroup co-leads and Workgroup members.

» **October:** Full RTOC meeting, scheduled during the week of the Annual Tribal/EPA Conference. This RTOC would focus on major policy EPA issues requiring senior level attention.

Rationale: Topics could include policy issues, budget, environmental priorities, exploring opportunities for partnering among tribes, federal and state agencies, and leveraging resources. These discussions could occur through focused breakout sessions.

Participants: Tribal leaders, senior representatives from EPA and federal agencies, and tribal and agency staff.