

**America's Great Outdoors**  
**Notes from Great American Outdoors Tribal Government Roundtable**

Location: Prior Lake, MN

Date: August 4, 2010

*President Obama launched a national conversation about conservation in America at the White House Conference on the Great Outdoors on April 16, 2010. The President understands that protecting and restoring the lands and waters that we love and reconnecting people to the outdoors must happen at the local level. Therefore, President Obama directed the principal leaders of the Initiative to travel across the country to listen and learn from people directly involved in finding grassroots solutions to conserve our lands, waterways, historical and cultural resources and to reconnect Americans with the Outdoors. The President indicated that the sessions should engage the full range of interested groups, including tribal leaders, farmers and ranchers, sportsmen, community park groups, foresters, youth groups, businesspeople, educators, State and local government, recreation and conservation groups and others. Below are notes from the Great American Outdoors Tribal Government Roundtable. Please feel free to use the ideation tool at <http://ideas.usda.gov/ago/ideas.nsf/> if you would like to share your thoughts.*

Participants

**Leonard Wabasha**

**Stanley Crooks, Chairman SMSC**

**Nancy Sutley, Chair, White House Council on Environmental Quality**

**Del Laverdure, DOI Deputy Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs, representing DOI Assistant Secretary Echohawk.**

**Will Shafroth, DOI Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks**

**Todd Kennedy, DOI Bureau of Indian Affairs, Acting Regional Director**

**Harris Sherman, USDA, Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment**

**Ernie Quintana, Regional Director, National Park Service, Nebraska**

**Stanley Crooks, Chairman Shakopee**

**Lisa Jackson, Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency**

**Greg Blackdeer, District One Ho-Chunk Nation, Legislative Representative**

**Honorable Lewis Taylor, St. Croix, Chairman**

**Al Pemberton, Red Lake, Director of the Department of Natural Resources and Tribal Council Member**

**Honorable Karen Diver, Fond du Lac Tribe, Chairwoman**

**Kenneth Fish, Menominee, Tribal Legislator**

**Emily Boyd, Rosebud, Biologist**

**Jeffery Gilpin, Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, Council Member**

**Honorable Richard Marcellais, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, Tribal Chairman and North Dakota Senator**

**John Dunfy, Mille Lacs, Commissioner of Administration, representing the Chairman**

**Mic Isham, Lac Courte Oreilles, Tribal Council Member**

**Jim Zorn, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, Executive Administrator**

**Brian Bisonette, Lac Courte Oreilles, Secretary/Treasurer**

**Gregory Miller, Stockbridge Munsee Tribe, Vice President**

**Honorable Norman Deschampe, Grand Portage, Chairman**

**Glynn Crooks, SMSC, Vice Chair**

-The Roundtable began with an opening Prayer. It was noted that tribal leaders are aware of taking care of the land and the need to discuss what is being done and how it can be done better. Opening remarks also noted that the Executive memo (for the AGO program) was signed by President Obama on April 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Presidential Memorandum -- America's Great Outdoors**, MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR, THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE, THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, THE CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

SUBJECT: A 21st Century Strategy for America's Great Outdoors

-A Federal Official defined the session goals and objectives. State, private, tribal and local governments need to continue to improve on partnerships. Indian country has unique challenges. The Fee to Trust Initiative was mentioned. The session goal is to listen and learn. The goal is to build on partnership efforts.

-A Federal Official stated that the President has made it clear how important this is. Clean and healthy places are important for fishing and hunting in Indian Country and they need to be protected and restored. In the United States people/children are losing connection to the outdoors. Pollution and development is threatening the environment. We need to think of ways to protect and renew. We need new and old solutions to invigorate the effort.

-A Federal Official conveyed greetings from Sec. Salazar who could not attend. It was noted that there is a special role and opportunity for the Department of the Interior on this initiative. Fish & Wildlife has a great connection in this area and region. This is a great opportunity to work with tribes in this region. Secretary Salazar has deep interest in America's stories being told.

-A Federal Official noted that USDA includes the US Forest Service, NRCS, Natural Resource Conservation Service and that USDA is familiar with NCAI Chippewa National & Superior National (Chequamegan Nicolet Forests). USDA is trying to extend themselves to provide input and listen in this new chapter to improve our environment. The real focus is on what can work in the future, to capture bottom up ideas and put them to use, and record these issues/ideas and take them to Washington. Outline the recommendations and make changes to local, federal, tribal and business communities. The President expects a report in November to implement new levels of change.

-A Federal Official affirmed that he was there to support everyone in their efforts.

-A Tribal Leader noted that this is the first official listening session incorporating the tribes with America's Great Outdoors.

-A Federal Official noted that she just got back from Alaska where she spent time with Chief Tom Tillson whose father moved around a lot and kept diary of his time. Many diary entries read, "I have no gold today." Then one day an entry read, "I found my gold today." This gold relates to natural resources for Alaska's climate that can help support his family, children, and grandchildren. Today we need to focus

on the young people, listen and learn from them, protect the air, water, and get young involved in our future.

-A Tribal Leader stated that the issue in 1969 was that the tribe only had 260 acres and not much Natural Resources. Tribal members were jammed into the reservation/community. Now we have about 2,000 acres, plenty of walking trails, restored wetlands, recreated meadows and preserves. We have a watershed district, a wind generation plant and utilize recycled water for irrigation of the golf course. We will continue to improve and work on opportunities like these. The Land Manager works with EPA to obtain grants for these opportunities. We would like to have funding maintained for these purposes. Cooperate with Prior Lake on trails policy and roads. Concern is not to cut current funding.

-A Tribal Leader stated that the role the agencies play is all hinged on funding. He likes the initiative. Referred to a kindergarten program in Europe where the classes are held outside. He referred to it as "No child left inside." Build on green space, kids outside 365 (no child left inside). Help with language and education component. Creating and managing green spaces all play a role. With that comes land management. Ho-Chunk is unique in that they are spread out to 14 counties. This makes it difficult for them to put a management plan together. Joint management, working with Department of WI Natural Resources, environmental water management has worked for them. Cooperative Management in (our dispersed land base) (Kickapoo is open to all). How do we protect cultural heritage in those coop areas without funding? How can tribes help? When we create these initiatives, what kinds of impact will that have on the mounds? Yet our laws are not favorable to the tribes. They impact funding; policies are not strong enough to enforce. Ho-Chunk is trying to do organic gardening and composting. He noted the climate change and a story his uncle told of a medicinal plant in Illinois. They were shocked to find this plant was (growing so close) to where they reside (due to global warming). How are we enforcing the initiative?

-A Tribal Leader thank the attendees for coming to listen. "Long overdue." When Washington policies affect his tribe he listens. Sacred teachings are important. The wish for the President's initiative on the Great Outdoors is a blessing. We are losing our sacred things. We are losing our wild rice. What the heck are Asian Carp? We need to protect our natural resources. We need to do this as a group. (A 30 million \$\$ fish farming project failed due to (regulation delay), it took 5 years to do and they are still waiting for return on investment.) We are the sacrificial goat. We need input on development and policy. He sees this in WI and on the federal level. Need consultation with Indian tribes. Tribally driven policies versus Washington-developed policies. Natural Resources shouldn't be regulated in DC. Lack of input from tribes is a concern. Tribes need to step up and do something in addition.

-A Tribal Leader talked about reservation boundary issues. By act of Congress they were given tribal boundaries. Need long term planning. Projects don't work. They don't have infrastructure to implement. She highlighted the issue of identifying cultural resources and then the difficulty in protecting that same information. Working on IRMP, Integrated Resource Management Planning, identifying resources and defining cultural/historical resources. Need to beef up management and get business/management plan, get water resources, trying to give back to the youth. There is a concern of losing cultural and language. The goal is to start with the young, teach the language and then they gain

connection to natural resources. There are water issues with the (use) (of the Aquifer) and (River) water rights. Why do they need the water, except for irrigation? They are working on zoning. Don't want their resources just taken. There is a need to identify important resources to be preserved. They have issues regarding agricultural/range leases. We need to improve our management plans with NRCS for land use.

-A Tribal Leader noted that in regards to resources, he was an electrician and was forced to leave the reservation. He knows the problems on the reservation. We all have the same problems. Talked about BP oil spill, needles washing up on shore /international dumping in our waters, preserving our Cultural Resources, and losing the language. He mentioned smog at the Grand Canyon. He highlighted that a white guy is teaching their language at UNL. Lincoln. The language is his mission. He also mentioned a museum that is in the works and that the Smithsonian is (holding some of their cultural heritage/sacred pole.)

-A Tribal Leader responded to the question "What works?" They have a New Director in Natural Resources that is working, a Green Thumb program, elders beautifying the community and they are stocking lakes with fish. They are acquiring GSA surplus equipment and work cooperatively with State and Fish and Game. They are a small reservation with a small land base. They have buildings on dumping grounds. (A Middle school and a former housing unit that was torn down 18 months ago, which is not cleaned up yet.) Since it is not cleaned up people are getting hurt, there is vandalism, and it poses a hazard to the members. There is not enough law enforcement on these sites. They must protect the aquifer on their land. They also have Chippewa Tribal Industries, which is performing home inspections and energy audits. They have Community gardens. Another challenge is they are losing the willows for basket making. Would like to see more tribal, state, governmental teamwork on these issues.

-A Tribal Leader stated that they are moving into a regulatory phase from acquisitions and working with state on wild rice issues. Lake front open space (initiative). They are interdepartmentally moving towards "green building certification" with DNR.

-A Tribal Leader responded to the question "What works?" What fits this is CCC. Civilian Conservation Corps with youth doing natural resources. (Rails to Trails program, projects such as trails from WI to MI, campsites and deer surveys) This got the young into the outdoors. This all ended when Tommy Thompson became Governor. They only receive funds to build, not to operate & maintain these parks, ball fields and trails. Doesn't want other programs to be fleeced in the process. Wants them to be 638 so tribes run the program. (MI mine to be destroyed). Get young away from crime and into traditional sites/values. Doesn't want sites open to the public. (Mention of Monuments/site where they collect pipestone where there was graffiti. He wants no graffiti on rocks.) He cited GLIFWC as an example of off reservation cooperation to protect resources. Can we purchase off reservation and close it to the public?

-A Tribal Leader responded to the question "What works?" Culture is Paramount. First tribal historic preservation office (THPO) program for inventory of cultural sites, prevented desecration, development.

(He was previously a tribal preservation officer). Highlighted issue that money for THPO is cut or stays the same as participation increases. Their tribe can't subsidize/fund programs. They lobby for more funding.

-A Tribal Leader commended other tribes for the management of their lands and does not know how it happens but believes that positive management comes from the heart. Their tribe has the best second-growth forest. A sense of community may have helped. Land into trust is important. Law Enforcement - how do we keep game wardens? There are interaction difficulties with external law enforcement in a PL 280 state. In today's world, could kids tell what time of day it was if they were dropped in the woods? We don't cut trees with holes in them; they are homes to small animals. Congratulations to those tribal leaders who have realized success. He felt tribes weren't always invited to the table. Tribal resource management comes "second-nature." Others need to work at it. He applauds having the listening session early in the process. Thinks the government should use the tribes as a role model for management of land resources.

-A Tribal Leader stated that the Head of Natural Resources for Red Lake sent a letter to Secretary Salazar and he won't go into that now. This initiative needs to be funded with new money. They are looking at 7% (BIA/tribe) reduction. The cut doesn't leave room for this. How can we support this? What works? They work with USDA, EPA, MN DNR and the young. They have a Water Fest every year. "They" took it away, the grant for the water Fest? Soil and watershed district, they will have to find the money somewhere else. Tree plantings with the kids/young help give back to mother earth. They are a closed reservation so it is easier for them to do things since all their land is in trust/closed. They have the sixth largest fresh water lake in the United States. Their reservation is like it was way back and people come there to take pictures. They have been bombarded by government on land issues and giving back the Angle. They have diminished land all the way to Canada. Many don't know that Red Lake owns the Northwest Angle in Canada. Red Lake has pre-settlement resources.

-A Tribal Leader expressed thanks to Obama for this initiative. Our economy and culture was destroyed by this government. The agencies have helped. We, as tribes, do not have the infrastructure to help with funding. He had an issue with OSHA winning administrative jurisdiction on the reservation. Issue with Unions. Many tribes are poor to begin with. Pow Wow winning are now on the 1099. The IRS and taxation/1099 take too much. IRS is a disservice to the tribes. Tribes win little money. Land into trust. Menominee feels they were ripped off. Connection to Congress resulted in MIT ripped off (Legend lake) acres. Legend Lake landowners have a covenant to stop land into trust. The youth is in crisis. New law enforcement (funding) will help. Drug problems are a big issue. We need to utilize the resources available to us and the Agencies. Need assistance with infrastructure so that they can utilize the funds that they receive.

-A Tribal Leader stated that they rely on their own tribal capacity to work on natural resource issues. They have good technical advisors on their staff who works on sustainable energy. Work well with EPA in Region 5. "Thank you". They focus on protecting high quality resources instead of saving compromised natural resources. Polymet project was wholly inadequate and the tribe's input into the environmental process was reduced. Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is a Federal trust

responsibility and the hat stays on through the entire process. (GLIFWC helped in this effort.) Their natural resources are integrated with tribal initiatives. Iron range problems result in damage to the Great Lakes. We can't survive cuts. Keep us even. More money would be great. This is a great new initiative. She wants to know "how do tribes initiatives match what the feds are trying to do?" Let us tell you how our priorities match what you are doing.

-A Tribal Leader noted that the youth focus of America's Great outdoors is great! Our assets are our children. The greatest gift is a world where they can sustain themselves. We are losing our moose population, seeing raccoons and wood ticks, which they have not seen before. Their ceded territory saw their first Turkey hunting season last year. No one knows how to hunt turkeys. Concern: Treaty rights as they relate to subsistence which is important to the tribe. Mining is a big issue for them. Asian Carp & VHS (fish disease) is big problem for them too. Don't do enough implementing; instead they do too much studying. We did the same thing with the lamprey. Now they are managing them. We need quicker action on invasives. Partnerships are important; both sides must have total honesty. Need everyone to come to the table with no hidden issues/agenda. We need more direct tribal contracts. Hopes this initiative doesn't stop.

-A Federal Official stated that she got a lot of "Food-for-Thought" and ideas on how to make this an important initiative. For her this is a beginning, not an end on the America's Great Outdoors. She will look for opportunities.

-A Federal Official expressed thanks and asked how do (we) keep tribes input happening? He directed everyone to the web site for continuing to make the issues known.

<http://www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/> He asked, "What does the forest of the future look like? Should we be looking to new ways?" He liked the second generation forest mentioned by the Stockbridge Munsee tribe. The CCP program and youth can become the new natural resources care giver. Community gardens and USDA can be of help. The Forest Service has learned how to manage forests from studying Native American practices. They are struggling on how to manage forests to anticipate climate change.

-A Federal Official noted that she would like to see the 6<sup>th</sup> largest lake in the US at Red Lake and would like to travel here again. EPA is working on strengthening tribal leaderships and relationships. They have priorities, so everyone knows what is important. Let us know what we can be doing better. Please submit suggestions on how to improve consultation. One of the agencies' 7 priorities was to improve/maintain tribal partnerships.

-A Federal Official stated that the Cultural Resources issues were heard loud and clear. Message received to support THPO offices, Historical Preservation, assistance, partnership and the role that tribes have in overall management of parks and natural resources. This is the theme they are hearing around the country. Landscape scale management (needed) (Park Service, US agencies and Canada). He said thank you and said that he was sorry they couldn't have set aside more time.

-A Federal Official thanked the tribes for their stewardship over all these years. This is a direct pipeline to the President with the cabinet leaders here today.

-A Tribal Leader concluded that you need to listen to the children and Indian country. He appreciates the effort in them being here. He stated that they must spend a day or two here, not just a few hours. Tribe's resources are "they need the money." Tribes expect the government to live up to treaty rights, funds, and provide technical support. He noted that the President said that Indian Country has always been underfunded. We/tribes need to maintain what we have and find other financial resources. The treaties don't say "subject to budgets."