



White House Council on
Native American Affairs

Indigenous Sacred Sites MOU

May 11, 2022

2012/2016 Sacred Sites MOU

Signatories

- Departments of Defense, Interior, Agriculture, Energy and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Purpose

- Extended the 2012 Sacred Sites MOU
- Aligned the requirements of Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites
- Improve the protection of and tribal access to Indian sacred sites
- Enhanced interdepartmental coordination and collaboration.
- Development and application of consistent policies and processes.

Implementation and Tribal Engagement

- Presentations at tribal and intertribal meetings
- Listening sessions in conjunction with the White House Tribal Nations Conference
- Developed Action Plan
- Executive and Core working groups to help accomplish the action plan



Photo Credit: Bureau of Land Management

2012/2016 Sacred Sites MOU

Responsibilities and Commitments

- Develop and improve training and guidance for federal staff
- Develop best practices and build capacity
- Analyze mechanisms for, and develop recommendations related to, confidentiality of information
- Increase outreach to the public and non-federal partners
- Review existing legal authorities related to sacred sites

Accomplishments

- *Native American Sacred Sites and the Federal Government* (training video)
- *Sacred Sites Guidance for Federal Senior Leadership and Staff*
- *Policy Statement on the Confidentiality of Information about Indian Sacred Sites*

Accomplishments Cont'd

- *The Protection of Indian Sacred Sites: General Information*
- *Policy Review Report*
- *Progress Report on Implementation*
- *The Relationship Between Executive Order 13007 Regarding Indian Sacred Sites and Section 106 (ACHP)*
- *Guidelines on Maintaining the Confidentiality of Information about Indian Sacred Sites (DOD)*



Photo Credit: Bureau of Land Management

2021 Sacred Sites MOU

- **Signatories:** USDA, DOE, DOI, DOT, EPA, ACHP, CEQ, TVA
- **Renews and Strengthens** 2012/2016 MOU
- **Tribal and NHO guidance** are central to MOU

2021 Sacred Sites MOU

- **MOU Commitments**

- Working Group
- Develop best practices, procedures, and guidance for management, treatment, and protection of sacred sites
- Identify impediments to Federal-level protection of sacred sites
- Address and remedy impediments

2021 Sacred Sites MOU

- **MOU Commitments**

- Incorporate consideration of Sacred Sites into Federal decision-making; consultation; regulatory processes;
- Incorporate Traditional Knowledge;
- Increase accountability
- Consultation



Framing Questions

Question 1: What can federal agencies do to better consider, protect, and provide you access to Sacred Sites?

Question 2: How should federal agencies consult with you in order to better identify and protect Sacred Sites, while also providing access?

Question 3: What challenges have you experienced in your efforts to protect Sacred Sites?

Question 4: This MOU contains several provisions that commit agencies to action - are there any you would like to see prioritized?

Question 5: What additional commitments could federal agencies include in this MOU to advance the protection of Sacred Sites?



Feedback from Listening Session

- Capacity building
- Earlier consultation
- Respect Traditional Knowledge (TK)
- HQ and local office coordination
- Commitment to protection
- Confidentiality/FOIA
- Proactive identification (pre-106)
- Budget for management & identification
- 2021 MOU training for federal staff

A Sacred Landscape

During ceremonies, the elders tell him, in the beginning, Nallé (Coyote) came through here. He destroyed the people, water and transformed the world, preparing it for the human beings who were yet to come. He made this place abundant and good, and showed the right way to live. And he left behind landmarks to remind us of his deeds.

For thousands of years, tribal people lived here by the ways taught by Coyote.

All along the "road" — the Flathead River — our people have held a deeply spiritual relationship with the land and waters. Here we have fished and hunted, gathered botanical, animal, and other food and medicinal plants. Here we have been born, raised, and buried.

The river is our "road to the west" — the travel corridor that links the various bands of the Qlappan (ancestral Kalispel) and Flathead (ancestral Flathead) people as a whole, from Flathead Lake all the way downstream to eastern Washington. The river is as central to the identity of the Qlappan that in sign language, the river is indicated by a gesture simulating the stroke of a canoe paddle.

For the Qlappan, Salish, Shoshone, and Kootenai, the Flathead River holds the highest spiritual and material importance.

The old people have said we must honor the land and waters, the plants and animals, the fish and birds. We must keep them clean and abundant. We must always do our best to take care of the river and surrounding lands for the generations yet to come.

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes have carried this deep respect for the river into the present day: during the 1970s and 1980s, we turned down two proposals to build additional dams on the river. In 1986, we turned down the second "River Dewatering" environmental action plan. In 1987, we secured an agreement requiring Kootenai Dam to be operated in a way environmentally damaging was. And in 1995, the Tribal Council unanimously passed the Lower Flathead River management plan, with a guiding vision rooted in traditional values.

"...the natural and cultural values of the Lower Flathead River Corridor shall be preserved for present and future generations of the Tribes."



Next Steps

- White House Council on Native American Affairs
- Agency/Department commitments
- Indian Tribes, Native Hawaiians, and other Indigenous Peoples

Opportunities for Department of Energy

Utilize strengths

National policy

National/Local points-of-contact

Local/Regional Implementation Plans

Define role of Sacred Sites in planning

Questions?



Flathead Indians Camping - Southeast of Missoula



Ira L. Matt
Director, Office of Native American Affairs
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation