



**Proposed Course of Action Regarding Training as  
Determined by the Training Subgroup  
of the  
Memorandum of Understanding  
Regarding Interagency Coordination and  
Collaboration for the  
Protection of Indian Sacred Sites**

By

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*U.S. Department of Defense  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Energy  
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation*

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## **SUMMARY**

Federal land managing agencies hold in public trust a great diversity of landscapes and sites, including many culturally important sites held sacred by Indian tribes. Recognizing a common goal and obligation to consider the impacts of agency actions on historic properties of traditional cultural and religious importance to tribes, on December 5, 2012, the Departments of Defense, the Interior, Agriculture, Energy, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to improve the protection of and Indian access to sacred sites through interagency coordination and collaboration.

This proposal was developed by the Training Subgroup (TSG) of the Core MOU Working Group and proposes actions that will further enhance interagency coordination and collaboration.

## **BACKGROUND**

In the annual progress report, the TSG recapped how it had identified existing training resources for the legal protections and limitations regarding the accommodation of, access to, and protection of sacred sites; promoted awareness of existing trainings and training resources; and identified training resources Federal employees need regarding sacred sites. Furthermore, the TSG articulated the necessity to engage in communication and outreach to tribal leaders, subject matter experts, and Native American NGOs to gain further knowledge of perceived difficulties in the field as identified by our non-federal partners.

## **PROPOSAL**

### Step 1: *Working Effectively with Tribal Governments*

In recognition of Native American Heritage Month in November, each signatory agency will agree to direct all employees<sup>1</sup> take the free, one-hour, online training hosted by the Office of Personnel Management, *Working Effectively with Tribal Governments*.

- Participation in the training would be beneficial as a first step to introducing a broad range of employees to Native American governments, policy and government-to-government consultation.
- Participation would be in the spirit of Native American Heritage Month, which is widely promoted by the Federal Government.

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<sup>1</sup> All employees where appropriate; i.e. DoD would not request participation from combat service members or employees OCONUS.

- The training is free; no cost would be incurred by any of the signatory agencies that participate.
- Employees would have through the last day of November to complete the training. Employees will receive an online certification of participation upon completion.

Step 2: Development of a Sacred Sites Training Component.

The Executive Working Group identified the primary function of the MOU as interagency collaboration and communication regarding federal management of lands that possess Native American sacred sites/places. The TSG determined that there was a gap in available training as it pertained to this primary purpose of the MOU. Therefore, the TSG proposes to develop the following curriculum:

- Effective Coordination & Communication Between Federal Departments/Agencies Regarding Management of Lands Containing Tribal Sacred Sites, Places, and Landscapes
- The training would be developed in coordination with volunteer subject matter experts from within the federal family, academia, tribes, and tribal NGOs.
- At this point in time the TSG is solely focusing on developing a training curriculum and not on a mechanism for delivery or promotion across the federal system.
- A timeline for development would be as follows:
  - October 1 – December 1, 2014:
    - Identify and send letters to potential Subject Matter Experts requesting their assistance.
    - Coordinate with NCAI to secure a listening session at the NCAI Annual Convention scheduled for October 26-31, 2014, in Atlanta GA.
  - November 1– December 31, 2014:
    - Send letters to tribes and Federal Department/Agencies requesting success stories and specific examples of challenges regarding sacred site/places management, access, and protection.
    - Select a panel of volunteer Subject Matter Experts to participate in the continued development of the training curriculum.
  - January 5– March 13, 2015:
    - Hold a series of three (3) national teleconferences with tribes requesting further insight into difficulties and successes when working with the Federal Government on matters pertaining to sacred sites.
  - March 16 – May 29, 2015:

- Analyze all data received, including success stories, challenges.
  - Begin drafting the training curriculum.
- June 1 – September 1, 2015:
  - Finalize the training curriculum for release at the White House Tribal Leaders Summit (fall 2015, date TBD)