



# APHIS Native American Working Group

*Strategic Plan – 2009-2014*

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## **VISION**

*The APHIS Native American Working Group (ANAWG) enhances APHIS program delivery in Indian Country.*

## **MISSION**

*The ANAWG provides guidance and direction to APHIS leaders to promote communication with tribal nations and facilitate the delivery of APHIS programs to tribal governments and organizations.*

## Introduction

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is charged with protecting America's agricultural resources by keeping foreign pests and diseases out of the country, regulating the introduction of genetically engineered organisms that may pose a plant pest risk, minimizing damage caused by wildlife, and protecting certain animals from inhumane treatment. As part of its commitment to serve all Americans, APHIS accepts the responsibility to deliver its programs on lands managed by the more than 500 federally recognized Indian tribes. The agency recognizes the historic rights of these sovereign dependent nations to govern themselves and manage their resources. Like the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Federal Government in general, APHIS acknowledges its obligations under treaties, statutes, and executive orders to protect and maintain the lands, resources, and areas traditionally used by American Indians and Alaska Natives. USDA and APHIS are committed to building day-to-day working relationships with Native American governments and respecting tribal heritage and cultural values when planning and initiating programs.

APHIS officials work cooperatively with tribal governments to enlist their interest and support in efforts that are mutually beneficial. Program specialists maintain contacts to better consult with Native American leaders relative to tribal concerns and issues. The APHIS Native American Working Group (ANAWG) encourages managers and program coordinators within the agency to consider the impact of agency decisions on tribes and consult with tribal governments to ensure that tribal rights, issues, and concerns are factored in during rulemaking and the development of projects, programs, and policies.

The ANAWG—a standing committee of representatives from all APHIS program areas—advises top management about ways to enhance program delivery and accessibility to tribes, intertribal committees, and related organizations, such as the Intertribal Agriculture Council and the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society. ANAWG representatives work with their program leaders to be sure that Native American needs are taken into account when new strategic plans for APHIS programs are developed. The ANAWG also stresses the importance of offering potentially affected tribes an opportunity to consult with us early in the rulemaking process when proposed agency activities could impact tribally managed lands or Native Americans themselves.

The ANAWG was established in September 1994 under the direction of the Office of the Administrator with all participants, including the chair of the group, doing their ANAWG work as a collateral-duty assignment. In 2002, the Administrator established a full-time tribal liaison position to coordinate and

expand APHIS programs and activities for tribal governments and Native Americans. In 2008, this position—now known as the Native American Program-Delivery Manager (NAPDM)—was relocated within the Office of Civil Rights Enforcement and Compliance (CREC). In 2004–05, both Veterinary Services (VS) and Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) developed a full-time tribal liaison position to further expand programs and activities in the field. In 2007, Biotechnology Regulatory Services (BRS) created a full-time State and tribal liaison position. The Administrator retains authority for establishing agency policy relating to all APHIS activities and programs of interest to Native Americans.

## Values

While conducting our mission, we value:

<b>Honest Dialogue</b>	We communicate and act truthfully, in accordance with a sense of fairness and sincerity.
<b>Integrity</b>	We maintain credibility by making certain our actions always match spoken or written words.
<b>Collaboration</b>	We build partnerships with tribes to attain the common goal of protecting agriculture and natural resources.

## Strategic Goals

The following is a summary list of the goals for the ANAWG:

<b><u>Goal 1:</u></b>	ANAWG effectively informs APHIS management about their roles and responsibilities to tribal governments and organizations.
<b><u>Goal 2:</u></b>	ANAWG communicates with American Indians and Alaska Natives about APHIS and its programs and services.
<b><u>Goal 3:</u></b>	ANAWG raises APHIS' awareness about tribal sovereignty and the Federal trust responsibility.
<b><u>Goal 4:</u></b>	ANAWG maintains its own effective and efficient infrastructure.

## Strategic Objectives, Activities, and Performance Measures, by Goal

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**Goal 1:** The ANAWG effectively informs APHIS management about their roles and responsibilities to tribal governments and organizations.

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**Objective 1:** Develop decision memorandums and make policy recommendations to APHIS managers.

**Activities:**

- Identify issues that affect program delivery in Indian country.
- Provide input to draft policies for the signature of the Administrator to require that tribal consultation be conducted whenever APHIS program-delivery activities significantly impact one or more federally recognized tribes.

**Objective 2:** Interpret existing Presidential directives, executive orders, laws, and regulations and make recommendations to managers and programs.

**Activities:**

- Track and analyze new issuances concerning Native Americans.
- Provide input for the development of summaries and interpretations of new issuances, focusing on explaining how the issuances will or should affect program planning and actual program delivery.

**The following performance measures will be used to monitor progress:**

APHIS managers receive accurate information related to consultation requirements.

APHIS managers incorporate requirements for consultation into their operational plans.

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**Goal 2: The ANAWG communicates with American Indians and Alaska Natives about APHIS and its programs and services.**

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**Objective 1:** Market APHIS' mission and programs within Indian Country.

**Activities:**

- Develop information materials on APHIS programs targeted to Indian Country.
- Attend meetings of tribal organizations.
- Distribute APHIS information materials at those meetings.
- Contribute to the maintenance of the ANAWG Web site.

**Objective 2:** Promote two-way communication between APHIS and tribal leaders.

**Activities:**

- Establish and maintain relationships with tribal leaders, members, and organizations.
- Develop, maintain, and make employees aware of a current and accurate directory of tribal leaders, natural resource staff, and tribal organizations.

**The following performance measures will be used to monitor progress:**

Appropriate materials in adequate numbers are available for tribal members attending selected tribal meetings.

APHIS managers have resources to readily contact tribal leaders and natural resource practitioners when issues of mutual concern arise.

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**Goal 3: The ANAWG raises APHIS' awareness about tribal sovereignty and the Federal trust responsibility.**

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**Objective 1:** Educate APHIS Program managers and APHIS leadership about responsibilities to tribal nations.

**Activities:**

- Hold training events for APHIS managers and supervisors that cover the meaning of tribal sovereignty and the Federal Government's trust responsibility to the tribes.

**Objective 2:** Educate APHIS about American Indian and Alaska Native culture so that employees can be more sensitive to actions and needs of tribes.

**Activities:**

- Contribute to content for a quarterly electronic newsletter made available to all employees.
- Coordinate training on how to build effective working relationships with American Indians and Alaska Natives suitable for all levels of APHIS employees.
- Maintain a list of resources (books, tapes, videos, articles) available for sign-out and sharing.

**The following performance measures will be used to monitor progress:**

Three training sessions (headquarters, ERO, WRO) are given between September 2008 and the end of fiscal year 2009.

Employees are queried electronically about their response to the e-newsletter, and a majority of respondents describe it as informative and useful.

APHIS leaders and managers understand the concept of the Federal Trust Responsibility to American Indian and Alaska Native governments.

APHIS employees have access to training materials on tribal relations

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**Goal 4: The ANAWG maintains its own effective and efficient infrastructure.**

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**Objective 1:** Align ANAWG's human resources structure with its mission.

**Activities:**

- Clarify the voting and at-large membership, their roles and responsibilities, and the relationships both within and outside of the ANAWG structure.
- Update the ANAWG Charter.
- Establish a process for developing the agenda for the group's meetings.
- Meet monthly.
- Identify and develop standard operating practices.
- Establish permanent subject-based subcommittees (e.g., outreach, Web site, etc.).

**Objective 2:** Educate APHIS employees about the ANAWG.

**Activities:**

- Publish and distribute an electronic newsletter quarterly to all employees.

**Objective 3:** Implement a system that provides appropriate communication within and outside the ANAWG.

**Activities:**

- Identify and develop best mechanisms for communication within ANAWG, within APHIS, and outside APHIS.
- Define reporting mechanisms for members (both verbal reports to be given at monthly ANAWG meetings and annual written reports sought by the Civil Rights Enforcement and Compliance group).

**The following performance measures will be used to monitor progress:**

ANAWG members and their supervisors understand their roles and responsibilities.

APHIS employees understand the role of the ANAWG.

Appropriate communication is made by the appropriate individual(s) effectively and efficiently.

## Key External Factors

The APHIS Native American Working Group has taken into account a range of external factors in developing strategies for accomplishing its mission. The ANAWG accomplishments over the next 3–5 years will to a large extent be determined by how well it manages the following factors:

**Need to clarify direction and roles:** Over the past several years, the Department has provided little guidance and policy to USDA agencies in attending to their Federal responsibility to Native Americans. Compounding the problem of lack of Departmental direction is the confusion of who does what within APHIS' roles and responsibilities with tribes. This translates into poor information-sharing within APHIS and significantly adds to the difficulty for tribes to communicate with APHIS. The Director of Native American Programs at USDA has recently organized a subcommittee within the USDA's own NAWG to work on developing a Department-wide policy about how tribal consultations should be handled and by what level of agency employees. When this guidance is finalized, it will be distributed to APHIS employees, and the ANAWG will help develop an APHIS directive on the subject to mirror USDA-level direction.

**Identify opportunities to use resources more effectively:** Everyone within and outside of the Government is feeling the tightening of the Federal purse strings. Current budget constraints and associated travel restrictions are making it harder for managers to deliver their programs. This in turn makes it even more challenging for the ANAWG to secure funding for outreach. How well the ANAWG presents its priorities to leadership and can align its activities with other program-delivery priorities may be a key factor affecting how much funding is received.

**Build relationships to promote visibility and earn trust:** Lack of visibility is a systemic issue. The ANAWG is challenged in several directions: USDA and APHIS may not see the value of having the ANAWG or its purpose. APHIS, as an agency, lacks visibility in some States. Much of the reputation APHIS does have in Indian Country can be attributed to the hard work of ANAWG members. Increasing visibility and ultimately gaining trust in Indian Country will be due in large part to how well APHIS, with support from the ANAWG, establishes and maintains partnerships with other organizations to assist in delivering the agency's goods and services. APHIS already has productive relationships with some tribal organizations. And there are opportunities to build on those and form new partnerships with, for example, tribal nation conservation alliances, the tribal colleges and universities supported since 1994 as Land Grant institutions, and other USDA agencies. The ANAWG needs to build upon the assumption that tribes are interested in what APHIS is doing; however, we need to do this in a

culturally sensitive manner. APHIS needs to earn trust through actions. Specifically, listening and encouraging meaningful dialogue is a critical approach to building trust in Indian Country. This means identifying what tribes need, not what we think they need. On the other side, the ANAWG needs to market and educate APHIS employees about our accomplishments. Effective communication is clearly the overarching key to ANAWG success.

**Understand the unique tribal government structures and our Federal responsibility:** The federally recognized Indian tribes each have their own government, and these tribal governments are not all alike. Tribal resources and access to information vary greatly among those governments. Unfortunately, the United States has historically tended to reach out and apply a one-size-fits-all approach to tribal governments. That approach is obviously easier than adapting the Federal game plan to 560+ different tribal government structures. Unfortunately, Government agencies have a reputation for putting on a show with tribal governments, making things look good, issuing reports, and then leaving without followthrough. Tribes are often frustrated with the Federal Government in general and, by extension, with APHIS specifically. A good first step for APHIS would be to recognize that tribes have a learning curve when dealing with agency processes and procedures, and APHIS employees need to be patient. Although tribal *organizations* don't speak for tribes, working with tribal organizations can help bridge the gaps in understanding and appreciating cultural differences. The bottom line is that APHIS, like many other Federal agencies, is woefully ignorant about tribal sovereignty. Most in APHIS are not aware of Executive Order 13175, which defines the Federal responsibility to Native Americans. Once again, effective communication within APHIS and outside APHIS is an overarching key to ANAWG success.