



**ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION OFFICE**



**2025 —————
COMMUNITY GUIDE**

“OUR TRADITIONAL SEMINOLE CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS, AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, AS WELL AS COMMERCIAL ENDEAVORS, ARE DEPENDENT ON A HEALTHY SOUTH FLORIDA ECOSYSTEM. IN FACT, THE TRIBE’S IDENTITY IS SO CLOSELY LINKED TO THE LAND THAT TRIBAL MEMBERS BELIEVE THAT IF THE LAND DIES, SO WILL THE TRIBE”

**- JIM SHORE (BIRD CLAN)
GENERAL COUNSEL, SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA**



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ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



EXECUTIVE OPERATIONS OFFICE

Tina Osceola, Interim Executive Operations Officer



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OFFICE

Paul Backhouse, Ph.D. Senior Director

Administrative Services • Community Engagement • Climate Resiliency
Geographic Information Systems (GIS) • Grants and Contracts
Environmental Safety and Emergency Management



WATER RESOURCES

Alfonso Tigertail, Director

- Operations & Maintenance
- Stormwater
- Hazardous Remediation



EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

Stacy Myers, Director

- NEPA Review
- External Coordination



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

Craig van der Heiden, Director

- Forestry
- Animal Control
- Mosquito Control
- Fish and Wildlife



ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Whitney Sapienza, Director

- Environmental Planning
- Environmental Permitting and Compliance
- Water Quality
- Environmental Restoration



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OFFICE

Dear Seminole Tribal Community Members,

I am pleased to introduce the newly formed Seminole Tribe of Florida, Environmental Protection Office (EPO). The office is a management function of the Tribe's Executive Operations Office and replaces the former Heritage and Environmental Resources Office (HERO). The Environmental Protection Office retains the original function to protect, evaluate, and conserve the Seminole Tribe's natural resources through the work of our committed and professional staff.

This guide serves to provide a detailed overview of the EPO organizational structure and 5-year strategic priorities ensuring the protection of the Tribe's lands and resources. Throughout this guide, you will be introduced to the programs and services of the EPO and its four Departments, as well as the goals of each for the FY2025 for the benefit of the tribal community.

While the names and structures of these departments have changed over the years, our commitment to the Seminole Tribe has never wavered. If anything, the new Departments and direction by the EPO will allow our teams to be more effective in our work than ever before. Our actions are always guided by the needs of the community, which is why we continue to provide multiple avenues for tribal community engagement with our staff to directly support and enhance the conservation and preservation of tribal natural resources.

Throughout the year, we will be hosting informational sessions and community meetings to give you the opportunity to meet our staff, discuss our plans, and gather your valuable input. Your insights will help us tailor our initiatives to better meet the needs of the Seminole community. Alongside the community meetings, our staff are available to you at any time, as we are always a resource for you. If you ever have any environmentally-related inquires both on or off Reservations, please feel free to contact me via email at PaulBackhouse@semtribe.com, or by phone at 239-248-8734.

We are excited about the potential of the Environmental Protection Office to make a positive impact on the Seminole community. Thank you for your continued support and collaboration as we embark on this new journey.

Sincerely,

Paul Backhouse, Ph.D.
Senior Director, Environmental Protection Office





ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OFFICE

What is the Environmental Protection Office (EPO)?

The Environmental Protection Office (EPO) is a multi-Departmental management tool for the Executive Operations Office (EOO) that brings together a talented team of professionals to protect the Tribe's environment and way of life. Operating Tribal-wide and with an eye towards the Tribe's ancestral lands that extend beyond the boundaries of today's Reservations, the Office consists of a Water Resources Department, Environmental Resources Department, External Environmental Compliance Department, and the Department of Conservation. The Office is supported by a core set of programs that includes Climate Resiliency, Grants and Contracts, Environmental Geographic Information System (GIS), Environmental Safety and Emergency Management, and Administration who serve all the EPO Departments and look for opportunities to support and collaborate with our sister Departments across the Tribal Government.

Purpose:

Responsible and sustainable environmental stewardship for future generations.

Mission:

Ensuring responsible use of land and water resources for the community through guiding policy and conservation of natural resources.

Vision:

A future where the land contributes to the full sovereignty and resilience of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

5-Year Priorities:

- Build a high performing team
- Develop clear guidance
- Provide the Tribe with robust information for decision-making
- Use GIS to enhance EPO's technical expertise and inform Departmental Operations
- Provide comprehensive grants support
- Develop Climate Resiliency strategies



EPO LEADERSHIP

EPO Leadership provides oversight and management guidance to the EPO Departments ensuring that communication, collaboration, and service are the paramount ideals of the organization in service to the Tribe. Leadership provides communications between the Tribe's Executive Operations Office and the Executive Operations Officer and seeks opportunities to collaborate with other internal Departments and external agencies. In addition, Leadership guides strategic planning development and is the decision maker for the overall office.

Key Goals for 2025:

- Development of capacity of the Office and its Departments to meet the expectations of Tribal Leadership and communities
- Emphasis on communication at all levels of the organization through community engagement and regular Departmental open houses on all Reservations
- Clarification of guidance through the development of a comprehensive Environmental Ordinance

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

The Administrative Services Program provides high level administrative and office support services to EPO Departments. A key function is to establish, oversee, and maintain EPO files, databases, records, and other documents. The section helps administer program budgets, expenditures, and reconciles management information reporting. The section also processes purchase orders, invoices, and is the key point of contact with the Tribe's Purchasing and Accounting Departments. The section executes critical federal grant tracking and reporting, submits Contract Request Forms following Tribal Purchasing policy, manages active vendor contracts and service agreements, and facilitates the appropriate Tribal Leadership approvals. Tribal Council Resolutions are drafted, submitted for legal review, and further coordinated with the Tribal Clerk. The section facilitates Seminole Water Commission monthly meetings via planning, meeting minutes, and Tribe-wide agenda notification, and processes Commissioner compensation. All EPO staff travel arrangements are secured and processed by the Admin Services Section manager, including any incidental reimbursements.

Key Goals for 2025:

- Build effective communication strategies and streamline processes so that there is an easy-to-follow format for staff when requesting support
- Build capacity by hiring a Brighton Administrative Assistant
- Analyze and restructure current and future data by creating a standardized file folder structure through the shared drive and Laserfiche database
- Develop guidance documents to streamline processes and SOP development



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A core value of the Community Engagement program is to make community-based decisions to allow for a holistic, more informed view of the Everglades ecosystems and how to best protect them. This process enables Tribal members to protect and conserve areas within Tribal lands by making their voices heard and implemented into the decision-making process. The Community Engagement program also strives to raise community awareness on all Reservations of environmental impacts and/or concerns. We strive to achieve this through multiple community events such as environmental youth programs, educational workshops, climate awareness outreach, Departmental collaborations, quarterly open houses, and many more opportunities to participate actively with the community.

Key Goals for 2025:

- Develop a systematic approach to best informing and updating Tribal members on key issues and current policies
- Work with Departmental leaders and staff to organize community events to enhance communication between staff and Tribal members
- Establish an online system to intake environmental concerns observed by Tribal members in and around their communities



CLIMATE RESILIENCY PROGRAM



The Climate Resiliency Program was launched in 2020 to protect the Tribe’s community, environment, and economy from an ever-changing future. We work across Departments to create climate resiliency strategies using indigenous-led science and community-based decision-making. Together, we can protect future generations, repair a broken system of relationships, and heal the land and ecosystems we depend on. Climate change affects everything and everyone. Each additional degree our earth warms adds greater risk to our water supply, food security, health, infrastructure, ecosystems, and economy. That’s why it’s our priority to ensure Tribal policies and operations incorporate climate change, so that STOF is resilient now and in the future.

Key Goals for 2025:

- Develop a climate action plan that protects the Tribe’s community, culture, health, and economy
- Implement cross-Departmental policies that ensure the community can adapt to an ever-changing future
- Secure partnerships and technical support from organizations that can help us achieve our research goals

Meet The Team



Jill Horwitz
*Chief Climate Resiliency
Officer*



Krystle Bowers
*Climate Resiliency Policy
Coordinator*



Cody Motlow
*Climate Resiliency
Coordinator*

Food Sovereignty Training and Cultural Exchange

As a continuation of the Indigenous Farms Tour our program led last summer with support from USET, we were proud to help CBH host visitors from the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Osage Nation, Dine Nation, and Cherokee Nation for a week of Food Sovereignty events and Cultural Exchange in March to celebrate the Big Cypress Let's be Trees Community Garden 1-year anniversary.



Chandler and Anthony share freshly cooked turtle.



Women from 5 nations cook under 1 chickee.



Angela Furgeson gives Krystle Bowers corn to plant in the Big Cypress Community Garden.



Krystle Bowers harvests peppers in the Big Cypress Community Garden.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)

Geographic Information Systems or GIS is a computerized system designed to capture, store, manipulate, analyze, manage, and display all kinds of data that have geographic information associated with it. This type of data is more commonly referred to as geospatial data. GIS enables the centralization of geospatial data which can be overlaid and examined to identify relationships between different datasets. The information extracted from it allows decision makers to obtain a deeper insight of what is going on within their land jurisdictions and facilitate day-to-day operations of government services.

Our GIS program is part of the EPO Core team, delegated with the responsibility of providing GIS support to the Departments under EPO. These Departments are comprised by a diverse workforce responsible for carrying out different types of tasks that ultimately protect the Tribe's natural environments. What that means is that the GIS program must become familiarized with the wide array of workflows to provide services and solutions. Examples include producing maps of various environmental resources within the Reservations, developing mobile data collection apps, acquiring elevation datasets to inform on water drainage across the Reservations, and producing online dashboards and web applications that effectively visualize and disseminate information about our natural environment to leadership and the Tribal community.

One of our project highlights for FY24 was coordinating with ESRI (the global market leader in GIS) to have one of their instructors come down to the Native Learning Center to teach their Migrating from ArcMap to ArcGIS Pro course for EPO staff. This was necessary to ensure that our staff begin using ArcGIS Pro desktop software to complete their GIS tasks and workflows, considering that ArcMap faces imminent software deprecation. This means that our GIS users are staying on track with utilizing the latest and greatest software applications and innovations ESRI has to offer. This, in turn, helps bridge the GIS gap we may have between other STOF Departments.

The functionality and success of the EPO GIS program will be predicated on the inherent passion and appreciation our personnel have for the science of geography. Our program will perpetually strive to apply the principles of geography to help us produce the greatest GIS products possible. We hope that the services we render to support the operations of the Departments under EPO will provide the Tribe and its community a greater understanding of the forests, wetlands, wildlife, water, and other environmental resources within their lands.

Key Goals for 2025:

- Growing our program with the addition of personnel that specialize in remote sensing and web GIS
- Cataloging all of the Department's GIS data
- Effectively tiering and organizing the Department's GIS data while providing metadata where needed
- Procuring the latest GIS technology hardware such as high accuracy GNSS receivers for mobile data collection workflows
- Increasing our deployment of ArcGIS field data collection apps and web GIS deliverables
- Improving our accessibility to specialized GIS software and training opportunities



GRANTS AND CONTRACTS

The Grants and Contracts Area of the EPO at the Seminole Tribe of Florida oversees the strategic acquisition, management, and compliance of grants. It focuses on developing standardized and streamlined procedures for grant applications and communications, building strong relationships with funding agencies, and internal and external stakeholders, and ensuring efficient post-award management. The team aims to secure significant funding to support community initiatives while fostering transparency and accountability in grant management.

EPO Grants Awards		Project FY 2025 EPO Grant Funding		
Funding Agency	Amount	Agency	Program	Federal Dollars
BIA	\$ 7,800,000	BIA	Climate Resiliency Grant	\$ 250,000
EPA	\$ 3,600,000	EPA	Partnership Performance Grant	\$ 270,000
FEMA	\$ 930,000	USFWS	Tribal Wildlife Grant	\$ 200,000
USFWS	\$ 830,000	NFWF	America the Beautiful Grant	\$ 2,000,000
Total	\$ 13,160,000	EPA	South Florida Program Grant	\$ 400,000
		Totals		\$ 3,120,000

Key Goals for 2025:

- Assess current grant management processes, identify areas of inefficiencies or gaps in grant-related activities, and develop a plan to streamline processes to create more efficiency in grant management, implementation, and closeout
- Manage Departmental budgets in order to better support grant management and Tribal Council funding
- Implement a centralized system for tracking grant applications, progress, deadlines, and reporting

ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The Environmental Safety and Emergency Management program seeks to create safe and resilient communities for the Seminole Tribe of Florida and to effectively prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond safely to and recover from all incidents and emergencies while ensuring compliance with applicable environmental laws and regulations.

Key Goals for 2025:

- Be prepared to respond to emergencies and have operational specific emergency procedures in place to reduce or remove the effects of the hazard events and prevent them from turning into larger emergency incidents
- Train employees that may be involved in responding to emergencies and have them participate in exercises to evaluate their ability to manage emergency events
- Develop and update the EPO All Hazard SOPs document, which will be provided to all EPO employees and Emergency Management





ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

The Environmental Resources Department (ERD) is the Tribe's oldest Department originating in October 1987, when the Tribal Council created the original Water Resources Department with the mission to implement provisions of the Water Rights Compact amongst the Seminole Tribe of Florida, South Florida Water Management District, and the State of Florida. Since the Department's inception, the resource management needs of the Tribe have grown significantly, and the Water Resources Department became the Environmental Resources Management Department, and in 2024 refined to the ERD. Currently the ERD is comprised of four program areas: the Water Quality Program, Environmental Planning Program, Environmental Permitting and Compliance Program, and Environmental Restoration Program. These four programs work closely with the Environmental Protection Office (EPO) counterparts to protect and manage the Tribe's natural resources while asserting the Tribe's sovereignty in natural resource planning and regulatory compliance.

Mission:

Establish harmony between the Tribe's needs and the quality of natural resources across all Tribal lands.

Vision:

Become leaders in indigenous environmental stewardship.

5-Year Priorities:

- Review organizational structure to provide clarity, consistency and efficiency in program execution
- Optimize program implementation to meet current and future Tribal needs
- Improve data driven resource management decisions through the use of best available technology and science
- Implement Tribal Environmental Regulatory Program and ensure compliance so that current Tribal interests are met
- Be leaders in Tribal Science for Indigenous Nations through strategic collaboration

Key Goals for 2025:

- Build a Team to support high performance for program implementation
- Provide opportunities for the Tribal Communities' input to support future program development
- Increase the ability to make informed and consistent environmental management decisions
- Increase Tribal Sovereignty with implementing environmental regulatory programs
- Increase presence within the National Tribal Forums and Tribal Community opportunities



ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING PROGRAM

The Environmental Planning Program, as a function of the Environmental Resources Department, plays a critical role in safeguarding Tribal resources, ensuring sustainable development, and promoting ecological integrity. This Program is dedicated to integrating environmental considerations into all phases of planning to support Tribal interests, including land use and management of Tribal-trust resources on and off the Reservations.

A common example of services in resource management includes preservation of gopher tortoises throughout Tribal lands, as the gopher tortoise is both culturally and ecologically important. As part of standard pre-project field surveys, Environmental Planning staff perform 100% gopher tortoise burrow surveys for all developmental projects to either avoid or relocate potentially impacted gopher tortoises as a result of the Tribal development project. Should a gopher tortoise burrow within a developmental footprint be identified, staff will excavate the burrow by hand. This ensures no gopher tortoises or other species will become trapped once the site is developed. If a gopher tortoise is found on the site or within an excavated burrow, staff will then relocate it to a safe location with suitable habitat and resources within the same Reservation. Before the tortoise is released, staff will dig a “starter burrow” that will provide immediate shelter for the tortoise. It is then placed within the starter burrow and monitored on a weekly basis.

All wildlife coordination activities completed by the Environmental Planning Program are performed under the guidance of the Seminole Tribe’s Wildlife Conservation Plan (approved under Tribal Council Resolution No. C-389-12), which provides survey and monitoring protocols for all threatened and endangered species as designated under the Endangered Species Act with the potential to occur on Tribal lands. This year, the Environmental Planning team is looking forward to updating the Wildlife Conservation Plan to continue support of Tribal interests while also managing the Tribe’s sensitive wildlife resources. We’re also looking forward to organizing new community events and providing opportunities for Tribal Members to work with or become part of our team.

Environmental Planning is a highly interdisciplinary team that provides services in a variety of functions: development of management plans, Tribal policy, environmental permitting, protected species surveys, Tribal mitigation programs, environmental education programs, and engagement with the Tribal community and Departments. Environmental planning is essential to balance the Tribe’s growth and development with the vision of sustaining Tribal resources for future generations.



Gopher tortoise observed during pre-project field work, Big Cypress Reservation.



Environmental Planning staff leading a guided boardwalk tour for Earth Day, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum.

ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITTING AND COMPLIANCE PROGRAM

The Environmental Permitting and Compliance Program is primarily responsible for upholding the rights and obligations of the Seminole Tribe under the Water Rights Compact, as it pertains to the development and use of Tribal land and the effect that development has on water quantity, quality, and the wildlife of the Tribe. Additionally, our program serves to provide the necessary compliance determinations with the National Environmental Policy Act for those activities that require authorization by a federal agency, such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs, or that rely on federal funding to support the activity. As such, we primarily serve the Tribal Community Development Departments and individual Tribal members seeking to make improvements within the Tribal Reservations and Trust Lands and ensure that development maintains compliance with applicable environmental regulations.

Meet Our Team



Megan Mills
*Environmental Permitting
and Compliance Manager*



Curtis Hardman
*Environmental Compliance
Analyst*



Yannick John
*Environmental Compliance
Inspector*

Currently, our Program consists of one Environmental Permitting and Compliance Manager, one Environmental Compliance Analyst, and one Environmental Compliance Inspector. We plan to grow the team to include additional staff to provide efficient and timely environmental reviews of Tribal development projects and to establish a baseline compliance rate for Tribal development projects. Additionally, we are looking to create an interactive accessible platform for reporting environmental concerns for further investigation.

Ongoing and Upcoming Projects:

We are underway in a review of the current regulatory framework established by the Water Rights Compact, including a review of the Criteria Manual, Tribal Water Code, and the Rules to Implement Tribal Water Code. The purpose of this review is to provide recommendations for enhancements to these regulations to provide clarity and consistency in the environmental review process for the Tribal community. We anticipate several opportunities throughout the year for the Tribal community to provide input on proposed recommendations.

Through the next year, our program aims to review, identify, and close the gaps in our environmental GIS datasets. We intend to leverage this environmental data to improve our permitting decision tools and make the data available to the Tribal community, as appropriate.

Our team is a highly productive and collaborative group committed to providing the highest quality permitting and compliance services for the current and future Tribal community. If you want to be notified for upcoming workshops or trainings, or if you have any questions about our program, please email ERMDRequest@semTribe.com.



WATER QUALITY PROGRAM

The Seminole Tribe's Water Quality Program has been a central function of Tribal government for over thirty years. Each month we visit every Reservation and collect samples of surface water and test these samples for the presence of nutrients. Surface waters are tested for metals and other trace contaminants every other month.

The Water Quality Program is entering a new era at this time. Now that we have several decades of consistently collected information we have been systematizing and synthesizing our historical information and are working to integrate our information together with data from the regional water management system so that we can describe our water quality observations as part of each Reservation's annual nutrient budget.

Exploration of new ways to collect, analyze, and report information about water quality is a key theme of our work this year. We have developed a staff of skilled professionals who are committed to lifelong learning and are applying our skills to transform our program. This year we have applied for a competitive grant from the EPA to apply remote sensing tools to track and predict water quality conditions both on and upstream of our Reservations. These actions are focused to ensure that our program meets current and future needs of the Seminole Tribe by adopting the best available technology and science and applying it to our program.

Water quality plays a central role in the regulatory and compliance responsibility that the Environmental Resources Department performs as a service to the Tribe. This coming year we will update our water related regulatory criteria, and we are constantly working with our information processes to ensure that we quickly detect any water quality challenges. Our goal is to make science based, data driven decisions to promptly address any water quality challenges that we detect.

It is an exciting time to be a part of the Water Quality Program. As the Seminole Tribe grows and purchases land throughout Florida, our program and our Department have an opportunity to grow with the Tribe. As Reservations are established and grow, we ensure that the Tribe's sovereignty is protected. As we increase the number of Reservations where the Tribe has "Treatment as a State" status, Tribal government takes responsibility for establishing and enforcing rules designed to ensure the health of the surface waters and Tribal communities. We do this by directly measuring conditions, developing policies, and continuing to learn new methods of sensing and understanding the environment. As we seek to be leaders in Tribal Science we continue to seek and establish collaborative relationships with other Indigenous Nations across the world. Connecting our work with the communities on each Reservation and reaching out to recruit Tribal members to work in the water quality program are two areas where we seek to make significant progress in the next few years.



ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION PROGRAM

The Environmental Restoration Program is a new program anticipated to begin at the start of fiscal year 2025 dedicated to preserving and rehabilitating wetlands, which are among the most integral and valuable ecosystems on Tribal lands. Wetlands provide flood protection, fish and wildlife habitat, filter and purify surface waters, and help to sustain culturally important plant communities and habitats. Key areas within the program include ecological research, monitoring and assessment, maintenance of the Tribe's wetland areas and restoration and enhancement of degraded wetland systems.

The Environmental Restoration Program works closely with the Permitting Division within ERD to verify potential impacts to Tribal wetland resources and develops strategies to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to Tribal wetland across all Seminole Tribe lands. This is achieved by providing quality assurance and quality control of wetland delineations performed for on Reservation projects, wetland functional assessments, and mitigation program monitoring. Environmental Restoration Staff aim to create a continuous inventory of impaired wetland systems across the Reservations, identifying key drivers of degradation and priority restoration areas. Restoring degraded wetland ecosystems will greatly aid in recovering ecological integrity and functionality aligned with Tribal interests.

A primary focus of the Environmental Restoration Program is completing monitoring and maintenance of the Tribe's wetland areas. The Tribe depends on the ability to have in-house mitigation available for unavoidable impacts to wetlands and wildlife within the Tribe's Reservations. The Environmental Restoration Program works to balance development trends within the Reservations and provide sustainable use of the Tribe's natural resources. Currently the Tribe has the largest of its mitigation areas located within the Big Cypress Reservation, which was established in 2005 and is comprised of six (6) compartments of Wetland Enhancement Areas (WEAs) which total approximately 4,100 acres. The WEAs are comprised of a unique mosaic of habitats within southern Florida and are home to some of the largest old growth cypress within the region.

The Brighton Reservation includes two active mitigation areas, the Brighton Advanced Mitigation Area, established in 2014 totaling approximately 880 acres and the Brighton Panther Preserve established in 2008 comprised of approximately 1,000 acres. Finally the Lakeland Reservation is comprised of one mitigation area that is 50 acres in size that was established to offset for the unavoidable impacts associated with the Lakeland Master Plan Development.

Aside from the priority of ensuring regulatory compliance of the Tribe's mitigation areas, the Environmental Restoration Program also seeks to enhance the knowledge and understand of restoration potential of habitats within the Reservation boundaries.





Wetland staff conducting a habitat quality assessment, Big Cypress Native Area.



Vegetative plot as part of mitigation area monitoring, Brighton Reservation.



WATER RESOURCES

Water Resources Department (WRD) staff engage Tribal wide on a daily basis with respect to primary open ditch systems and structures operation and maintenance, hazardous remediation activities, and engineering and stormwater planning. WRD staff work with a mission to provide operational and technical capabilities to manage water involving watersheds on a Tribal wide basis. This mission is guided by a larger vision that seeks a future where the only limits on surface water supply and drainage with respect to the reservations are those limits set by the Tribe itself. With so many changes occurring within and around the Tribe with respect to water, WRD staff not only work on a day-to-day basis in the field, but WRD also works in partnership with other Tribal Departments to identify adaptation and implementation strategies needed to effectively address both the external and internal changes occurring within the watersheds where the Tribe maintains an interest.

The Water Resources Department (WRD) of the Environmental Protection Office (EPO) operates four (4) primary program areas that directly relate to surface water on all Tribal Reservations and Trust Lands. These program areas are WRD Tribal-Wide Operation and Maintenance (O&M), Watershed Operations & Conservation (WOC), Technical Services, and Hazardous Remediation. The O&M program works together with Watershed Operations to manage complex ditch, structure and pump systems that provide primary drainage as well move water through Reservation lands to support Agricultural and Environmental needs. The Technical Services program provides support with respect to long range engineering planning for water related infrastructure improvements, contracting, grants, studies, upkeep of watershed and stormwater master plans and projects. The Hazardous Remediation Section provides response to spills, assists with sight cleanup, provides management of Brownfields, and provides education and training guidance. WRD recognizes that the Tribe will need to continue to adapt to changing Tribal needs as well as changes in the environment with respect to climate change. In an effort to fulfill this role, WRD has identified both one-year and five-year goals which are listed below.

5-Year Priorities:

- To keep pace with the rapid growth of the Tribe
- Implement facility improvements related to pumping
- Support continued realization of the Tribes Water Rights
- Continually improve working relationships with other Tribal Departments
- Continue to provide essential support to EPO departments with respect to water resources

Key Goals for 2025:

- Increase overall efficiency of maintenance and pump operations
- Achieve a minimum of 24hrs of training to support growth of staff
- Create a 1 year and 5 year forward looking maintenance outlook
- Have at least 25% of the major conveyances mapped as set-asides
- Create a 5 year forward looking CIP plan





EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

The External Environmental Compliance Department (EECD) works with agencies on major civil works projects and federally guided initiatives that are off Reservations. The EECD staff review these complex projects by acting as a cooperating agency and through consultation and informal workshops, which means they are part of the planning and decision-making process for these projects. Through this work, the EECD ensures the Tribe's long-term water supply allotment through fulfilling the objectives of the Tribe's Water Rights Compact, Criteria Manual, and related agreements. Finally, the EECD Department is proactive in identifying and participating in opportunities that guide policies and projects that could impact Tribal Lands with the goal to assert and enhance Tribal sovereignty.

Mission:

Assert the Tribe's sovereignty through engagement with federal, state, and local agencies and offices facilitated through government-to-government consultation, informal technical workshops, and leadership-level coordination.

Vision:

A future where the Tribe's sovereignty is fully elevated in guiding policies and projects that may impact Tribal lands and water resources across existing Reservations and throughout ancestral lands.

5-Year Priorities:

- Protect the Tribe from external threats that affect Tribal resources and values
- Align policy and messaging from Tribal leadership on down
- Develop administrative and technical capacity and expertise within EECD to deal with pertinent internal and external communication and influence
- Develop and maintain relations with dedicated Tribal liaison staff from Federal, State, and Local agencies
- Assert and enhance Tribal sovereignty through informed decisions, proactive interactions, and challenging the established paternalistic nature that exists

Key Goals for 2025:

- Track and participate in projects related to NEPA, environmental resource protection, permitting, and consumptive water use through an intensive review system based on the geographic areas of concern and interests for the Tribe
- Assess Federal changes as a result of administration turnover and legislative and regulatory implementation
- Communicate with other areas of the Tribe to gather community concerns, ideas, and perceptions, which together will help form a unified message



NEPA Review:

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, agencies and participating entities evaluate the environmental and related social and economic effects of federally proposed actions. Agencies also provide opportunities for public review and comment on those evaluations. The EECD utilizes these consultations and workshops to engage with regional and federally sponsored initiatives and projects and ensure the Tribe's Reservations receive their fair share of clean and plentiful resources while protecting the Tribe from potential external threats. In addition, consultations and informal technical discussions under NEPA allow the Department to monitor and guide projects as they develop, and that holistic point of view allows us to connect how projects relate and impact each other now and into the future. For the Tribe to participate in a government-to-government consultation, there needs to be a federal nexus or authority for the Tribe to provide comments and participate in the design and implementation of a project.

External Coordination:

EECD acts as the main interface between the Seminole Tribe and Federal, State, Local Governments, and non-government organizations on environmental and water resource issues. The EECD is responsible for ensuring that EPO's messaging is aligned with the Tribal Council's positions while updating the community on State, Federal, and Local issues. As such, our staff strive to be effective communicators where we are consistent and clear when delivering the Tribe's priorities through our work. Overtime, we will continue to build our ongoing relationships with external agencies that will result in increasing the Tribe's presence, reputation, and level of influence, which will ensure the Tribe's voice and input be heard and incorporated into the decision-making process. Additionally, EECD regularly hosts visits from agencies and external partners (such as Directors of Federal Departments or members of Congress) to the various locations within the Tribe's Reservations. These visits provide a perfect setting for Tribal Leadership to get acquainted with the external partners, advance the Tribe's concerns and interests, and obtain support for the development of various projects or funding opportunities.

Meet The Team



Stacy Myers
Director



Ashley Wilson
*Environmental Protection
Manager*



Angelica Ocampo Pinzon
Program Analyst II



DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

We are a new team of scientists and dedicated professionals administering a variety of programs germane to the Seminole Tribe's natural environment and land management. The services DOC provides are designed to balance today's needs with tomorrow's obligations by fostering the wise use and conservation of fish, forests, wildlife and domestic animals. To accomplish our goals the Department is divided into four core areas: Forestry, Animal Control, Mosquito Control, and Fish and Wildlife. Our ultimate success will be measured by the health of our fish, forests, wetlands, wildlife resources and the opportunities and enjoyment they provide to community members.

Mission:

Implement cultural and science-based management strategies that promote the sustainable use and resiliency of Tribal natural resources.

Vision:

Enhance and improve ecosystem function to promote understanding and guide sovereignty in resource management.

5-Year Priorities:

- Streamline and review organizational structure to provide clarity, consistency, and efficiency in program execution
- Optimize program implementation to meet current and future Tribal needs
- Improve data driven resource management decisions
- Strategize to remain pertinent and fulfill our mission in a dynamic environment
- Become the leaders in Tribal Science for Indian Country

Key Goals for 2025:

- Start fauna and flora species inventories on all reservations
- Treat at least 3,000 acres of invasive plant species
- Rabies vaccination clinics on different reservations
- Spay and Neuter clinics for tribal members
- Work with other departments to assist in ecosystem restoration
- Invasive animal species removal



FORESTRY

Forestry combines land management actions of wildland fire, mechanical fuel reduction, and chemical invasive plant treatments and responses of all treatments across the landscape. Forestry operates within the approval mandates of Tribal Council Resolution C-305-16 Forest Management Plan (FMP). The FMP sets forth the trust standards for the management, monitoring and the protection of valued resources on trust lands which seek to ensure the sustainability and health of the forest while meeting Tribal landowner visions, goals, and objectives of promoting growth and abundance of culturally important plants and wildlife with sustainable forest and grassland management. Research and data driven management is critical to our success in overseeing healthy forests. Technological enhancements have allowed for improvements in land management evaluation, selection, and improvements in culturally significant resources, including consumptive use renewable and non-renewable resources.

Forestry incorporates scientific methodologies, new technologies, new data acquisition methods, collaborations with other Tribes, and local academic institutions to support the Tribe as a leader in science in Indian country. A data-backed understanding of the Tribe's resources will strengthen the Tribe's assertion of sovereignty over the use and management of its natural resources and demonstrate to other Tribes how to become regional leaders in forestry. Some of the new technologies include drones and LIDAR.



ANIMAL CONTROL

Animal Control's Officers are dedicated to promote and protect the health, safety and welfare of domestic animals and wildlife for Tribal lands and communities. We are guided by and enforce the Tribal Animal Ordinance to protect people and promote responsible animal ownership and welfare. We provide public safety from sick, injured, vicious and at large animals on all Reservations. Animal Control provides care and new homes for unwanted and homeless domestic animals. Officers, also deal with wildlife issues and provide assistance to injured wildlife. We assist when needed in any animal related issue on any Reservation.

We are pleased to serve the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Tribal communities by providing information and resources to ensure public safety and animal welfare for both domestic and wildlife.

Some Of The Things We Do:

- Free rabies inoculation four times a year on major Reservations
- Free Microchipping and registration for domestic animals
- Help find homes for unwanted and unclaimed animals
- Provide information on free or low cost spay and neuter programs
- Transport animals to long term boarding facilities for Tribal members under Guardianship
- Assist feeding pets for hospitalized elder patients
- Trapping and relocation of nuisance animals, domestic and wildlife
- Investigate all reported animal complaints and bites
- Quarantine of animals that have been involved in bites
- Pick up deceased animals on Tribal trust lands
- Work together and assist other Departments on animal related issues, domestic and wildlife
- Distribute information to all homes and public buildings related to animals, domestic and wildlife
- Surveillance in areas of concerns involving animals, domestic or wildlife
- Attend events and provide educational materials
- Attend events to provide public safety for animals at large
- Enforce Tribal animal ordinance on all Seminole Trust Lands

Meet The Team



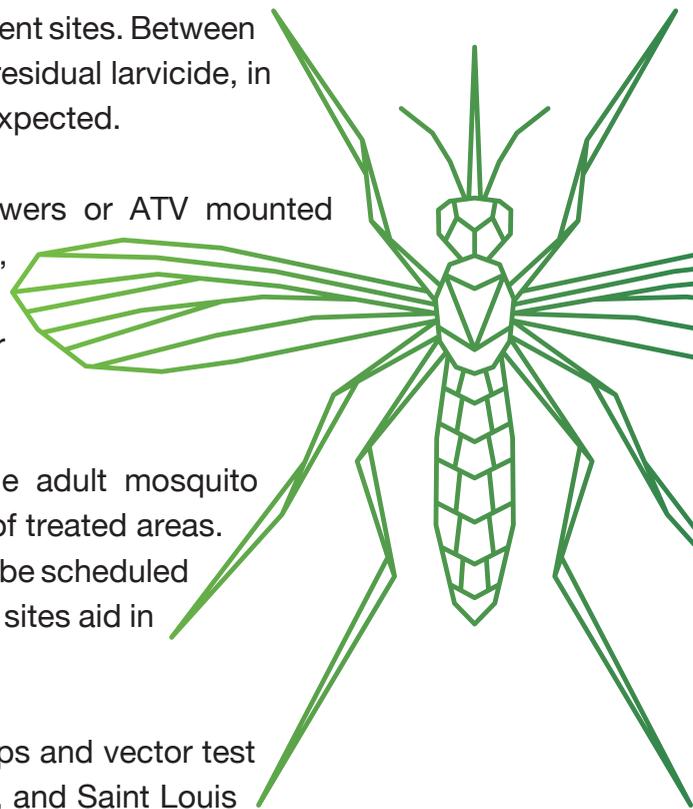
MOSQUITO CONTROL

Mosquito Control is tasked with the mission of protecting public health and comfort by and through the control of disease-carrying and nuisance mosquitoes. We use an integrated mosquito management plan (IMMP). The method uses a combination of methods to control mosquitoes based on an understanding of mosquito biology and the mosquito life cycle. IMMP uses methods that, when followed correctly, are safe and scientifically proven to reduce numbers of mosquitoes.

Mosquito control professionals conduct mosquito surveillance, look for places where mosquitoes lay eggs, control mosquito larvae and pupae, control adult mosquitoes, and monitor control efforts.

We do this through the following methods:

- **Ground Truck and ATV Adult Mosquito control:**
We schedule ground sprayers for all reservations based on weather, mosquito counts and scheduled outdoor events. The trucks spray, during peak mosquito flight times, on established roads throughout the communities and the ATV's treat in remote areas or within individual residential properties. They drive over 3500 miles a year with sprayers on.
- **Aerial Adult Mosquito Control:**
Aerial adulticide treatments at weekly application during the season and at times increase the frequency after tropical storms or unusually high annoyance. Approximately 190,000 acres are treated each season.
- **Aerial and Ground Larvicide Control:**
Aerial larvicide treatments occur to floodwater and permanent sites. Between 1900 and 3500 acres are treated annually, with a 45-day residual larvicide, in response to larval hatches that are either in progress or expected.
- **Barrier Applications:**
Applications are performed by powered backpack blowers or ATV mounted equipment. Treatments are performed along tree lines, around homes, and within public facilities. Applications clear areas immediately for weekly maintenance or for special events.
- **Light Traps:**
Light Traps are monitored on a weekly basis to gauge adult mosquito concentrations within the application zones and outside of treated areas. These traps determine when and which reservation should be scheduled for applications. Inspections of floodwater and freshwater sites aid in the scheduling of larval treatments.
- **Vec Test:**
The *Culex* mosquitoes are collected from weekly light traps and vector test are performed for West Nile, Eastern equine encephalitis, and Saint Louis encephalitis. We tests for disease in Big Cypress and Brighton due to their remote locations. If a positive test is triggered, additional traps would be set immediately at the location to confirm the existence of viral activity.



FISH AND WILDLIFE

The Fish and Wildlife section is responsible for understanding patterns in faunal population trends, health, and responses to local, regional, and global environmental changes across Tribal lands. The purpose of garnering strong, actionable data is to provide the Tribal community with wildlife management options aimed at the long-term conservation of culturally significant resources, including species harvested for consumptive use. Florida, due to its geography and status as an international economic hub, has become a hotbed of invasive species introductions that negatively impact native ecosystems. The wildlife section is also responsible for determining the distribution of invasive fish and wildlife, their impact on the Tribe's native wildlife resources, and the impact of invasive vegetation on native wildlife. By applying scientifically rigorous methods, incorporating new technologies, and collaborating with other Tribes and local academic institutions, the section aims to support the Tribe in establishing itself as a leader in science in Indian Country. A data-driven understanding of the Tribe's resources will strengthen the Tribe's assertion of sovereignty over the use and management of its wildlife.

Fiscal Year 2024 saw the conceptual organization of this section and its parent Department. There has been an effort to identify what data previous environmental sections have collected, what gaps exist, and what priorities will need to be addressed to best serve the Tribal community. A critical strategic goal for the Wildlife Section for FY 2025 will be developing a data management strategy. This will include the creation of a geodatabase(s) that can integrate with other sections' data to facilitate the streamlining of data analysis and informed decision-making. During this process, we will mine archival datasets and use these areas to direct projects that can inform the Tribe about historical wildlife population trends and the current status of these resources. With limited personnel, new data acquisition will need to focus on areas that will provide the greatest return of useful information with the least amount of logistical effort. Initial efforts will focus on questions of species richness, relative abundance, and distributions within and across Reservations. This new section seeks to understand the population dynamics of game and culturally significant species to provide the Tribe with actionable information and strategies for the management of those resources.



THANK YOU TRIBAL COUNCIL & BOARD

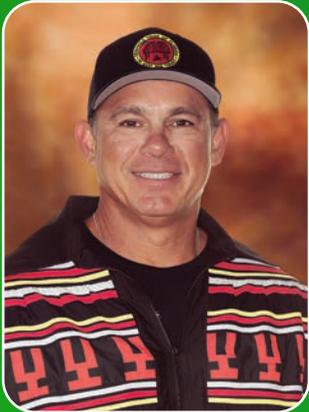


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