



[www.ntaatribalair.org](http://www.ntaatribalair.org)  
(505) 242 – 2175 office  
(505) 242-2654 fax

**National Tribal Air Association**  
4520 Montgomery Blvd. NE, Suite 3  
Albuquerque, NM 87109

June 22, 2009

Executive Committee

Region 1  
Bill Thompson  
*Chairperson*  
Penobscot Nation

Region 2  
Angela Benedict-Dunn  
*Secretary*  
St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

Region 4  
Laura Cook  
Poarch Band of Creek Indians

Region 5  
Brandy Toft  
Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

CFW Wheelock  
Oneida Nation in Wisconsin

Region 6  
Tammy Belone  
Jemez Pueblo

Ryan Callison  
Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma

Region 7  
Anthony "Sam" Kitto  
Santee Sioux Nation

Region 8  
James Temte  
*Vice-Chairperson*  
Southern Ute Indian Tribe

Region 9  
Syndi Smallwood  
Pechanga Band of Luiseno  
Mission Indians

Erica Helms-Schenk  
Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians

Region 10  
Julie Simpson  
*Treasurer*  
Nez Perce Tribe

Aja DeCoteau  
Confederated Tribes and Bands  
of the Yakama Nation

Alaska  
Rosalie Kalistook  
Orutsararmuit Native Council

Alaska  
Millie Hawley  
Native Village of Kivalina

The Honorable Lisa Jackson  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
EPA Docket Center (EPA/DC)  
Mailcode 6102T  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

**Attention: Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2009-0171**

**Subject: Comments on the Proposed Endangerment and Cause or Contribute Findings for Greenhouse Gases under the Clean Air Act**

Dear Administrator:

The National Tribal Air Association (NTAA) is pleased to submit these comments and convey our support of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Proposed Endangerment and Cause or Contribute Findings for Greenhouse Gases under the Clean Air Act (hereinafter "proposed findings"). The greenhouse gases referred to under the proposed findings – carbon dioxide, hydrofluorocarbons, methane, nitrous oxide, perfluorocarbons and sulfur hexafluoride – endanger public health and welfare, and in particular, are highly injurious to the many tribal communities of our nation and the world.

The NTAA is an autonomous organization of the National Tribal Environmental Council and has more than 50 principal member tribes. The NTAA's mission is to advance air quality management and policies and programs, consistent with the needs, interests, and unique legal status of American Indian tribes and Alaskan Natives. As such, the NTAA provides its resources to support the efforts of all federally recognized tribes in protecting and improving the air quality within their respective jurisdictions.

### **Indian Tribes and Climate Change**

Federally-recognized tribes -- sovereign nations with certain rights ensured by the U.S. Constitution, treaties and legal precedence -- are facing the immediate, adverse impacts of climate change. Tribes are also affected much differently than the rest of the nation as their cultures are integrated into the ecosystems of North America; and many tribal economies are heavily dependent on the use of fish, wildlife, and native plants.

Even where tribal economies are integrated into the national economy, tribal cultural identities continue to be deeply rooted in the natural world. As climate change disrupts biological communities, the survival of some tribes as distinct cultures may be at risk. The loss of traditional cultural practices, because important plants and animals are no longer available, may prove to be too much for some tribal cultures to withstand on top of the external pressures they have faced during recent generations.

Internationally speaking, indigenous peoples worldwide are faced with a grim future as a result of climate change and its impacts. A glimpse of this future was conveyed in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2007 Fourth Assessment Report which found indigenous peoples to have a limited adaptive capacity to deal with climate change outcomes such as health risks, sea rise, and environmental hazards; the impacts of climate change on indigenous communities are taking place in North America, Africa, Australia, New Zealand and the Polar Regions (not to mention communities in Asia, the Amazon and Andean nations); and there are variations in the vulnerability of indigenous groups with respect to climate change. As such, the NTAA sees the proposed findings as a necessary step on the part of EPA to begin to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help reverse the adverse impacts of such emissions on the tribal communities and cultures of the United States and the world.

### **Greenhouse Gases and their Health Impacts**

As the U.S. Supreme Court noted in *Massachusetts v. EPA*, 549 U.S. 497 (2007), the pollutants associated with climate change undoubtedly fall under EPA's authority, an authority that the Agency needs to exercise based on the growing evidence that these pollutants are endangering "public health and welfare." 42 U.S.C. section 7521(a)(1)).

Multiple and severe health effects due to climate change have been documented by numerous governmental and scientific bodies. These include the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change whose work has already been acknowledged above regarding its assessment of climate change impacts on indigenous peoples, the U.S. Climate Change Science Program which predicts climate change impacts will become increasingly severe for more people and places as warming increases, the World Health Organization which has estimated 150,000 deaths occurred in 2000 as a result of climate change, and the International Organization for Migration which estimates more than 200 million people could be displaced by 2050 as a result of climatic shift. This is just a snapshot of the many organizations looking at climate change and its impacts, with undeniable evidence that these impacts will only grow worse in the days and years ahead.

A recent report published in the respected medical journal, *The Lancet*, sums up the current situation with respect to climate change, finding it to be the "biggest global health threat of the 21st century." This statement along with the full body of work carried out by the aforementioned organizations and the data gathered wholly support an EPA finding of endangerment of public health and welfare from greenhouse gas emissions. To find otherwise would be a proverbial slap in the face of science and imperil the public health and welfare of our planet.

### **Conclusion**

In short, the proposed findings are warranted and necessary based on the impacts of climate change on the nation's Indian tribes and indigenous peoples worldwide, and the mounting scientific evidence concerning such impacts on the planet as a whole. As such, the NTAA is pleased to provide its comments and would like to once again convey our organization's support of the proposed findings. If you should have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact Bob Gruenig, NTAA Senior Policy Analyst, via phone at (505) 242-2175 or via e-mail at [bgruenig@ntec.org](mailto:bgruenig@ntec.org).

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Thompson  
Chairman  
National Tribal Air Association