

William Vega, Chairman
50 Tu Su Lane
Bishop, California 93514
(760) 873-3584



January 21, 2010

RE: TRIBAL CONSULTATION COMMENTS

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Bishop Paiute Tribal Council has the following comments regarding tribal consultations.

1. If what is being considered will affect the Tribe(s), then the Tribe(s) should be consulted and this should be done at the earliest possible opportunity. Some issues only directly affect either a single Tribe or a small number of Tribes located in a general region. In other cases, the issues will be much broader reaching and have the potential to impact the Tribes on a national level. The location, parties involved and methods used will need to consider this. However, since any action has the potential to affect other tribes, all Tribes should be able to monitor what discussions are taking place to see if it may also have the potential for impacting them. This would allow them to have their input considered on a matter that they believe may affect them.
2. How to conduct it will depend on how many parties are participating and what communication capabilities they have access to. Video or teleconferencing are less expensive, but not all tribes have access to them. Those that do should use them whenever possible. This presents some challenges in that it can make the process too impersonal and therefore less effective when dealing with some issues. This will also depend on the topic being discussed; sometimes there is no good replacement for face to face interaction.
3. When face to face consultations take place the agency requesting it should make every effort to send personnel that are empowered to make any decisions necessary to accomplish the purpose of the discussion.

4. Many federally recognized Tribes have very limited financial resources available to them, so some kind of travel reimbursement should be available to those Tribes that would otherwise be unable to send someone to represent them.
5. The notice of these meetings should be done with a minimum 60 day notice. Tribal leaders and agency decision makers have very packed calendars. Respecting that should enable maximum attendance and effectiveness on the part of all parties involved.
6. The Tribe(s) should have an identified process for bringing issues important to them to the consultation process for consideration and/or action as the matter being presented requires.
7. Agencies may want to coordinate with established national or regional groups that already hold events that attract Tribal Leadership, as this would probably increase the number of potential participants.
8. The meeting with the President this past November had many beneficial aspects. Some that were very visible and identifiable and some that were more intrinsic. We are very grateful to this administration for conducting this event and we would encourage the President to establish this as periodic event (annual or bi-annual).

Sincerely,

William Vega, Chairman