

## **Tribal-Focused Environmental Risk and Sustainability Tool**

### **SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY AMERICAN INDIAN TRIBES**

### **What is Tribal-FERST?**

The Tribal-Focused Environmental Risk and Sustainability Tool (Tribal-FERST) is an online information and GIS mapping tool designed to provide Tribes with easy access to the best available human health and ecological science.

Tribes face unique and numerous environmental and human health challenges. As Tribal leaders work to build and enhance environmental safeguards in their communities, user-friendly, science-based tools can contribute to sustainable solutions. Tools developed by and for Tribes are needed to help them and their partners identify and learn about environmental issues, explore exposure and risk reduction options, and conduct Tribal assessments—all of which are important in decisions to improve public health and the environment.

### **What information is in Tribal-FERST?**

Tribal-FERST provides access to resources that can help Tribes follow a Tribal roadmap to learn more about their environment, exposures, and demographic characteristics; compare conditions in their community with their county and state averages. The tool includes local maps and data, reports, fact sheets and links to other environmental and public health tools, information about other Tribal and community projects.

### **How is Tribal-FERST Being Developed?**

The United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) is partnering with EPA to develop Tribal-FERST,

and connect the Agency's water quality exchange database and data transfer network with Tribal-FERST. USET is reaching out to Tribes and partners throughout the United States, representing a wide range of interests and issues in Indian Country, to provide the design and content for Tribal-FERST. They will also provide training to Tribes and work with them to identify needs, applications, and results from using Tribal-FERST.

The Pleasant Point Passamaquoddy Tribe of Maine tested a Beta version of Tribal-FERST as part of its sustainable and healthy community effort. The collaboration drew together Tribal members, EPA, and the Tribe's sustainable community planning consultants, to make informed environmental and economic decisions about solid waste, sea level rise, and subsistence diet. At the same time, the Pleasant Point Passamaquoddy Tribe provided input to improve Tribal-FERST. USET is using this input to develop a pre-release version of Tribal-FERST, which is being enhanced through information collected and lessons learned in this and other pilot studies, to make it broadly applicable for other Tribes as well.

### **What Can I Do with Tribal-FERST?**

- **Follow a Tribal Roadmap**  
For each step in the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET) Tribal-FERST Roadmap there are applicable resources and tools in Tribal-FERST which can help you navigate through the Tribal assessment process. The Tribal-FERST Roadmap puts data, information and potential solutions in context for Tribal community decision-

making and takes users through recommended steps for conducting a Tribal community assessment.

- **View GIS Maps**

Tribal-FERST maps contain information on pollution sources, estimated concentrations, exposures, and risks for select pollutants, demographic data, and other key community characteristics. Users can also supplement Tribal-FERST maps with local information, and add their own maps.

- **Gather Information**

Tribal-FERST has information to help you gather information about your environment. The Environmental Measurement Methods section provides links to key resources on citizen science air monitoring, as well as a set of methods for taking other types of measurements.

- **Analyze Issues**

Tribal-FERST's "Community Data Table" provides a summary of environmental conditions for a community, including estimated concentrations, exposures and risks for select pollutants, as well as demographic information.

- **Explore and Learn About Issues in Your Environment**

Tribal-FERST's "Environmental Issue Profiles" contain links and information from various sources for issues and concerns commonly identified by Tribes. Tribal-FERST contains hotlinks to exposure and risk reduction options in addition to projects implemented by other communities and Tribes.

The planned products from Tribal-FERST include:

- a methodology to build capacity and match tribal issues with the best available science
- a user-friendly, science-based tribal environmental decision support tool
- a national tribal environmental data inventory to inform and populate Tribal-FERST
- results from phased pilot projects, providing answers to questions of tribal interest for priority environmental issues and best practices

## **Benefits of Tribal-FERST**

Tribal-FERST is being built in partnership with Tribes, with support from EPA scientists. The tool is intended to empower Tribes by providing access to relevant science that can be used to develop sustainable, cost-effective solutions for reducing environmental exposures and health risks. Using the online tool, Tribes can employ a holistic approach to address environmental concerns and plan for the future.

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