



NATIVE AMERICAN FISH & WILDLIFE SOCIETY **ANNUAL REPORT** **2023**

**260 TRIBES
WERE PROVIDED
TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE**

**928 PARTICIPANTS
SEVEN REGIONAL
CONFERENCES**

**1,700+ ATTENDEES
70+ TRAININGS,
WORKSHOPS &
WEBINARS**



Greetings to our membership

As we come to the end of 2023, I find myself without words. I have been a part of the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society (NAFWS) since 1991 and our organization has grown so much over the last four to five years. I find myself thankful for my nine months serving as the President for the NAFWS and collaborating with the board of directors, staff, membership, partners, and supporters. I am fortunate to be part of an organization with such compassionate and knowledgeable leadership.

In 2023, NAFWS saw another increase in our funding and our staff. Through the Bureau of Indian Affairs Self Determination Contract, we hired an administrative assistant and three invasive species technicians. With the addition of a Senior Tribal Climate Resilience Liaison (TCRL) and two Assistant TCRLs, we completed our Alaska Tribal Climate Resilience Liaison team. NAFWS also staffed a including a grants coordinator and two America the Beautiful Field Liaisons. Already, new staff members are making valuable contributions.

As NAFWS grows, so does our ability to offer more to our membership. For the first time in many years,

NAFWS hosted a conference in all seven regions. These conferences are an opportunity to provide education and training, network with peers, and offer assistance where needed. All conferences were very successful and increased membership recruitment. This achievement is a testament to the hard work of the Board and Staff to expand engagement.

Our work this year emphasized the 2023 National Initiatives: Climate Resilience and Adaptation, Wildlife Health, Recovering America's Wildlife Act, Tribal Conservation Law Enforcement Program Enhancement, Habitat Connectivity, and Invasive Species. NAFWS provided education, training, and technical assistance around each of these initiatives. Some examples include the Alaska Tribal Climate Resilience Program, Hunt Safe, webinars and technical assistance for federal funding opportunities, fish and wildlife trainings, and youth education programs. The NAFWS Board and Staff continue to respond to requests for support, accept feedback, and are eager for suggestions for future trainings and resources to provide.

Overall, I am pleased to report everything is on track with the organization. Audits and financial reports were completed in the required timeframe. Executive Director Dr. Julie Thorstenson continues working hard to ensure that staff is taken care of and funding and grant program requirements are met. The Board of Directors continues to hold two in-person meetings and two virtual meetings each year to complete NAFWS business.

Thank you NAFWS membership for your continued participation and enthusiasm in our professional community and for being a part of the NAFWS Family. I hope you continue to be a part of our organization. Considering the ever-changing conditions of our world, our work to protect our people and our natural resources is a job that will never be done. To support our work and collaborations, visit our website to become a member and follow us on social media platforms to stay up to date with our latest resources and actions to take.

Thank you all and wishing you success!
Donald J. Reiter, President

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Han Mitakuye (Hello all my relatives),

What an absolute blessing these past nearly five years have been. We have grown as an organization in so many ways, including staff capacity, visibility and most importantly, membership benefits. It is a pleasure to provide the following update to the membership on the accomplishments of NAFWS staff and Board of Directors for 2023.

Some of the highlights of 2023 include, International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) World Certification, the release of the Wildlife Stewardship on Tribal Lands textbook and hosting a conference or event in each of the seven NAFWS regions in 2023 for a total of 928 participants from more than 100 Tribal Nations. Hosting a National and Alaska Regional Summer Youth Practicum and awarding nearly \$20,000 in scholarships to Native students pursuing Natural Resources careers. We provided training to 146 Conservation Law Enforcement Officers representing 69 Tribal Nations. We maintained regular contact with over 400 federally recognized Tribes in 2023.

One of our major duties is to provide technical assistance to our membership. In total we provided direct technical assistance to 260 Tribal nations. This included activities such as grant development and review, scientific resources, partnership development, informational webinars and work groups. In addition, we hosted several trainings and workshops in 2023. We educate on the importance and proper way to collaborate with Tribal fish and wildlife programs and the need for base funding for Tribal fish and wildlife programs. We continued to increase membership, membership value, staffing, partnerships, opportunities, visibility, and funding in 2023.

With the support of The Hewlett Foundation, we completed a 3-year strategic plan that outlines key strategic decisions, established priorities and intentional future growth and development. The plan and six national initiatives were approved by the Board of Directors in December 2023.

We saw an increase in our funding and staffing in 2023. Through our self-determination contract with the BIA we hired an administrative assistant and three Invasive Species Technicians. We completed our AK Tribal Climate Resilience Liaison hiring. We also staffed our grants team with the addition of a Grants Coordinator and two America the Beautiful Field Liaisons through grant and contract funding. We are proud to be 71% American Indian/Alaska Native staff and continue to recruit AI/AN staff.

I hope you continue to find value in being a member of NAFWS and remind you to provide feedback to your Regional Directors and NAFWS staff on how we can improve. Thank you all again for your continued trust in NAFWS. I hope to see you in Welch, MN on the Prairie Island Indian Community lands May 13 16, 2024 at our 41 st NAFWS Annual National Conference.

Pilamaye ye,

Julie Thorstenson, PhD (Lakota)



2023 CONFERENCES



40TH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

In April 24-27, 2023, NAFWS celebrated our 40th Annual National Conference hosted by Chugach Regional Resource Commission. The Conference theme helped capture NAFWS history and future, "Celebrating 40 Years of Success: The Past Holds the Power. The Future Holds the Promise."

Three hundred and fifty-two participants from 77 Tribal Nations, representing all seven NAFWS regions, traveled to Anchorage, AK to network about Tribal natural resource management, participate in trainings and natural resource tours, and learn about the successional planning for our growing organization.

The Great Lakes Team won the National Shoot Competition and Beaufort Joe of Three Affiliated Tribes won Top Gun with the highest individual score.

The following Tribal Natural Resource professionals were recognized for their contributions:

- *Emerging Professional of the Year*: Mariah Blackbird-Perry, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe
- *Biologist of the Year*: Timothy Gatewood, White Mountain Apache
- *Conservation Law Enforcement Officer of the Year*: Beaufort Joe, Three Affiliated Tribes
- *Chief Seal*: Arthur "Butch" Blazer, Mescalero Apache

GREAT PLAINS REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Due to extreme weather, the 2023 Great Plains Regional Conference was rescheduled to May 24-25, 2023 in

Deadwood, SD at the Deadwood Lodge. Eleven Tribal Nations were represented among the 85 participants.

SOUTHEAST REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The Southeast Regional Annual Conference was held on August 14-17, 2023 hosted by the Cherokee Nation at the Cherokee Casino in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Forty-four participants attended the conference with representation of seven Tribes.

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The Las Vegas Paiute Tribe hosted the 2023 Southwest Regional Conference at their Palms Casino & Resort in Las Vegas, Nevada on August 21-24. There were 31 Tribes represented within the 241 participants. The conference theme was "Building Tribal Resiliency in a Changing World."

GREAT LAKES REGIONAL CONFERENCE

NAFWS Great Lakes Region held their 36th Annual Regional Conference at the Kewadin Casino in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan from September 10-15, 2023 hosted by the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. The conference was attended by 145 participants representing 23 Tribes.

PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The 2023 Pacific Regional Conference was hosted by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe on October 16-19, 2023 at the Coeur d'Alene Casino Resort Hotel in Worley, ID. The conference was attended by 34 participants representing 16 Tribes.

NORTHEAST REGIONAL CONFERENCE

On November 6-9, 2023, Penobscot Nation hosted the 2023 Northeast Regional Conference in Millinocket, ME. Twenty-seven participants representing seven Tribal Nations attended the conference. This was the first NE Regional since the 2018 36th Annual National Conference hosted by the Narragansett Tribe in Warwick, RI.



NATIONAL INITIATIVES

CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION

Tribal Nations are at the front lines of climate changes as it threatens the traditional lands, foods, and lifestyles of many communities. As a result, many Tribes are working to assess vulnerabilities and develop climate adaptation and resilience strategies. NAFWS has successfully secured several grants focusing on climate adaptation, impacts, and resilience for Tribes.

WILDLIFE HEALTH

The Wildlife Health initiative focused on established and emerging threats to wildlife health impacting Tribes. This initiative was primarily supported by the USFWS Tribal Collaboration Project self-determination contract that supports a contract with Native Healing, LLC – Dr. Tolani Francisco, DVM, MPH.

Dr. Francisco led five One Health webinars, presented on Wildlife Disease at the National Conference and regional conferences, and participated in the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) National Fish and Wildlife Health Steering Committee.

RECOVERING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE ACT

The Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) (S 1149) is a bipartisan bill that would dedicate \$97.5 million to Tribal Nations and \$1.3 billion to state-level conservation efforts for on-the-ground conservation projects. In 2023, NAFWS continued to build the RAWA Tribal Coalition and send information about RAWA to Tribes and provided updated information on our website. NAFWS remains an active participant in the RAWA Alliance.



TRIBAL CONSERVATION LAW ENFORCEMENT

Throughout 2023, NAFWS provided Tribal Conservation Law Enforcement Officers (CLEOs) trainings to supplement and/or achieve annual training requirements or to provide officers with advanced law enforcement training to safely and successfully carry out their duties as sworn peace officers. Trainings topics included waterfowl identification, hunt safe, human/wildlife conflict management, tactical medical training, defense tactics, legal updates, and firearm training.

In addition to attending trainings, CLEOs compete in Practical Pistol Competitions (PPCs) at national and regional conferences. Shoot competitions were hosted at the National Conference and the Southeast, Southwest, Great Lakes, and Pacific Regional Conferences. Teams from the Great Plains, Great Lakes, and a combined Southeast/Southwest team competed in the National Shoot Team Competition. The Great Lakes team including Brad Cameron, Don Carrick, Tim Mallory, Ashley Zurn, and Henry Bearheart won first place. The Great Plains team won second place followed by the Southwest/Southeast team. The 2023 Top Gun Award was presented to Beaufort Joe.



7 TRAININGS
HELD

69 TRIBES
REPRESENTED

146 CLEOS
TRAINED

HABITAT CONNECTIVITY

The goal of the Habitat Connectivity Initiative is to assist wildlife movement between habitats while minimizing mortality risk and human encounters. At times, it is necessary for Tribal communities to collaborate with federal, state, or other Tribal entities, to address corridor concerns on Tribal lands.

NAFWS hosted Habitat Connectivity workshops in the Southwest and Pacific Regions and held meetings for a Tribal-only working group. The Wildlife Connectivity Coordinator provided technical assistance to 47 Tribes across 17 states on wildlife migration issues.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Led by Mitzi Reed, Invasive Species Coordinator, NAFWS hired three Invasive Species Technicians to help build Tribal capacity to manage invasive species and implement Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) and management capabilities.

The Invasive Species team hosted four invasive species webinars attended by 101 participants and provided technical assistance for grant proposal reviews, letters of support, inquiries on funding activities and species identification.

PROJECTS

FISH & WILDLIFE BIOLOGISTS

Biologists provided technical assistance and training to Native American and Alaska Native Tribes to identify invasive species, monitor wildlife disease changes, support endangered species programming, develop partnerships, and develop a resource bank to assist Tribes in protection of their environmental resources and populations. Some examples of our Fish & Wildlife Workshops include:

- Fundamentals of R Programming
- Endangered Species Act
- Pacific Northwest Bat Workshop
- Tribal Wildlife Crossing Workshop
- Climate change

HUNTSafe PROGRAM

The NAFWS HuntSafe Program was officially certified through the International Hunter's Education Association in November 2022. This year, the Hunt Safe Instructor Course training plan was implemented and courses were conducted in six of the seven regions with 94 attendees representing 41 Tribes completing the instructor courses.

ALASKA TRIBAL CLIMATE RESILIENCE

The Alaska Tribal Climate Resilience Liaison (TCRL) team was completed with the addition a Senior TCRL and two additional Assistant TCRLs. We also hosted an Alaska Native Intern focused on climate resilience in AK.

At the 2023 NAFWS Annual National Conference in Anchorage, AK, the TRCLs held a climate adaptation

workshop. A second workshop for the Strengthening Resilience Today (SRT) Project was held in Fairbanks attended by 23 participants from six Alaska Native Villages. Additional opportunities for Tribal members to learn about and develop climate adaptation strategies for their communities are planned for 2024.

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

The NAFWS Research and Publication Committee (RPC) was established in 2021 due to concerns regarding research on and about Tribal lands, resources, and people. The purpose of the RPC is to aid Tribal fish and wildlife professionals to navigate, pursue, and apply the different aspects of contemporary research-related issues including research guidance, data sovereignty, professional growth, funding, publications, and academia involvement.

GRANTS TEAM

In 2023, NAFWS established a Grants team, with one Grants Coordinator (funded by Doris Duke Conservation Fund) and two America The Beautiful Challenge Field Liaisons (funded by National Fish and Wildlife Fund) hired to support Tribal grant applications and remove barriers to access funding. The team provides direct Technical Assistance and can help seek out and apply for funding opportunities, aiming to get more dollars directed towards Tribal fish and wildlife programs.





Scholarships

NAFWS awarded scholarships to 11 Native Scholars. The Great Lakes Region awarded two scholarships, Great Plains Region awarded one, and the Southwest Region awarded two scholarships. Six national scholarships were awarded.

In an effort to increase student attendance at the national conference, NAFWS awarded five college students' travel expenses to attend the national conference. Additionally, we awarded travel support to four high school students and their chaperones as part of the 2023 National SYP Wildlife Management Challenge.

Native Emerging Professionals

NAFWS hosted the third National Tribal Poster Session and Professional Mixer during the National Conference in April. Eighteen poster presenters including nine students presented at the "Top of the World" in the Hilton Anchorage. First place was awarded to Colin Glass who presented on Using Dragonfly Larvae as Bioindicators of Methylmercury for the Red Lakes in Northern Minnesota.

National Summer Youth Practicum

Sixteen students representing 13 Tribes from all seven NAFWS regions attended the 2023 National SYP which took place at both the Colorado State University Mountain Campus and main campus.

Students heard from 20 guest lecturers and participated in team building activities. Students utilized the knowledge gained throughout the week for a Wildlife Management Challenge and staff selected a student group to attend the 2024 NAFWS National Conference to present their plan.

Alaska Summer Youth Practicum

Nine Alaska Native youth from seven Tribes and six different schools participated in the inaugural Alaska SYP. The six day program took place in Anchorage, AK on the Alaska Pacific University campus. Participants spent time in-lecture, in the field, doing hands-on activities, group work, and team building exercises. The Chickaloon Village Traditional Council, hosted the SYP for a day in the field observing their stream and salmon restoration project.

Internships

NAFWS welcomed Ashley Miles, a citizen of Hopi and Pueblo of Santa Ana and a student at University of Colorado – Denver, as a summer intern. Ashley assisted with the National SYP and attended the Tribal Wildlife Connectivity Workshop.



MEMBERSHIP

In 2023, NAFWS saw an increase in membership. There were 110 active Member Tribe memberships and 866 active Individual memberships with memberships renewed on a rolling basis. Conferences in all seven regions and a strong social media presence contributed to membership growth.

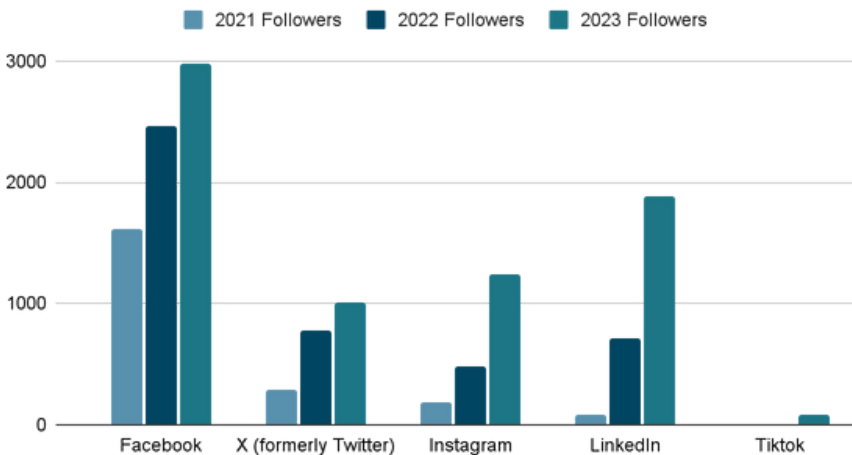
PUBLIC INFORMATION

In 2023, NAFWS continued to gain public awareness through involvement in national policy, increased events and trainings across NAFWS Regions, increased availability and scope of trainings, outreach efforts and the media. Through the website, newsletters, and social media accounts, NAFWS shares organizational updates, events, educates followers, and connects people with resources and opportunities.

The NAFWS website (nafws.org) provides a central location for people to learn about the organization’s purpose, events, and National Initiatives. NAFWS released four quarterly *From the Eagle’s Nest* newsletters and a *Bi-weekly Member Newsletter* with details about upcoming opportunities. Additionally, NAFWS published four press releases to highlight our work and Tribal conservation projects and NAFWS staff members were interviewed for five national news articles and podcasts.

NAFWS utilizes social media to share organizational news, advertise for events, and to celebrate work happening in Indian Country. In the past three years, the audience on our social media platforms has significantly increased.

NAFWS Social Media Followers





TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In 2023, NAFWS staff provided direct technical assistance (includes one on one communication, trainings, webinars, workshops, conferences and events) to 260 Federally Recognized Tribes, 21 Government Agencies, 28 Tribal Organizations, 35 Academic Institutions (including 4 Tribal Colleges), 64 Non-governmental Organizations, and seven private Companies.

Assistance varied greatly but the majority of direct requests were assistance identifying and accessing funding, hunter education course development, program implementation, trainings requests, and research methods.

ADVOCACY

NAFWS continued to advocate for Tribal inclusion in federal programs and fish and wildlife work. The board, staff, and Executive Director met with key personnel in Federal agencies, attend monthly meetings (e.g., USFWS, USGS-CASC), and provided input and concerns based on our work with Tribes.

The Executive Director presented at more than a dozen virtual and in-person events to audiences totaling more than 1000 people. Presentation topics included Tribal capacity building, stakeholder engagement, approaches to habitat restoration, NAFWS programs and more.

Region	Tribes Receiving Technical Assistance
Alaska	51
Pacific	65
Great Plains	20
Great Lakes	27
Northeast	14
Southeast	20
Southwest	63



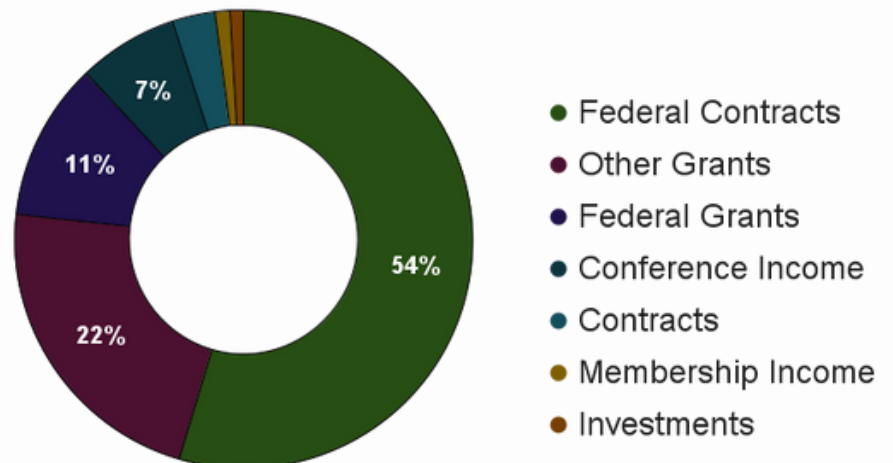
2023 FINANCIALS



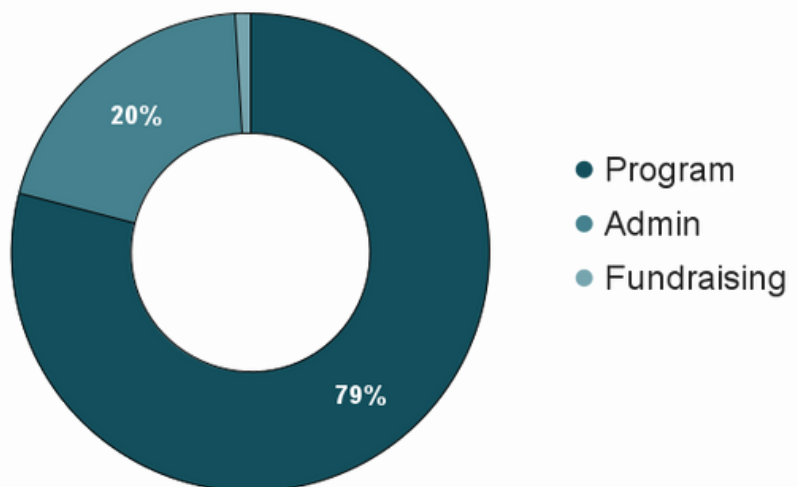
NAFWS Revenue Sources & Use of Funds

January - December 2023 (unaudited)

Revenue Sources



Use of Funds



PARTNERS

FINANCIAL

- Bureau Of Indian Affairs
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Alabama Fire College
- Bass Pro Shops
- The William And Flora Hewlett Foundation
- Doris Duke Conservation Fund
- Resource Legacy Fund
- Kalliopeia Foundation
- National Fish And Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)
- First Nations Development Institute (FNDI)
- USDA-APHIS: Office Of National Tribal Liaison
- National Parks Conservation Association
- National Wildlife Federation (NWF)
- The Wildlife Society (TWS)

NON-FINANCIAL

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
- Alliance For America's Fish And Wildlife
- Indian Land Tenure Foundation
- Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC)
- Climate Adaptation Science Centers (CASC)
- Alaska Village Initiatives (AVI)
- Alaska Tribal Resilience Learning Network (AK TRLN)
- Inspiring Girls Expeditions
- Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC)
- Trees, Water, People





BOARD OF DIRECTORS STAFF

ALASKA REGION

- Orville Huntington - Wildlife Biologist
- Hope Roberts - Indigenous Advocate & Captain/
Owner of Surreel Saltwaters

GREAT LAKES REGION

- Donald J. Reiter, NAFWS President - Wildlife Biologist,
Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin
- Terry Metoxen - Conservation Law Enforcement
Officer, Oneida Nation

GREAT PLAINS REGION

- Jeff Kelly - Director, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Game
and Fish
- Charles Wilkinson - Game Warden, Three Affiliated
Tribes Fish & Wildlife Division

NORTHEAST

- Dinalyn Spears - Community Planner/Natural
Resources, Narragansett Indian Tribe
- Benjamin Simpson - Biologist, Penobscot Nation

PACIFIC

- Donna Nez - Fisheries Technician, Confederated
Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Ted Lamebull, Jr - Retired Conservation Law
Officer, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission

SOUTHEAST

- Mike LaVoie - Biologist, Eastern Band of Cherokee
Indians Natural Resources Program
- Vacant - Election was held at the Southeast Regional
Conference

SOUTHWEST

- Elveda Martinez - Water Resources Coordinator,
Walker River Paiute Tribe
- Darren Talayumptewa - Program Manager, Hopi
Tribe Wildlife & Ecosystems Management

- Julie Thorstenson, PhD - Executive Director
- Robert Romero - Deputy Executive Director
- Laurel James, PhD(c) - Director of Programs
- Judith McKenna - Administrative Assistant
- Heidi McCann - Membership Coordinator &
Office Manager
- Megan Hawkins - Grants Coordinator
- Ashley Mueller - Education Coordinator
- Rosie Sanchez - Public Information Officer
- Shailyn Wiechman - Wildlife Connectivity
Coordinator
- Mitzi Reed - Invasive Species Coordinator
- Sean Cross - Fish & Wildlife Biologist
- Emily Hagler - Fish & Wildlife Biologist
- Hannah Golden - Fish & Wildlife Biologist
- Thomas Hafen - Invasive Species Technician
- Annette Bravo - Invasive Species Technician
- Wade Reiter - Invasive Species Technician
- Lori Petruski - Senior Alaska TCRL
- Kaitlyn Demoski - Assistant TCRL
- Tess Hostetter - Assistant TCRL
- Jerilyn Kelly - Assistant TCRL
- Andy Edwards - ATBC Field Liaison
- Katie Schultz - ATBC Field Liaison

CONTRACTORS

- Managment Partners, Inc.
- ARED, LLC.
- Native Healings, LLC.