

A “Hole-in-the-Community” Approach

How Federal Disaster Policy Overlooks Indigenous Communities



PC: American Forests

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) advocates a “Whole Community” approach to disaster resilience and recovery considering the interests of all private and public stakeholders.

Tribal governments are part of the whole community, but an analysis of FEMA policy documents, grant data, and interviews with hazard management professionals revealed that in practice, Tribes lack equitable access to FEMA assistance.

Barriers include lack of resources to execute mitigation projects; lack of capacity and appropriate assistance to secure grants; and standards that undervalue projects situated on Tribal lands and/or using Indigenous techniques. Tribes also lack a meaningful voice in the direction of federal policy. The [published report](#) includes a full discussion of proposed policy changes and workaround strategies.



Scan here for the full report

Proposed Responses

- Establish an interagency Tribal government task force and reorganize FEMA’s Tribal Liaison Offices to improve federal-Tribal engagement.
- Review and revise the Department of Homeland Security [Lexicon](#)* to account for Indigenous concepts, knowledge, and perspectives.
- Change or eliminate the benefit-cost analysis requirement that is a formidable barrier to Tribal mitigation projects.
- Include Tribes in all mitigation and preparedness grant programs.

* The Lexicon is a unified controlled vocabulary that the Dept. of Homeland Security and its sub-agencies use when communicating and sharing data.

