

Western's revised American Indian policy fortifies tribal relations

Energy Secretary Bill Richardson recently announced an updated American Indian policy aimed at improving government-to-government communication and building trust between the Department and Native Americans.

"Compared to the 1992 policy, the new version does not create any new requirements when carrying out Western's mission and power marketing program," said **Steve Warner**, Western's DOE Indian issues point of contact. "Western officials must still consult with tribes before making decisions that will have potential impact on American Indian nations," he explained.

"The policy is more proactive than its predecessor. For example, the definition

of cultural resources is very broad with respect to cultural impacts. Western managers must pay more attention to the impacts of their decisions throughout Western's service area," Warner said.

The policy also requires agencies to establish mechanisms for outreach and notification to ensure Indian nations are integrated into the decisionmaking process. "Western currently complies with this for most issues, especially in its power allocation process, but managers may need to

DOE's revised American Indian policy:

- Provides for enhanced consultation with tribes before taking action that would affect tribal interests.
- Assures compliance with laws and executive orders to better protect tribal resources.
- Pledges the Department will take actions that uphold tribal treaty rights.
- Recognizes the need for direct funding from DOE for tribal initiatives.
- Convenes an annual summit with the Secretary to discuss tribal issues.

expand their consideration of the potential impacts on Indian nations when proposing any new initiatives or revisiting existing ones," Warner added.

Richardson said, "This plan underscores our recognition that tribal nations are sovereign nations that require different approaches. Our efforts help show the way to new partnerships, new joint ventures and new, improved relationships in Indian Country."

The National Congress of American Indians, the nation's largest and most representative body of Native Americans, helped DOE update the policy.

DOE's American Indian Policy is available on the Internet at www.ci.doe.gov. Select "Tribal Affairs."

For assistance in working with tribes, contact Warner. ✉



Boysen Peak Microwave Site on the Wind River Indian Reservation is one example of Western's coordination with Native Americans. Western is negotiating with the Arapaho-Shoshone tribe to renew the right-of-way authorization for this site. (Photo by Steve Warner)