

ITCMI Environmental Services Division

QUARTERLY UPDATES (OCT. – DEC. 2025)



Bill Bernier, Environmental Services Director



Environmental Director's Summary

During the final quarter of 2025, ITC's Environmental Services Division advanced clean energy, water protection, and natural resource initiatives across Michigan's Tribal Nations. Key achievements included home electrification and weatherization projects, climate action planning, and the launch of the Tribal Energy Codes Advisory Council. Partnerships with EPA, NOAA, and Tribal schools strengthened youth watershed education, source-water protection, and lead testing, while philanthropic support sustained Manoomin stewardship and new efforts such as the Michigan Tribal Seed Collection Network. Despite federal funding challenges, ITC continues to build Tribal capacity, resilience, and sovereignty through strong intergovernmental and community partnerships.

Updates to EPA Community Change Grants

EPA Community Change Grants were terminated by the EPA in May 2025. We are currently disputing that decision as the programs were in full effect prior to EPA changing their "Pillars" and objectives. If our dispute is granted, we will continue the work on both programs. Work details are below:

- **Track I - Tribal Home Energy Program:** ITC partnered with seven Michigan Tribes to provide weatherization assistance, install geothermal or heat pumps and electrify housing for Tribal homeowners. The program also has workforce development objectives and aims to provide the foundational support for Tribes to begin to maintain staff for these types of projects.
- **Track II - Michigan Tribal and State Manoomin/Mnoomin/Mnomen Stewardship Program:** ITC partnered with nine Michigan Tribes, the University of Michigan and the State of Michigan to increase our efforts on protecting and managing Manoomin/Mnoomin/Mnomen.

Upcoming Programs and Projects

- **Water Operator Training and Technical Assistance Program:** Partnering with the EPA, ITC will be assisting Tribal Water Operators with training and any technical assistance that is needed. The program will be starting soon. Please look for a job announcement on the ITCMI website (www.itcmi.org).
- **Solar for Savings Pilot for Tribal Communities:** ITC was selected to be funded through the State of Michigan's Solar for All Pilot Program. Unfortunately, EPA has terminated the Solar for All program. It will be up to the State to pursue legal avenues to regain access to the funding. The project was going to install solar and battery back-up systems on low-income housing and one community building. The foundation built from this pilot program was to be used to strengthen our application to the MI Solar for All Program's general funding available in 2026. Our application for the general funding will aim to help all Michigan Tribes.
- **Manoomin Assistance Program:** Due to the termination of our EPA Community Change Grants, ITC has received funding from philanthropic sources to assist Michigan Tribes with their Manoomin projects. Please contact Bill Bernier for more information.

Contact: Bill Bernier, Environmental Services Director - bbernier@itcmi.org

Environmental Health Services



- ITC's Environmental Health Services program continues to assist Tribes with food safety, life safety, child safety, and health facility compliance, providing detailed inspection reports of facilities/operations and compliance assistance with applicable codes and regulations.
- Food Safety Manager and Safe Food Handler training is also provided through our EHS program to participating tribes as needed.

Contact: Tony Rinna, Assistant Director Environmental Services – Anthony.rinna@itcmi.org

Underground Storage Tank Program and Lead Testing in Drinking Water Program



- The UST program allows ITCMI Environmental Services Department to provide direct assistance to the owners and operators of underground storage tanks (fuel service stations), to ensure that RCRA Subtitle I is fully implemented on and near Tribal lands. The compliance inspector travels to the stations located within the exterior boundaries of reservations and provides education and recommendations to make sure the station is following the federal regulations for underground storage tanks.
- Lead Testing in Drinking Water Program: In the second round of this program ITC will be partnering with EPA and Michigan Tribes to make sure all of our schools and childcare facilities have zero lead in the drinking water. This program will fund drinking water analyses and remediation within the facility if lead is detected.

Contact: Greg Shubel, Compliance Inspector and Geologist – gshubel@itcmi.org

Source Water Protection Program and the NOAA B-WET Program



- Through an agreement with the US EPA, ITCMI is assisting all Tribes in Michigan with updating Source Water Protection Plans. This program identifies any current or future sources of potential contamination to the public water supply.
- ITC, NOAA, Bay Mills Biology Department and the Ojibwe Charter School (OCS) have all partnered to offer OCS students more meaningful watershed educational experiences. This program is all about getting the youth involved in fun, educational, outdoor experiences that incorporate traditional and cultural teachings.

Contact: Dustin Paras, Program Manager – dustin.paras@itcmi.org

Tribal Clean Energy Communication and Engagement Program



- The purpose of this opportunity is to help federally recognized Tribes navigate and access DOE funding and technical assistance opportunities by amplifying DOE messaging and creating effective engagement opportunities for member Tribes.
- Funding supports communication, internal organizational capacity-building, and engagement activities – to build long-lasting effective working relationships with Tribal leaders, key staff, and DOE through partnering with inter-tribal organizations to establish channels of communications and education between Indian Energy, Tribes and energy-related communities.

Contact: Jenna Killips, Program Manager – jkillips@itcmi.org

Climate Pollution Reduction Program



- Our Climate Pollution Reduction Grant program, funded by the EPA, has continued to collect greenhouse gas emission data and is currently working on Comprehensive Climate Action Plans for the Tribes that have partnered with ITC. We are also working with Michigan EGLE to make sure Tribal priorities are included in the MI Healthy Climate Plan.

Contact: Lucas Roff, Program Manager – lucas.roff@itcmi.org

Department of Energy's Resilient and Efficient Codes Program



- ITC is partnering with Slipstream to work with Tribal utilities and Tribal governments to offer technical assistance and workforce development related to updating building energy codes, making amendments to existing codes, or adopting energy codes for the first time.
- A Tribal Energy Codes Advisory Council has been formed to guide the project, consisting of Tribal representatives and energy consultants. Interested tribes are encouraged to contact us to participate in advisory meetings and this program in general. We plan to hold the two more advisory meetings at 11 am on April 8, and June 17. We are currently working with 6 Tribes in Michigan and hope to have all 12 Tribes involved before the end of the project (Dec 2027).

Contact: James Bremmer, Building Code Specialist - james.bremmer@itcmi.org

Michigan Tribal Seed Collection Network



- ITCMI is partnering with the US Forest Service and the National Forest Foundation; this program will provide training to Tribal community members and staff to help with the gathering of tree seeds to aid assisted migration if species are threatened by climate change. This program will also provide the ability for seed banks at Tribal Communities and ITCMI.

Contact: Emily Kemp, Program Manager - emily.kemp@itcmi.org