

ITCMI Environmental Services Division

QUARTERLY UPDATES (APRIL – JUNE 2026)



Bill Bernier, Environmental Services Director



Environmental Director's Summary

During the second quarter of 2026, ITCMI's Environmental Services Division continued supporting Michigan Tribal communities through programs focused on environmental health, drinking water protection, climate resilience, clean energy, and natural resource stewardship. Highlights this quarter included continued progress on Tribal Climate Action Plans and Source Water Protection Plans, expansion of the Michigan Tribal Seed Collection Network, and receipt of EPA funding to launch a Lead Testing in Drinking Water Program for Tribal schools and childcare facilities. Through technical assistance, compliance support, education, and partnership development, the department remains committed to protecting Tribal environmental health and strengthening Tribal capacity throughout Michigan.

Updates to EPA Community Change Grants

EPA Community Change Grants were terminated by the EPA in May 2025. We are still 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:** ITCMI continues preparations for launching a statewide program that will provide technical assistance, operator training, emergency response planning, and certification support to Tribal drinking water systems. Please look for the job announcement on the ITCMI website (www.itcmi.org) and share with anyone you think may be interested.
- **Lead Testing in Tribal Schools and Childcare Facilities Program:** ITCMI recently received funding through EPA's WIIN Act Lead Testing Program. Beginning this summer and fall, Environmental Services staff will work with participating Tribal schools, childcare facilities, after-school programs, and cultural education facilities to conduct drinking water sampling, provide education on lead exposure risks, and assist with remediation efforts when needed.
- **Great Lakes Tribal Energy Summit:** Planning continues for the first annual summit designed to bring Tribal leaders, utility representatives, and energy professionals together to discuss energy sovereignty, renewable energy development, resilience, and funding opportunities.

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Environmental Health Services



- Environmental Health Services continues to provide direct support to participating Tribes through food safety inspections, pool and spa inspections, healthcare facility surveys, life safety evaluations, and childcare facility assessments.
- During this quarter, inspections continued for Bay Mills Indian Community and Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, while facility inventories and code updates were completed for Grand Traverse Band.
- Food Safety Manager and Safe Food Handler training opportunities continue to be offered to participating Tribal communities as requested.

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Underground Storage Tank Program and Lead Testing in Drinking Water Program



- The Underground Storage Tank Program continues providing compliance assistance, inspections, and operator education for Tribal fuel facilities throughout Michigan. All scheduled facilities remain in compliance with federal regulations, and technical assistance continues to be available upon request.
- ITCMI recently received funding through EPA's Lead Testing in School and Childcare Program. Sampling activities will begin this summer and continue through fall 2026. The program will focus on reducing children's exposure to lead by testing drinking water outlets in Tribal schools, childcare facilities, after-school programs, and cultural education facilities, while providing education, technical assistance, and remediation support where necessary.

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Source Water Protection Program and the NOAA B-WET Program



- Through funding from the U.S. EPA, ITCMI continues assisting Michigan Tribes with updating and developing Source Water Protection Plans. Ten Tribes are currently participating in the program, and the first updated plans are nearing completion.
- The NOAA B-WET Program continues providing meaningful watershed education opportunities to students at Ojibwe Charter School. Students have participated in field experiences across multiple watersheds, educational field trips, greenhouse projects, and hands-on activities focused on water resources, fisheries, and environmental stewardship.

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Tribal Clean Energy Communication and Engagement Program



- ITCMI continues supporting Tribal energy development by improving communication and engagement among Tribal Nations, the U.S. Department of Energy, and regional partners.
- During this quarter, outreach efforts expanded through the program website, newsletter distribution, and direct engagement with Tribal Energy Project Leads. Planning is also underway for a series of educational webinars and the inaugural Great Lakes Tribal Energy Summit.

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Climate Pollution Reduction Program



- The Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program has completed greenhouse gas inventories, emissions projections, and climate reduction targets for participating Tribes.
- Comprehensive Climate Action Plans are nearing completion and will provide participating Tribes with implementation-ready strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pursuing future clean energy funding opportunities.
- ITCMI is currently working with participating Tribes to identify implementation funding opportunities, including support for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects.

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Department of Energy's Resilient and Efficient Codes Program



- ITCMI continues partnering with Slipstream and Tribal communities to support energy code adoption, workforce development, and building energy efficiency initiatives.
- The Tribal Energy Codes Advisory Council remains active and continues guiding program implementation. Outreach and technical assistance efforts are expanding to engage additional Michigan Tribes interested in strengthening energy codes and building performance standards.

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Michigan Tribal Seed Collection Network



- The Michigan Tribal Seed Collection Network continues expanding opportunities for Tribal community members to participate in seed collection activities that support forest resilience and climate adaptation efforts.
- Program staff have conducted outreach throughout Michigan, identified initial collection sites, coordinated with U.S. Forest Service and National Forest Foundation partners, and organized seed collection training opportunities.
- A major focus this quarter has been coordinating seed collection training through the Michigan Tribal Environmental Group Conference and preparing for fall collection activities.

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