

Native Americans face unique challenges that PFAS contamination poses compared to other racial ethnic groups. They have sacred relationships with water and PFAS contamination threatens the livelihood and customs that are part of their culture.

A 2022 study conducted by Northeastern University found that only 28% of the population served by Tribal public water systems were covered by EPA testing compared to 79% of the population served by non-Tribal water systems under UCMR 3 across the US. A study by the EWG found roughly 3,000 PFAS contamination sites within a five-mile radius of Tribal lands in the US.

EPA's efforts to address PFAS contamination in Tribal lands are hindered by legal complexities rooted in Tribal sovereignty and the lack of Tribe-specific drinking water standards. Although the EPA has amended the CDDA to recognize Tribal standards and enforce regulations outside of Tribal territory, states are challenging this approach. Furthermore, the absence of a clear mandate for PFAS testing on Tribal lands has contributed to data scarcity. This oversight leaves Tribal residents vulnerable to potential exposure to contaminated water.

We will analyze these disparities by analyzing potential PFAS contamination sites near or on Tribal land and look at differences in water testing in Tribal and public water systems. We will also seek to implement strategies to assist in remediating these disparities through water testing efforts, and community empowerment and education.