

Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission, Alaska
Press Release
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Forty Alaska Tribal Governments Oppose Rescission of BLM Public Lands Rule, and Call For Protection of Co-Stewardship and Indigenous Priorities

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The forty Alaska Tribal members of the Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission have unified with Tribal Governments across the United States, in opposing the Department of the Interior's (DOI) plans to rescind the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Conservation and Landscape Health Rule, finalized in May 2024. This planned rollback would dismantle one of the most significant federal acknowledgments of Tribal co-stewardship, traditional ecological knowledge, and conservation-driven land management in decades.

Tribes across the nation have passed resolutions voicing strong opposition to the BLM lands rule rescission. Tribes urge the Bureau to recognize the fundamental importance for Tribes to be at the table in decision-making regarding lands. Tribes strongly urge the DOI to engage Tribes in meaningful consultation pursuant to consultation regulations developed over half a century.

“The Rule Is a Historic Step”

“The BLM’s 2024 Conservation and Landscape Health Rule is a historic step toward honoring the federal government’s trust obligations to Tribal Governments,” said Frank Katchatag, Chairman of the 40-Tribe Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission. The rule elevates conservation to a status equal to energy development and recreation on public lands and creates a formal framework for integrating Indigenous Knowledge in decision-making. It also empowers Tribes to nominate Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) and shape a future of shared stewardship of lands historically stewarded by Indigenous peoples.

Free, Prior, and Informed Consent

The DOI’s move to rescind the rule without advance notice or formal consultation of Tribes contradicts decades of federal Indian policy advancements and undermines Executive and Secretarial Orders that direct agencies to engage in meaningful Tribal consultation and uphold Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) principles.

Rolling back the rule without consent not only breaches trust obligations, but it also violates the sovereignty and self-determination of Tribal Governments. Tribes are not stakeholders; we are sovereign governments with legal rights to be at the decision-making table.

Tribes Call for Action

The Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission call for the following:

- **Immediate halt to rescission** of the Conservation and Landscape Health Rule.
- **Full Tribal consultation** before any revisions to public land management policies.
- **Institutionalization of Indigenous Knowledge** in land use practices with enforceable protections under FPIC.
- **Binding data sovereignty safeguards**, including FOIA exemptions and intellectual property protections.
- **Continued Tribal participation in ACEC nominations**, leasing decisions, and co-management of restoration and mitigation lands.

A Critical Moment for Climate and Cultural Survival

“This is not just about land, it is about our way of life, climate resilience, food security systems, medicines, languages and sacred knowledge tied to these landscapes,” said Frank Katchatag, Chairman of the Bering Sea Interior Tribal Commission. “To remove Tribes from this process is to erase generations of science, culture, and stewardship.”

As environmental changes continue across landscapes, Tribal co-stewardship offers a proven, effective approach to safeguarding biodiversity and ecological integrity. A rescission would undercut efforts to adapt landscapes to climate extremes, further endangering ecosystems, and cultural lifeways.

Standing Firm for Future Generations

The message from Tribes across the nation is unequivocal: uphold the Tribal provisions and priorities within the rule and keep the promise of co-stewardship and keep the promise of adopting Indigenous Knowledge with western science management practices. The Tribal Governments urge the United States government to hear the voices of Tribes across the Nation.