

MAKING A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE

EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS



COMMUNITY SUMMARY

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) is a federally recognized Tribe located in western North Carolina, just south of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The Tribe has approximately 15,000 enrolled members, including 8,100 members who live on the reservation. EBCI is dedicated to promoting a healthy, sustainable environment. In 2014, as part of their commitment to environmental sustainability, the Tribe adopted their Legacy Plan identifying priorities and goals for environmental and natural resource programs, among others.



indoor air quality priorities, EPA partnered with the University of North Carolina Institute for the Environment to provide Healthy Homes training. The audience included Family Community Partnership employees and Public Health and Human Services Division staff who conduct home visits throughout the Cherokee community. A number of other training and technical assistance activities are planned.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Tribe's Legacy Plan reflects the voices and visions of the Cherokee people. Outreach to the community was a vital part of the Legacy Plan development, including open forums with Tribal elders, youth and community members to develop a multigenerational look at the past, profile of the present and vision for the future. EPA is committed to continuing the dialogue with the community as we work collaboratively with the Tribe to address their environmental priorities. This includes education and outreach activities to engage the community in environmental issues.

EPA ACTIVITIES

EPA is continuing its long-standing partnership with the EBCI to address their air, water and land quality priorities. EPA's activities directly impact the health and vitality of Tribal members. In June 2015, staff from EPA's Science and Ecosystem Support Division (SESD) assisted the Tribe's water quality program staff in deploying temperature monitoring instruments at 18 in-stream locations. The Tribe monitored these locations throughout the summer months to determine maximum and mean stream temperature. They will use this data later to develop water quality standards and submit them for EPA approval. To support the Tribe's



During the summer of 2015, EPA's participated in the Annual Talking Trees Children's Trout Derby to present games and activities about

water quality, waste, recycling, air pollution, lead, toxic chemicals, integrated pest management, sun safety and climate change. While conducting these activities, staff also had the opportunity to interact with the parents and extended family of the approximately 3,000 children in attendance.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

EPA works government to government with EBCI to protect human health and the environment in Indian country. In addition, EPA and the Tribe work collaboratively with other federal partners to leverage resources and achieve environmental protection goals. For example, EBCI, EPA, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) are working collaboratively to address water



quality concerns on the Oconaluftee River. With partial funding provided by the EPA, USGS will collect and analyze continuous water quality data. The data will be provided to the Tribe, EPA and USFWS, and will be used to monitor and document long term water quality improvements. The location of the monitoring station is particularly significant for protection of the Sicklefins Redhorse, a native fish that is now a candidate for endangered species listing.



SUSTAINABILITY

In June 2015, EPA recognized EBCI with the regional 2015 EPA Rain Catcher Award in the Tribal Category for the Native Plant Nursery Facility project in western North Carolina. The award was given at a ceremony during the EPA Region 4/International Erosion Control Association Municipal Wet Weather Stormwater Conference. The EPA Region 4 Rain Catcher Award recognizes excellence in the implementation of stormwater green infrastructure practices. Green infrastructure uses natural systems and/or engineered systems designed to mimic natural processes to more effectively manage stormwater and reduce receiving water impacts.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Native Plant Nursery Facility is designed to provide native plants for tribal projects associated with aquatic restoration, riparian enhancement, and wildlife habitat enhancement. The facility has provided approximately 75,000 plants for projects, and contains 120,000 container plants of 32 different species. The project employed two, 6,000 gallon cisterns to capture and reuse approximately 1,750 gallons of rainwater per inch of rainfall. The facility location received 52 inches of precipitation in the past year resulting in approximately 91,000 gallons of rainwater captured and ultimately applied to the plants. With this rain harvesting capability, the Cherokee have reduced surface water consumption from the on-site stream by more than 36 percent.