

AFCEC launches Air Force tribal relations viewer

By Jennifer Schneider

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Department of the Air Force cultural resource managers have an exciting new tool at their disposal, following the launch of the Air Force Civil Engineer Center's Tribal Relations Viewer.

"This tool provides a more robust picture of the relationship between tribal lands and Department of Defense installations than we've ever had before," said Alison Rubio, Air Force cultural resources subject matter expert. "It also provides a tribal contact list to make it easier for cultural resource managers to connect with tribe members and help with decision-making."

AFCEC's cultural resources team developed the viewer, available at <https://maps.af.mil/geoportal/apps/sites/#/environmental/pages/cr-tribal-relations>, in coordination with Colorado State University's Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands. The tool is geographic information system-enabled and housed on the AFCEC Environmental GIS Dashboard. Access is only available to users with common access cards and Air Force network accounts.

Once on the site, users can locate tribal land boundaries for a specific location by entering an installation name or adding a pin to the map. Contact information for the specific tribes listed for that area is then readily available.

"It (the tool) displays current proximity to reservation lands and historic land cessions by treaty, and the geographic context to enhance the understanding of tribal concerns with Air Force activities," said Paige Gebhardt, a CEMML environmental GIS analyst who assisted with the project.

The viewer consolidates multiple datasets, including the Versar Ethnographic Report (2010), 1899 Indian land maps from the Library of Congress, House Report 2503, land cession data, modern reservation lands, and DoD installation boundaries.

Many of the data layers were adapted from other state and federal agency GIS services, but some, such as that found in the Versar report, were digitized for the first time during the tool's development.

Compiling and overlaying multiple map datasets required attention to detail and months of effort.

"The work included cleaning up all of the marginalia of each map we incorporated, while being careful to maintain important labels," said Ben Wasserstein, a CEMML

environmental GIS analyst who assisted with the project. "Then we carefully pieced together each state's map, almost like a puzzle, so it fit together perfectly."

The team is planning to make additional enhancements in the future.

"We will continue maintaining the tribal contact list and are looking to add additional layers, to include such data as tribal linguistics maps and document links," Rubio said.

For more information on the tool, contact
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