

DUTIES OF ASSESSMENT TEAM MEMBERS

Assessment Team members function under the direction of the Team Chair who, in turn, functions under the direction of the Chairman of the Working Group through the Secretary's Indian Water Rights Office (SIWRO). Team members are required to fulfill certain responsibilities as set forth below.

Roles

Assessment Teams are appointed by Working Group on Indian Water Settlements to help it determine whether it is appropriate for the Department to appoint a Federal Negotiation Team upon the request of an Indian tribe. Often, a tribe may be anxious for the appointment of a Negotiation Team, the situation is not ripe and fielding a team in support of negotiations would be premature. Appointment of a Federal Assessment Team helps the United States better understand the nature and extent of a tribe's water rights claims, the position and interests of the various parties, and can help make the transition to a Federal Negotiation Team more fluid. Team members are expected to utilize their expertise and ideas on technical, factual, and policy matters in assessing whether a Federal Negotiation Team should be appointed. Team members are to serve as the principle resource for development of data, services, or other expertise from their agencies. The team duties and workload commitments of team members should be discussed with and developed in consultation with the Team Chair, and coordinated with the team member's agency.

Team members are responsible for identifying issues that are of interest to the agencies they represent, communicating those issues to their agencies and bringing agency interests or concerns to the attention of the team. However, team members do not merely function as advocates for their agencies, but as representatives of the Secretary charged with the determining whether a negotiation of a tribe's water rights claim is appropriate given the nature of its claims, the resources and data available, and the extent of the controversy that exists.

Communication

Team members are to report and communicate matters relating to assessment of the tribe's claims through the Team Chair. Team members are not to meet or communicate with parties without the consent of the Team Chair.

In addition to identifying issues that are of interest to their agencies and communicating those issues to their agencies, team members are also responsible for informing their agencies about the activities of the team in general, with appropriate caveats about any confidentiality orders or agreements. Communications should follow appropriate agency protocol.

Reports

Team members are responsible, under the direction of the Team Chair, for preparing a recommendation on whether a Federal Negotiation Team should be appointed, and other reports requested by SIWRO or the Chairman of the Working Group.