



## **DEC News Release**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **DEC Commissioner, EPA Director of American Indian Environmental Office Agree to Collaborate on IGAP**

**(Juneau) Feb. 6, 2004**—Environmental Conservation Commissioner Ernesta Ballard and EPA Director of the American Indian Environmental Office Carol Jorgensen met Thursday and agreed to collaborate on approaches to Alaska's environmental circumstances and priorities.

There are significant environmental problems in rural Alaska, such as pollution from dust and diesel fumes. "These issues are areas the State of Alaska, DEC, along with EPA and Alaskan tribes take very seriously and need to work together on," Director Carol Jorgensen said.

"There's been a misunderstanding that we want IGAP (Indian Environmental General Assistance Program) funds to come to the state. We do not. Our goal is to coordinate with EPA and Alaska's tribes to address known environmental issues," Commissioner Ballard said. To date, the State has been excluded from the collaborative process for developing solutions to Alaska's most pressing environmental problems. "We want the tribes to know about our regulatory programs, research initiatives and environmental priorities so that they can incorporate them into their grant proposals. We support and encourage the continuation of these grant programs and are looking forward to positive collaboration on environmental solutions," said Ballard.

"Our goal is to encourage federal-state-and tribal collaboration seeking a win-win-win implementation of the IGAP program in Alaska. Leveraging our collective resources and maximizing the benefits derived from IGAP grants should be the goal of all of us," said Jorgensen. "As we continue our work with Alaska tribes, we in Region 10 and the national EPA office look forward to working with the State of Alaska to do this."

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