

Insights into Floodplain Management Practices of Tribal Nations

Association of State Floodplain Managers, Flood Science Center



ASFPM Tribal Resources
Special Collection



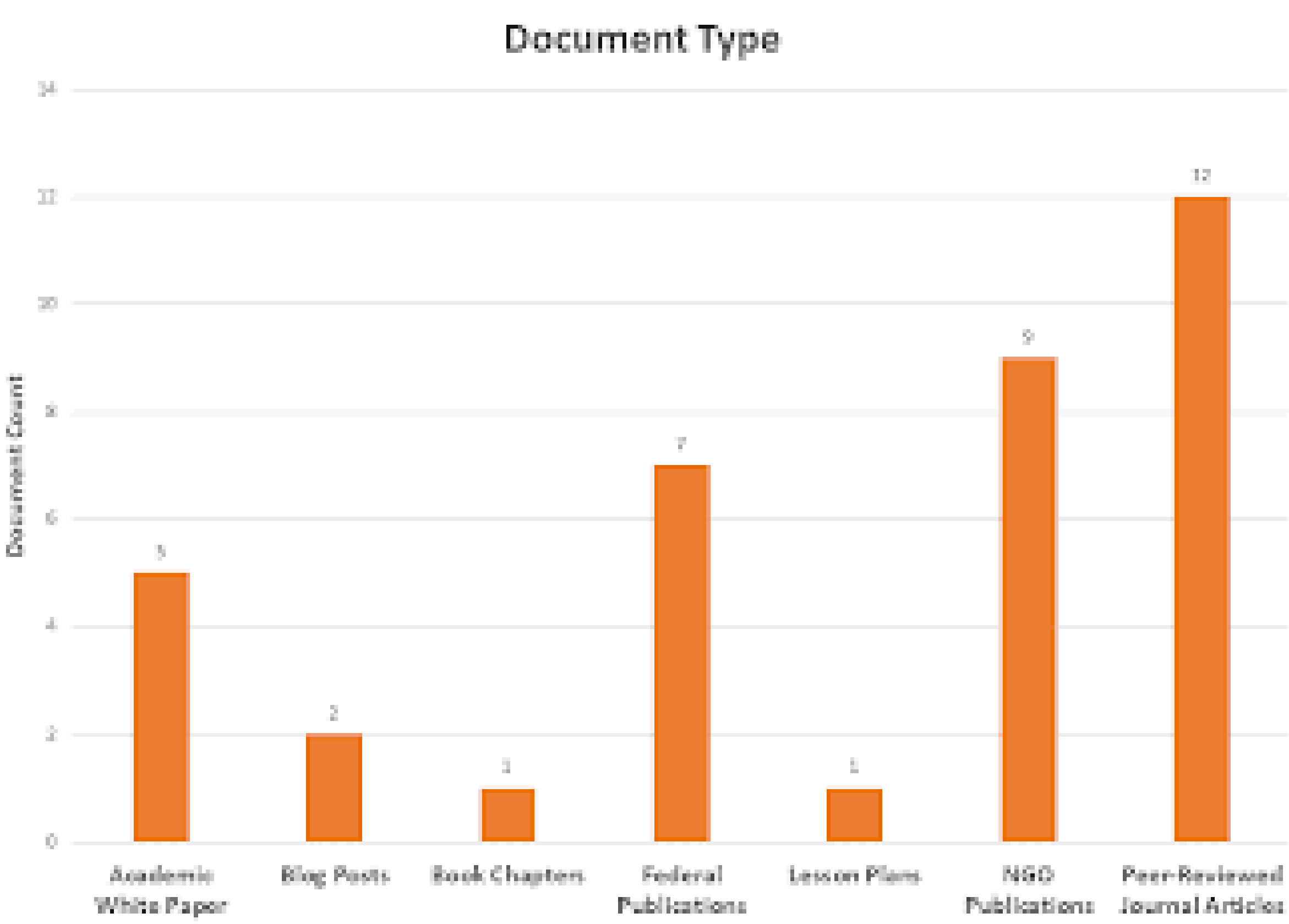
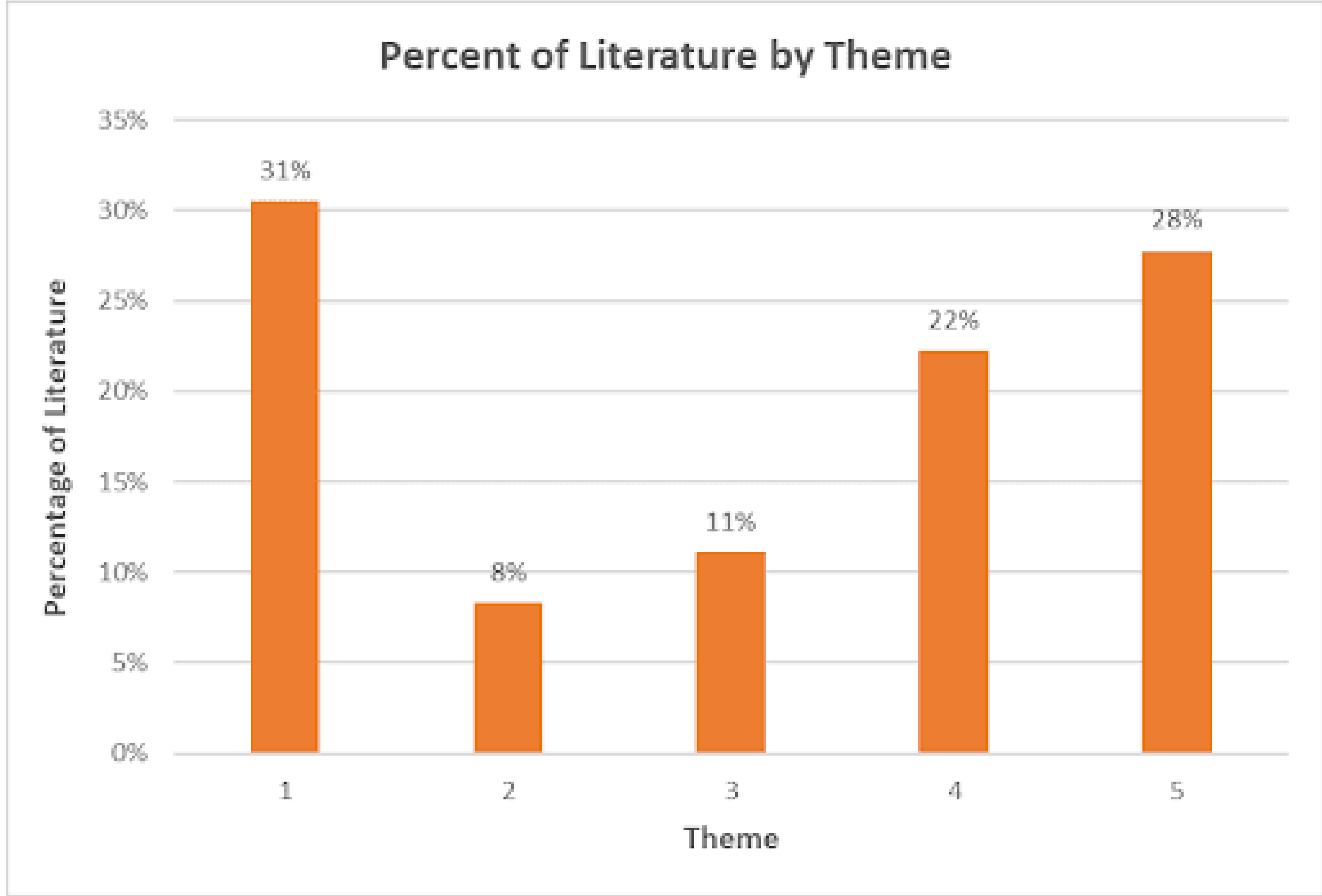
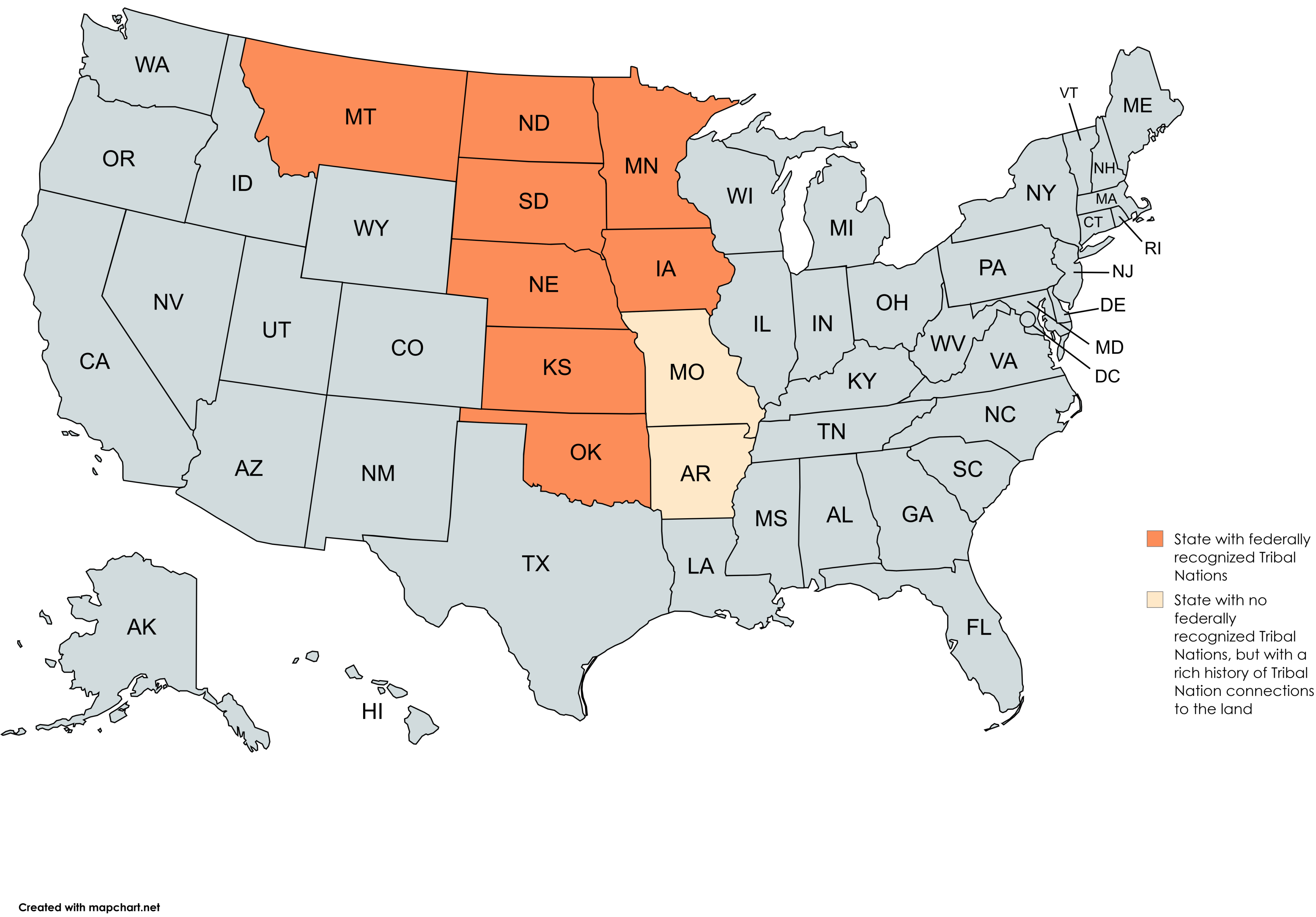
Background

Flooding continues to be the most common and costly natural disaster in the country, with flood-related disasters causing more than \$200 billion in damage and economic losses across the United States in 2021 and 2022. Tribal Nations are also facing increasing flood-related challenges. ASFPM aims to expand technical assistance to Tribal Nations. To start a literature review was conducted to aid in establishing a baseline knowledge on tribal engagement, cultural perspectives, and their tumultuous history with colonists, so that later relationship building activities will realize greater successes.

Methods

A basic literature review process was utilized in which five pertinent themes were identified and used to define the review’s scope and objectives. These five themes were:

Theme 1: Insights into the cultural perspective(s) of Tribal Nations (i.e., TEK, Phenology)
Theme 2: Insights into concerns around floodplain management of Tribal Nations
Theme 3: Indigenous knowledge related to floodplain management and stewardship
Theme 4: Previously identified support needs of Tribal Nations
Theme 5: Insights into engaging with Tribal Nations as an external partner



Findings

- Floodplain management is not a topic covered in most of the corpus.. (That does not mean that floodplain management is not being done, just that it has not been recorded in the literature.)
- Western Science and Tribal Ecological Knowledge (TEK) are difficult to reconcile.
- Western methods are historically extractive and prescriptive.
- Co-development of methods and co-production of knowledge are vital.
- Methods need to be tribally led and grounded in Indigenous worldview and culture, in order to show respect for tribal data sovereignty and Free Prior informed Consent (FPIC).
- Trust takes time and project timelines don’t always allow for time, and often once a project ends, maintaining the relationships built is hard.
- Federal funding available to Tribal Nations is often limited.

What’s Next for ASFPM?

- Ethical tribal engagement training requirements for ASFPM staff
- Outreach to Tribal Nations following the above findings with an emphasis on building relationships and meaningful partnerships that are respectful of tribal sovereignty and FPIC (non-extractive)
- Co-development of resources on floodplain management specific to Tribal Nations
- Development of a Tribal support network database