

AN INDIAN COUNTRY FARM POLICY ROUNDTABLE

Hosted By Indian Nations Conservation Alliance & Intertribal Agriculture Council
Las Vegas, Nevada Friday, December 9, 2005

Comment 1 of 25

MR. HILLER: Thank you, Ross. Good morning everybody. I guess I'm up here on the slides, and Tina is going to be the slide jammer here. So I'll try to rip through these and be brief. Next slide. It's frozen. It's Power Point. I'll get started here. We have got a number of challenges. This is our biggest challenge in the Extension Indian Reservation Program. We are reaching less than 10 percent of American Indian reservations. There is considerable confusion within extension host agencies, CSREES and the principal lobbying organization for land grant colleges. That's the second acronym up there, NASULGC, about Extension Indian Reservations Programs. NASULGC has done great work in supporting and helping fund through the 1994 laws, tribal college extension and research and endowment funds, and so on. And we feel like we have been a little bit lost in that because Extension Indian Reservation Program is run by the 1862 Colleges, the state land grant universities. And our needs go up into a great big pipeline that services some 2,000 colleges under NASULGC. Okay. Next slide. Here's where we're located with these programs. These Extension Indian Reservation Programs are attempts to create and deliver educational programs to people that live on reservations much like in the 3,100 counties in American that have cooperative extension programs. These programs are designed to be and operate under the same principles and objectives as county extension programs.

Next. Perhaps we need to change where EIRP hides within the CSREES budget to get flexibility and visibility. Perhaps it needs to be renamed so as to minimize the confusion between tribal college extension and what I call "big extension," the 1862 version of county extension. And we need to grow the program. The original intent, as Ross said, was about 85, 86 agents out there, and we have 28. We have also had some discussions about moving this program out into the western region to get it a little closer to where the action is. Most of the reservations, of course, are out West, and most of the money is back East, of course. So we are looking at administrative models that will help us grow this program. Here's a brief snapshot of EIRP funding history. Originally authorized in the 1990 Farm Bill, we started out with about 10 projects and in 1993 began to add a few. And in 2001 we added three more projects. We have 28 right now on 27 reservations in 15 states. We have taken some cuts. We can go to the next slide. There you go.

There's the math in general terms, about \$71,000 per extension office. Now there is not a self-respecting 1862 cooperative extension director in the country that would say, "I'll take \$70,000 and give you a county extension program." It is not enough. Out of that \$71,000 we buy an extension agent and a half time secretary and pay their fringe benefit package and try to get some gas money to them. And folks, it is not enough. This program has been starving to death for too long. Next slide, please. We can go through these kind of things real quick. These are things we all know. There's quite a few tribes out there, languages, reservations. Okay. Next.

We know a little bit about the land type out there. There's some significant changes in my adopted state of Arizona right now, the Indian reservation, the Water Settlement Act. There's 146,000 acres of new land that is going to be brought under irrigation. Nobody on the planet is developing agricultural land at that scale, nowhere in the entire world. You'd think we could get them an extension agent. We haven't been able to get it done. Next slide, please. Just click through that one, too. There's plenty of work for us out there. Some of the reasons we are not funded well is because.

AN INDIAN COUNTRY FARM POLICY ROUNDTABLE

Hosted By Indian Nations Conservation Alliance & Intertribal Agriculture Council
Las Vegas, Nevada Friday, December 9, 2005

of the 1862 Version of Funding Cooperative Extension typically requires the state legislature to participate, the county commissioners to participate along with the federal government. Well, county commissioners get money from property tax, which isn't paid on reservations. State legislatures are funded by sales taxes, which are typically not reverted back to reservation communities. You know, you got to leave Pine Ridge and go to Shadron to buy a couch and you pay Nebraska sales tax there, and that money goes to Lincoln and does not come back to Pine Ridge. County commissioners, county supervisors are very reluctant politically to spend money earned off reservation from property taxes on reservation. So the bottom line is this: Virtually the only money around to fund an extension program on a reservation got to be federal money.

The 1862 land grant universities have had a heck of a time in the last decade or so because they were funded typically in the college of agriculture much as county extension offices have been funded, cooperatively with USDA dollars, state dollars, those two funds principally. Well, the federal funds have been declining for a number of years. State legislative funds have been declining a number of years. And in order to stay alive, the 1862s have been writing lots and lots of research proposal monies, writing proposals for grants from outside third party resources and so on to stay afloat. So many of these land grant universities that used to be funded about 70 percent by state legislatures are well below 20 percent now. So some of us in state land grant university land are thinking, "Okay, we're not going to call this place the University of Arizona anymore. We'll just going to call it the 'University of Something' that happens to be located in Tucson because it's not owned by the state anymore."

You can't say that there is a major state legislative funding interest in these universities anymore. So we're turning away from state money too, state money, federal money. So we're going outside, but, again, my bottom line is EIRP. about the only funding game in town is federal. So at a time when the 1862s are looking away from federal funding, this is the only game in town. Okay. Next slide. This is the slide that tends to aggravate the 1862 land grant extension directors, big extension I call it. This is a pretty sad commentary. We have got almost 9,000 county extension agents out there, an average of almost three per county in over 3,000 counties in this country, and we've got 28 agents on reservations. I don't know what is going on here. We need to fix that. Okay. Next slide. There you go.

Tribes have helped. Tribes have continually written letters to the 1862 land grant universities. They know they are not going to get much reaction out of state legislators. They've written congressional delegations and visited with them trying to get this thing going. We've got an NCAI Resolution last year, and it's been reauthorized next for this year 2005, and we're trying to grow the program to what it was originally intended to do, and, in fact, to at least turn the program around, so we are approaching some sort of equity with big extension, county extension program. We have one Indian on the Council of Ag Research, Extension and Teaching ever. This is the body that divides the college deans on these -- on this business, ag research, extension, and teaching, within the NASULGC organization. So we don't have a voice there either. This is what we'd like to do. We have got some programs out there right now. In Arizona I've got to borrow money from the College of Agriculture every year to keep this program afloat. We have got 15 counties in the state, and they're not borrowing money from the College of Agriculture every year, but that's what we've got to do. And I suspect it's very similar in every other of the 15 states where we have EIRP programs. We need quick money now to stabilize financially this program. We think about \$750,000, 700,000

AN INDIAN COUNTRY FARM POLICY ROUNDTABLE

Hosted By Indian Nations Conservation Alliance & Intertribal Agriculture Council
Las Vegas, Nevada Friday, December 9, 2005

would probably do it. That money out to be added permanently to the base for these budgets of existing projects.

Then we need to get about growing the program, two or three agents a year. Ten, fifteen years we'd have 60, 70, 80 agents out there. It sounds pretty simple, but we've been working at and head knocking for quite a while. We seem to have attention fairly well up the chain of command within CSREES. They have acknowledged that we have issues here. Finally, we are talking about formation of a national task force between CSREES and NASULGC. So over the next year or so, we expect to produce documents, a strategic plan. We can tell you where these offices ought to be going. We've had that talk with tribes, with most tribes. But we need some help getting this thing over the top. I don't know what we have got to do to get some attention a little higher up the food chain to get this program out of the corner and into the game. So I'd be happy to answer questions. I'll leave my contact information. I appreciate the opportunity to make some comments here. Thank you.

MR. RACINE: Thank you, Joe. Again, I ask you to step to the mike, clearly state your name and your tribal affiliation. Next.