

MR. NOTAH: I'm headed for the mike. Good morning. My name is Nathan Notah. I'm from Stillwater in Oklahoma. I also work for the Intertribal Ag Council. Something that I mention all the time -- first off, I want to thank you guys for coming out. I want to thank the Secretary for taking the time to listen to our issues and our concerns. A couple of things. We take a lot of statistics on Indian lands. The numbers, the land base, we take all these numbers. In many cases those are used to justify positions. They're used to justify earmarked monies, but they never come back to Indian Country.

I think an example is, and I heard this throughout this week, an example is out at Navajo. Many of the numbers that we were used as far as livestock, both in New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah, those were taken, and I think it was used to justify positions, and those positions never came out to Navajo. That was something that I heard from several of my constituents from that part of the country. In those three states, 48 percent of the land -- these are numbers that I have heard -- 48 percent of the lands, the eligible lands for NRCS, are on Indian reservations, but less than 5 percent of those funds are used on Indian reservations.

And I really think that seriously needs to be looked at. On Indian reservations there's really still to this day there's lack of soil data, minimal range inventories. Ecological sites are still not identified, and I think that those issues really need to be addressed. I have said in the past NRCS, not necessarily NRCS, but USDA, they come onto Indian lands about 20 years ago in full force, and one of the gentlemen, Joel, mentioned that we'd like to see it at 90, maybe 90-10 percent cost share. I don't think we are asking for this for long term. We are asking just for this to the degree --

MR. RACINE: Nathan, would you move up to the front mike. I think that one -- you got too much electricity in your system.

MR. NOTAH: These cost share ratios that we are requesting, I really don't think we're asking for these for long term. This went out again. I think we're just asking for this in a catch-up circumstance. Like I said, our soils, our data, our range inventories and these things were way behind. And we're just asking to the degree that we can catch up with the rest of America. And we would like to see those issues addressed.

MR. RACINE: Thank you, Margie.