

**Council for Native American Farming
and Ranching, Meeting: August 14-15, 2012
CD4 8-14 Track01 to Track09**

[Start of CD4 Track01]

Joanna Mounce Stancil: All right. Moving right along, next on our list is USDA's marketing and regulatory programs, Joani Walsh, the deputy undersecretary. And we did bring it to Butch Blazer's attention that we're about 30 minutes behind, and he's okay with that, so he's joining us in the back, which means we might be dipping just a few minutes into your lunch hour.

Joani Walsh: Hi. Thanks so much. It's really a privilege to be here with all of you today at the Council for Native American Farming and Ranching, and for our team at marketing and regulatory programs to have an opportunity to provide an overview of our programs and also to hear from you about your questions. I know we're running short of time. I'm going to personally just hand around my personal business card, and I encourage any of you who have follow-up questions to contact me directly, and you're also welcome to contact the folks who will be representing each of the various agencies.

So, the marketing and regulatory mission area is made up of three agencies that together facilitate the domestic and international marketing of U.S. agricultural products, and that also ensure the health and care of animals and plants. These agencies are also active participants in setting national and

international standards. So, the Ag Marketing Service, we're going to hear from administrator Dave Shipman today, administers programs that facilitate the efficient and fair marketing of U.S. agricultural products including food, fiber, and specialty crops. AMS also houses programs that support local and regional food systems and markets for farmers and ranchers through programs such as the Farmers Market Promotion Program, the Federal State Marketing Improvement Program, and the Specialty Crops Block Grant Program, all of which you'll hear more about from Dave Shipman in a moment.

I also, just tagging on to what Deputy Undersecretary Doug O'Brien just mentioned about our efforts to coordinate with other departments such as Treasury and Health and Human Services to increase access to healthy food in communities that may have low access or low income, I certainly invite follow-up inquiries on that, and we'd be happy to speak more with any of you who are interested in pursuing some work in that area. And through our Farmers Market Promotion Program, we've certainly targeted in part projects that are aimed at increasing access to healthy food in underserved communities.

Our Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service provides leadership in protecting American agriculture by ensuring the health and care of animals and plants. APHIS is a broad mission area that in addition to protecting animal and plant

agricultural health, also includes regulating genetically engineered organisms, administering the Animal Welfare Act and carrying out wildlife damage management activities. Terry Clark is our National Tribal Liaison with APHIS, and he'll be providing an overview of APHIS program shortly.

And with us, we also have Alan Christian who's the Deputy Administrator with the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration. That agency, GIPSA, facilitates the marketing of livestock, poultry, meats, meat grains, and related agricultural products as well as the fair and competitive trading practices.

So, we are all here today to provide both details on our programs, but really most importantly, to hear about your particular areas of interest and to identify ways that our programs can best support your efforts moving forward. So, I realize we're jamming a lot in but really would invite your input and your thoughts moving forward. And what we can't get to today in conversation, I invite you to e-mail me directly. So, thanks very much.

[CD4 Track 2]

Joani Walsh: And I think first we'll have Administrator Dave Shipman with the Ag Marketing Service.

Dave Shipman: Good morning. It's still morning, right? By a few minutes. Okay. I'll try to make this really quick

because we have about 50 laws, statutes, that we're responsible for administering and adhering to. I'm going to quickly go through not all 50 but a lot of the programs that are tied to it. You should have brochures that were passed out to you; the one with the cotton and kind of the weather map on it, if you follow that, that kind of follows along with the presentation that I'll be running through real quick. And then there's another one that really focuses in on grants programs and some of the cost-share programs that we have that you might be interested in.

But as was stated earlier, our mission really is to facilitate marketing agricultural products post harvest, after they're produced and they're into the marketplace, how do you best market those products. And so, that's where our focus from producer to consumers. We have about in total about 5000 folks that work for us. We partner very closely with state agencies. We have cooperative agreements with every state, and we have, -- well, you can see, we have over 645 cooperative agreements.

We break all of our programs down, because they get into a lot of different areas, into the four basic categories, and one of them is quality verification programs. And that gets into rating the products, we set standards and we rate products -- and I'll just show you all the different products, whether it's cotton, dairy products, pistachio nuts, walnuts, peanuts, all

kinds of livestock products, fruits and vegetables, you name it, we've established standards, quality standards for it, and we provide a third-party inspection service, a grading service that determines the value and is used in the marketplace to assess value on that product.

We also have a process verification program, and this is where we're going in. And it used be that if you just looked at the contents of a product, whether it be beef or fruits and vegetables, that was enough to determine its value and move it. But now, more and more, it's the process by which it was developed. And so, we'll get into process verification programs that are based on international standards, and you're looking at how a product is produced and how it moves into the marketing chain.

You'll see a bunch of these types of things on products we're involved with. For example, the Black Angus recert, where it's USDA certified. We're verifying that it truly is Black Angus and that it meets all of the standards that are in place. And we have these across the board on a number of areas.

We also have a second category of our programs that we call industry self-help. That's where there are statutes, there are laws that have been put together that enable industries to come together and work together, and we help facilitate that. One of them is marketing orders and agreements. We have a number of

fresh fruits and vegetables. There are 32 marketing orders in the fresh fruit and vegetable area, and there are 10 dairy marketing orders. This is where industry is coming together. They establish through rulemaking in certain procedures that they follow and guidelines to again facilitate the marketing of their products.

We also have research and promotion programs. There are a number of them listed here. We actually have a few more since this slide was put together. This is where industry comes together. You may know them as check off programs, where an assessment is made, those funds are pooled together, and they're used for research and promotion activities. A lot of research activities go on as well as promoting products.

Our responsibility there is to oversee, to ensure that those programs that again are industry driven, follow all of the statutes, the requirements that are in place, and that the money that is collected through the assessments is used according to the regulations that are established around that.

The next area that we kind of categorized some of our services in is called Public Good programs. This is like our market news. This is one of the first programs that the agency ever did. It started over 100 years ago where we have market news folks across the country and actually work with others in other countries to identify prices in the marketplace and make

it a very transparent process, so that anybody can understand what the price of their commodity is on a daily basis. We put out reports every day, and in some cases, multiple times a day.

Again, I mentioned that we have commodity standards. We have over 475 different U.S. and international standards that identify the qualities of different commodities as you determine that value.

We have a Pesticide Data Program. We do sampling of agricultural products, determine the residues. So, we publish a report every year on that. It's used by EPA to assess the adequacy of current tolerances for pesticides, but it's also used by the marketplace to demonstrate to buyers of agricultural products, such as our trading partners around the world, of what residues you might see in the products that you're buying, and 99.9 percent of the time, they're far below the EPA tolerances and that helps open up barriers and move product in the international market. We have a transportation group that gets into being basically an advocate for agricultural transportation issues, a lot of rail issues as well as barge, waterway issues.

We have wholesale farmers in market development. This is where we actually work with folks to help establish farmers markets and wholesale markets. We actually have an architect on board that will assist local communities in developing and

designing the farmers market. We do not get involved with brick and mortar in terms of financing, but we help in all that regards in terms of zoning and working with your local communities to help develop that market, and we provide assistance. Under this program, we have a Farmers Market Promotion Program where we have grants in the neighborhood of \$5 million annually, and that is covered in one of those brochures.

We buy a lot of food. We buy about \$1.5 billion worth of food every year. We work very closely with the Food and Nutrition Service to buy food for the school lunch program as well as many other federal feeding programs, and we get involved with surplus purchases as well. The president yesterday, while in Iowa, announced that a number of bonus buys to help the livestock industry as a result of the drought that's occurring. So, we're in the process right now of purchasing over \$170 million worth of pork, catfish, lamb, and poultry. We covered commodity purchases.

We have a Federal State Marketing Improvement Program. This is another grant program. We have about \$2.5 million in that program, where it's a competitive grant process working with states and other recipients to improve marketing activities.

And then, the fourth category where we lump all of our programs is regulatory programs. We have a Federal Seed Act

that basically is a truth in labeling. So, if you're a farmer and you buy seed or even if you're a household and you have a garden and you buy seed and you look at that seed, we work very closely with states, the contents of that package are verified to be accurate. If they're not, it would be a violation of the Federal Seed Act. So, this is a regulatory program that we carry out primarily with state entities.

We have the National Organic Program. We are responsible for establishing the organic standards. We work with a National Organic Standards Board, which is made up of representatives from the organic community and science area and universities and consumers and so forth that are interested in the organic production, and we work with them to establish national standards.

And we have been more recently working in developing to actually international equivalence. We have one with Canada right now where our products that are organic are recognized as organic in Canada, and we also have one with the European Union and we're working on several others right now.

Finally, under the regulatory area is shell egg surveillance. This is where we actually go into every egg facility packaging house in the country and this is partnered with FSIS and FDA in checking for appropriate cleanliness and managing of shell eggs.

We also have the Perishable Agriculture Commodities Act. This is anybody that's selling fruits and vegetables has to be licensed under this act, and their license could be revoked if they don't basically adhere to fair-trade practices. In other words, if you sell a product to somebody, you're going to get paid, and if you buy it, you pay in a timely manner, and a variety of other things, but it's a way, it's a tool to ensure that those trading and perishable products that have a very short shelf-life, that the transactions that occur are fairly done, and we oversee that activity.

We have a Plant Variety Protection Act that we administer. This is basically a patent for plants. So, if you're a breeder, a public breeder or a private breeder, you can come to us, and if you can demonstrate that your variety is unique, stable, and distinct, that you can get a protection of up to 20 years for your products.

We have a Pesticide Recordkeeping Program that's working with states as well as those that use pesticides to ensure that the program's appropriate records are kept. And I think this is the final one, country-of-origin labeling. We're responsible for that statute, that this is where products have to be labeled appropriately that retailers can demonstrate their origin.

So, that is a very quick summary of all the activities. You can see it's rather diverse. They are covered in these

brochures. There's also our website and so forth on here, and please feel free to contact us if you have any specific areas or questions. I'm trying to fit all this in. I think it's APHIS up next.

[CD4 Track03]

Dave Shipman: -- APHIS.

Joanna Stancil: Terry Clark? Terry Clark.

Terry Clark: Good morning, everyone. [Indiscernible] pretty bad [indiscernible] sitting between you [indiscernible]. So, I'll try to be brief. Again, my name is Terry Clark. I'm the National Tribal Liaison for APHIS. I'm also a member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina.

Okay. APHIS or Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service is an agency with a broad mission area that include promoting U.S. agriculture health, regulating genetically modified organisms, administering the Animal Welfare Act, and carrying out wildlife damage management activities.

To protect agriculture health, APHIS is on the job 24 hours a day, seven days a week, working to defend America's animal and plant resources from agriculture pests and diseases. For example, if the Mediterranean fruit fly or an Asian long-horned beetle, two major agriculture pests, were left unchecked, they would result in several billion dollars of production and market loss annually.

Similarly, if foot-mouth disease or avian influenza were to become established in the United States, foreign trade partners could evoke trade restrictions and producers would suffer devastating loss. In the event that there's a pest or a disease concern detected, APHIS implements emergency protocols with affected states and tribes to quickly manage or eradicate the outbreak. This aggressive approach has enabled APHIS to successfully prevent and respond to potential pest and disease threats to the U.S.

This is just a quick slide of our different programs within APHIS. I'll cover those briefly.

Animal Care. Animal Care protects and promotes the welfare of animals bred for commercial sale, used in research, transported commercially, or exhibited to the public. Animal Care develops standards of humane care and treatment. Also, Animal Care works to eliminate soring of horses. So, if anyone has seen Racking Horses or Tennessee Walkers, you'd know that there is a technique that you use to make them pick up their gait higher by burning them. So, Animal Care tries to prevent that.

Animal Care also monitors animal care practice and achieves compliances through inspection, education, and cooperative efforts. Animal Care also provides leadership on the safety and well being of pets during disasters.

I want to try to give you some examples of what our agency does exactly with tribes. Since APHIS is an emergency response organization, Animal Care has assisted tribes in their efforts to include pets as part of their emergency response plan. Animal Care had most recently just started to assist tribes with providing funding to conduct spay and neuter clinics to reduce overpopulation of dogs and cats on the reservation.

Another one of our line programs is Biotechnology Regulatory Services or BRS. BRS protects against the risk of plant health by facilitating safe importation, interstate movement, environmental release of genetically engineered organisms. BRS established the requirements for that importation, that transportation, as well as the field testing of GE organisms. BRS evaluates potential plant health risks associated with GE and enforces regulatory enforcement through inspections. BRS removes from oversight GE varieties that does not pose a risk. BRS works in partnership with FDA and EPA to ensure their development, the testing, and the use of biotechnology products occurs in a manner that is safe for plants, animals, and human health as well as the environment.

One of our other programs is International Services. International Services provide animal and plant expertise to protect animal agriculture and facilitate safe agriculture trade around the world. International Services works with other

countries to address foreign disease and pest. International Services assists other countries in building their animal and plant infrastructures. We also monitor animal and plant disease and pests worldwide. International Services also inspects agriculture products prior to it coming to the U.S.

One of our other live programs is Plant Protection and Quarantine or some may know as PPQ. PPQ safeguards U.S. agriculture and natural resources from the risk associated with the entry, establishment, or the spread of pest including invasive and harmful weeds. Plant Protection and Quarantine prevents, detects, manages, and if possible, eradicates pests and diseases. Plant Protection and Quarantine collects and analyzes pest data both in the U.S. and overseas to identify potential pathways for introduction.

An example of PPQ working with tribes, I know PPQ has been working with the Nez Perce Tribes for several years now in the development of biological control agents to be released, assist other tribes with various issues with invasive plants they may have. PPQ also conducts surveys for pests on tribal lands and assist with the eradication of these certain pests. Plant Protection and Quarantine also assists tribes in the development of a plant emergency response plan.

Veterinary Services. This is another program within USDA APHIS that deals with animal health issues. Veterinary

Services' mission is to protect and improve the quality, the health and the marketability of our nation's animals and animal products by preventing, controlling, and monitoring animal diseases. Veterinary Services coordinates the National Animal Health Emergency Response and Management. Veterinary Services ensures the safe importation of animals and animal products as well as biologics. Veterinary Services diagnose foreign and domestic animal diseases and also monitors the health status of livestock and poultry in the U.S. Veterinary Services also certifies the animal and products for export.

This next slide shows you some examples of Veterinary Services partnering with tribes probably for the last 10 years. I won't go in detail with all of these, but some of them are the Memorandum of Understanding, an agreement to work together if there's a foreign animal disease that comes into the U.S. We have several other programs where we've provided funding to tribes. Some of those are in their surveillance program. We partner with tribes for them to collect samples for certain diseases that could exist in the U.S. as well as on tribal lands. So, we provide funding to tribes to do this collection for us and to test for these diseases. The goal is to assist tribes in protecting their livestock, wildlife, and tribal members.

Another program is emergency management activities. We've provided funding for tribes over the last couple of years to develop an emergency response plan, to respond to a foreign animal disease. We also recommend that tribes develop an animal population census database that would tell the tribes exactly what is on the reservation, as well as we're looking at helping tribes write animal health codes to prevent sick animals from coming on the reservation. We're also providing disease awareness training to tribal members and various producers. The goal is to help tribes take steps to prevent, identify, and respond to diseases that could affect their livestock, pets, and wildlife.

I hate to show you this slide right before lunch, but [indiscernible], this slide came from your state when we --

Female Voice: That's one ugly bird.

Terry Clark: Yes. That's one sick bird, too.

Identification. I know most of you have probably heard a little bit about animal disease traceability. We've been partnering with tribes over the last couple of years trying to provide some information and guidance and outreach and training on what the new traceability requirements will be. We also provided funding to help tribes prepare for these new requirements through assisting some tagging requirements, equipment, and other funds.

Another program within APHIS is Wildlife Services. The mission of Wildlife Services is to provide leadership and expertise to resolve conflicts to allow people and wildlife to co-exist. Wildlife Services assists in resolving wildlife damage to a wide variety of resources and reduce threats to human and health safety. Did most of you fly in on an airplane? So, Wildlife Services tries to help reduce the bird strikes. Wildlife Services also cooperates with tribes to provide predator control management to reduce damage to the livestock.

Wildlife Services and tribes. Wildlife Services provides some expertise in beaver management in the Great Lakes Area to try to improve [indiscernible] recovery. Wildlife Services also assisted tribes in the past in the wolf management plans by capturing and radio-collaring gray wolves and collecting biological information.

There've been several issues where animals were relocated from areas, and we've actually transported animals from, I think, it was Washington State, it was river otters from Washington State to New Mexico. But everyone can tell this is not really a river otter. This, I think, is a beaver. So, once we relocate some animals, we try to see if the tribe is interested in receiving those, so we do work with them on that.

APHIS has a very big interest in Native American youth. I know someone mentioned earlier about WINS program they have here

in D.C. APHIS sponsored six WINS students last year. They get exposure to what -- we hire them for the summer to get exposure to what APHIS is, what our programs are. Also, there are opportunities that exist -- hopefully more in the future, but there are opportunities that exist where we are looking at hiring summer interns to work in the various states that our different programs are in. And also, APHIS has partnered with Diné college this past year to host a two-week summer program for students age 14 to 17, bring them in, they get experience of what college life is like as well as what APHIS programs are, or look at possible careers within natural resources and agriculture.

So, I know that was very quick. If you have any questions, I think we may take them after the next presenter. But, in your presentation you have my e-mail and you have my cell number, so if you have any questions or concerns or issues, please feel free to contact me. Thank you.

Joanna Stancil: Thank you very much.

[CD4 Track 4]

Joanna Stancil: All right. Next we have Alan Christian from Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, GIPSA.

Alan Christian: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here, and thank you for the opportunity to share a little bit about

the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards program. Unlike the two previous agencies and the marketing and regulatory programs, GIPSA is probably the smallest. We've got about 700 people and only two programs, the Federal Grain Inspection Program and the Packers and Stockyards Program.

I know Dave talked about AMS, their role is to facilitate marketing, and GIPSA or the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards program, our role is to ensure fairness in the marketing of grains and livestock. So, we're a regulatory program and we try to provide protections for people that are trading or marketing agricultural products.

For instance, years ago, if you were selling a steer, you might sell that directly to another individual, and that individual could have looked at the animal, assessed what it's worth and then pay you for that animal. But nowadays, typically livestock are sold on a formula basis or a marketing arrangement, say, 14 days ahead of when the animals are actually delivered to be slaughtered. And so, as a seller, you don't actually know what you're going to get for that animal until the animal is slaughtered and the characteristics of that animal are determined, the weight, maybe the tenderness, and a number of different characteristics are taken into account before you get your check. And so, our role is to ensure that when you sell an animal without knowing what you're going to get, that those

parameters that are used to assess the value are applied correctly.

And the same goes with grain, as a lot of grain is shipped overseas, the buyer overseas wants to know that they're getting exactly what they're paying for. And so, on the federal grain inspection side, there are really three things that they do. One, they set national standards for grain. Two, they inspect all the grain that's being exported. About 80 million metric tons of grain that leave this country are inspected by FGIS to ensure that it's the weight that they say it's supposed to be, and to ensure that the quality of that grain is what it's supposed to be before it leaves the country. And then the third thing that FGIS does is they oversee state and private agencies that inspect grain for interstate movement.

So, if you're buying grain from, say, one state to another and you want to ensure its quality, you can have one of these designated agencies inspect that grain and certify its quality and/or its weight before it's moved.

On the packers and stockyards side which is the livestock marketing protection program, there are really three things that we look at there. One is financial protection. So, if you sell an animal, you sell a cow or you sell a hog, you should get paid fairly for that animal and you should get paid promptly.

We also ensure that the entities that are buying those animals, the packing plants and the livestock markets are solvent. In other words, they have enough money to be able to pay you, and they're bonded and they're covered by a trust, so that if they were to fail, you could get some of that money back, either through bond protection or by filing a claim against the trust. So, there are some financial protections if you sell an animal and that entity were to go bankrupt.

The other area that we look at on the packers and stockyards side is trade practices. We go into every packing plant, every livestock market and check their scales to make sure they're weighing your livestock correctly, if they're using that weight then to pay you. We also look at their practices in terms of advertising and deception. So, in other words, are you being told you're going to be paid on a certain basis and then actually when they run that animal through the packing plant, are they unfairly using other characteristics in that payment? A lot of payments now that come out of packing plants are based on very complex formulas that involve a whole host of characteristics. And so, we look at those formulas to see if they're paying people properly.

And then, the third thing we look at is competition in the industry. We all know that in the livestock industry, there are probably four large packers that control 80 percent of the beef

industry, there are maybe four or five that control about 60 or 70 percent of the poultry industry, and the same in hogs. And so, we look at those entities to see how they're buying and selling to ensure that they aren't using their market power to unfairly control the market, to manipulate prices, to control portion supply.

Those are basically the things we do on Federal Grain Inspection and Packers and Stockyards program, we're really involved in protecting producers or protecting sellers through the marketing process. So with that, I guess I'll turn it back over to Joanna if you have any questions for anyone in the marketing [indiscernible] programs. Yes, sir.

Gilbert Harrison: Gilbert Harrison here again from Navajo. How do you handle or do you have any authority over auction prices?

Alan Christian: We do. Livestock auctions are registered with GIPSA. They're required to have a bond. They're required to have a custodial account to preserve the proceeds from the sale of livestock for the sellers. And we go in on a random basis to inspect those livestock markets and ensure they're complying.

Gilbert Harrison: How about the health of the animals that they sell?

Alan Christian: We don't look at the health of animals. Our responsibility is really financial and trade practices. However, if we do see issues with regard to health, I mean, that's something that our folks that work with the local officials to alert them to that issue, but that's not our primary responsibility. And if it were in a packing plant, then we would alert the Food Safety Inspection Service [indiscernible]. Yes, Ms. [indiscernible]?

Female Voice: I actually have a question for one of the others. I know there's a lot of, like, rip-off Native American arts that are not made by Native Americans, and I'm wondering, is there a way of certifying Native American sourced food, food products?

Dave Shipman: So, it being similar to our country of origin but that it would be Native American origin?

Female Voice: Right. Like, Native American beef or Native American corn or Native American herbs or buffalo, stuff like that, where it would be -- because I think --

Dave Shipman: Yes. I think that we would have the legal authority to work with a group to establish a standard, you'd have to develop a standard and a program. And then, through a third-party verification and auditing-type program, I believe that we could work with you to do something like that. To get actually on the label, we have to be working with FSIS and some

of the others in the department on that. But there's a possibility that that could be worked on.

Joani Walsh: We'd certainly be happy to set up a meeting to discuss that further with you.

Joanna Stancil: Well, that certainly could be something that the council addresses more in depth. That could be one of your recommendations if you decide to do that officially with the council.

Dave Shipman: Typically those types of programs are really driven by the industry, okay, so it would be driven by you, and we would work to help facilitate that.

Joanna Stancil: All right. Any more questions?

Mark Wadsworth: Mark Wadsworth. On your organic cost-share program, what is the cost-share rate on that, and how would you go about -- one of the issues that we're looking at is certifying rangelands as being organic as a part of our production for our producers to be able to market that way. So, could you go through that?

Dave Shipman: What the cost share helps do is it helps defer the cost of actually getting certified. So, it runs through the states. The money comes from us, we give it to the state programs, and you'd have to work with your local state to identify what your certification requirements would be. And then, the cost sharing is actually that the state would help

reimburse you for the cost of having an auditor come out and verify that you've met your plan.

Mark Wadsworth: Could we open a rapport through the federal to tribe? Because in some cases, states and tribes don't work quite --

Dave Shipman: Okay. That's a real good point. Let me bring that back to our staff that manages that program, and we'll see how we can work on that.

Joanna Stancil: Anyone else? All right. Thank you so much for being with us.

[CD4 Track 5]

Joanna Stancil: And next, we'll bring up -- just before -- as Butch is making his way up, Butch Blazer who is the Deputy Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment, just let me tell you a little change to the agenda. We'll be going to lunch at 12:45 to 1:45, then we'll be picking back up with our agenda with the Tribal Technical Assistance Network at 2 p.m. The Bureau of Indian Affairs is unable to join us this afternoon, so we will have plenty of time to get back on track.

Let's turn it over to Butch. So, right after Butch is done with his presentation, we'll go to lunch.

Arthur Blazer: Good afternoon. It's always a little dangerous being the last speaker before lunch especially when

you're running a bit behind and people are hungry. But we'll get through this fine.

First of all, I want to let you know I'm very appreciative of this opportunity to come before you here today. For those of you who don't know me, I am Butch Blazer. I'm Deputy Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment here at USDA. Basically, the mission area I'm over is U.S. Forest Service, and we'll get into that here in a minute.

But before I start, I just want to thank all of you for being here. I mean, the fact of committee that you're serving on is so, so important. And being a former tribal councilman -- I'm from Mescalero, New Mexico, member of the Mescalero Apache Tribe. I know how important it is to have a seat at the table, and that's exactly the opportunity that you have been given here on this committee. And I know that you're going to take it very, very seriously because a lot of people are relying on you. And I want to be as helpful as I can in working with Janie and Joanna in providing the tools, the resources you need to be successful. And so, I truly view this welcome as a beginning, and any way that I can help you in helping you to achieve the work that you need to do, I await that and look forward to it.

I'm going to be going through the natural resource and environment organization, and basically we have two key areas that I will cover. First, I'll be going through the Natural

Resource Conservation Service, again, which is not my mission area, but I will be covering it as best I can for my counterpart, Ann Mills.

As I mentioned to you earlier, there are two primary areas here. First of all, of course, we work for our secretary, Secretary Vilsack, and my boss, the undersecretary is Harris Sherman. And again, deputy undersecretary with the Forest Service is myself, and then the chief of the Forest Service is Tom Tidwell. On the other side, again, Natural Resource Conservation Service person, my counterpart there, the deputy undersecretary is Ann Mills, and the chief of the Natural Resource Conservation Service is Dave White.

Again, we'll start with NRCS. And what I've always found fascinating about NRCS -- and I'll be speaking to this much from a user. When I was on the Tribal Council, when I was a natural resource manager for my tribe in Mescalero, and when I was a state forester there in New Mexico for former Governor Richardson, we did a lot of work with NRCS. And you can see it, all the various areas, very important areas that they work in -- water, communities, clean air. All of these areas are so, so important to the issues that we as Indian people are faced with out on the lands that we manage.

Natural Resource Conservation Service, just some historical facts here. I had a laugh when I looked at this slide when I

began preparing for this presentation. I hadn't seen that Soil Conservation Service in a long, long time, but when I started my career, that's exactly who they were and that's who I interfaced with. But, again, it needs to be understood that NRCS is not a regulatory agency, but they work with folks on a voluntary basis.

It's a large organization, not quite as large the Forest Service, we'll get to that in a minute, but it is a large agency. This sort of outlines the number of employees, at the national office, the state office -- there's a state office in every one of our states -- and then, of course, the most important are those field offices. There are 3000 county offices located throughout the country.

Again, I mentioned, voluntary, not regulatory. Provide technical assistance on private land, that's what they do. And from these points that are listed here, probably the one that I think is most important -- of course, I'm biased -- is that natural resource planning piece, because all the rest tie into that. But that planning that NRCS can help private land owners is so critical in working with them to figure out how to best gain the resources and information they need to manage their lands.

And again, that last piece, the financial assistance, I think my next slide here, we'll get into that more. But, again,

we're all so aware of the limited resources that we have to work with, and the funding that is provided through the NRCS programs is very important.

This sort of gives you an idea of that technical assistance and the resources that NRCS does provide. And, again, this is exactly the kind of combination that we need: Expertise and money. You take that with a good plan, and you can do good things.

And as mentioned here, they have these technical support centers that are located throughout the country that have this type of step that is shown here that basically meets about every need that a landowner would have in the implementation of their land management plans. It's nice to have that kind of expertise at your fingertip.

I had no idea this was set up this way. Okay. The kinds of concerns that we're all faced with are listed here. And again, that expertise that is made available to us through NRCS helps us to deal with the various issues that come to mind.

[CD4 Track06]

Arthur Blazer: Just recently there was a very important session meeting held here in Washington, D.C., and it was put together by several of the Pacific Northwest tribes, and the discussion was national discussion, sort of focusing in on what those tribes were doing in the Pacific Northwest but it related

to climate change. And of these emergency concerns, I picked climate, because, again, the kinds of issues that tribes are faced with and are dealing with out on their reservations are substantial.

As Indian people, you know, our traditional use of our resource on reservation, the very important plants that we utilize, all of these are being impacted by climate change. And the tribes have been aware of changing climate for many, many years. And, again, they have a lot to share; tradition knowledge is very powerful. So, I was quite pleased when USDA was able to join other federal agencies and partnering with the tribes, and bring them again, provide them a seat at the table to talk about climate change. And I thought that this first meeting was exceptional. They did a very, very good job in pooling a great group of people together to start this discussion, and they're planning on continuing that discussion, and I know that USDA will continue to be right there with them in addressing their concerns that they're wanting to address.

Here's a listing of the financial tools for conservation implementation. Again, there's a whole array here that is listed, but one that I'm most familiar with and that I utilized when I was a natural resource manager there at Mescalero was the EQIP program. I utilized certainly the others, but that EQIP program, what comes to mind during the time I was at Mescalero,

we put in about 70 miles of gravity-fed waterline -- and those of you who are familiar with Mescalero, it's about a half a million acres of land, and the ranching program and the wildlife program, trophy outcutting [sounds like] program that we have there, it's all dependent upon available water. And so, this network of water that we were able to put in as a result of working with NRCS and working with the funding through that program made that possible.

I wanted to show you several initiatives here that are ongoing across the country. That's one other thing that Secretary Vilsack is really pushing, and rightfully so. He's taking a look at initiatives that bring people together, and then have us work together in regards to large watershed initiatives. Of these, again, I'm most familiar with the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Prior to coming into this position as a deputy undersecretary, I was working on a climate change project representing tribal interest with the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission, and in my visits up to the Great Lakes Area and meeting with the commission, I became very aware of this Great Lakes Restoration Initiative that has been put into place. There is funding opportunities through that initiative for the tribes, and they're getting some great work done in working with our partners.

And so, those of you that here, take a look if some of these initiatives are ongoing in your particular area and if you're not involved, I would ask that you look into it and see if there's a way that potentially a particular initiative could help you out.

Again, I mentioned in the beginning, workforce for NRCS. Again, that's one area of this agency that I've always been impressed with, having the opportunity, again, there at Mescalero, and then when I was a state forester in New Mexico, having our state forestry program work with NRCS. It's that accessibility that makes this agency so successful. And having people, they just seem to be located in the right spots. And it just really helps. And again, knowing the kinds of capacity issues that our tribes are faced with, this is what we need; we need that accessibility to experts out in the field that can work with us.

The two organizations mentioned here are the Indian Nations Conservation Alliance and the Intertribal Ag Council. I was hoping that Ross Racine was going to be here this afternoon. I saw him on the agenda so I called him this morning, and I didn't know he was still out west, and so I probably woke him up. But I got a hold of Ross and, unfortunately, he's not here today. But, again, I've worked with Ross for many, many years and I'm fully aware of the great work that the Intertribal Agriculture

Council does. They just -- to me, I sort of liken them to an arm for NRCS that helps to reach out into Indian country and to accentuate the opportunities that NRCS provides to Indian people. And IAC does that very, very well. And so, I want to applaud them for that.

Talking about tribal conservation districts, unfortunately, I have not had the experience in working with the TCDs. But, again, over the years, I think we currently have three in New Mexico. I am well aware of the successes that they have and what they afford tribes in regard to getting that tribal voice out there and letting NRCS what the priorities are of a particular tribe in a particular area and then help them make those connections that are needed to be made. This sort of gives you an idea of what those conservation districts do. I know that -- again, we just had one more come online [sounds like], I think in 2011 in New Mexico, one of the pueblos.

And again, from everything that I've read, every person that I've talked with that has been involved in this tribal conservation, working within these tribal conservation districts, they do a great job, and the work they do is extremely important. Okay. That just gives you some additional information on the TCDs.

And then, again, this here shows the Regional Tribal Conservation Advisory Councils. Again, that's information for

you. I can't speak to them because I haven't been involved with them, but just be aware that they are out there.

[CD4 Track 7]

Arthur Blazer: Okay. Now, Forest Service. This is the mission area that I currently work with Chief Tidwell in regard to exercising and executing the mission of the Forest Service. And, again, when I first came to work here, I came on board last October, and found out immediately -- I had worked with the Forest Service my whole career, but in regard to now having the responsibilities of meeting this mission, it really came to light how big and how complicated this organization is. And it's very exciting work. A very hard work but a very exciting work, and I really do look forward to coming to work every day and people that I work with.

This here just gives you some historical information. Again, it gives you an idea of what the forest systems lands, what the Forest Service is over in regard to the 191 million acres of forested land that is managed. What catches my eye here, again, is this where it states "largest forestry research organization in the world." And I've visited many of their research centers across the country, and particularly the one located in Madison, Wisconsin, they're doing some phenomenal work up there in regards to figuring out how to utilize wood. There's some work now being done, it's called nanotechnology

where they take wood, they completely break it down and put it back together, and they're making projects, it's like space-age projects where they're talking about being able to use wood to build cars. And you're going to have to look into it because it is like space age stuff for me. I really enjoyed the conversation.

This slide here gives you an idea of what the Forest Service does. And again, in reading through them, the first one there, "Conserve the environment for future generations." It immediately takes me back home in the reservation in trying to figure out how we're going to protect our homelands and protect our tribal lands for many, many more generations, and how difficult that is. And then, I liken that to the Forest Service and the mission of the Forest Service, and knowing that there are multiple news agency, and being a multiple news agency, what that brings to the table in regard to trying to manage a piece of land for the benefit of many, many different uses. And, again, it's extremely complicated.

Research aspects, again, mentioned here. One of the things that people need to be aware of -- and I talked toward the research aspect of the Forest Service earlier -- is that they really push for the development of that baseline science for forest management in this country. We work with all the state forestry programs, we work with private landowners in regard to

the acquiring of forest inventory data. That baseline data that we can make management decisions on, science based management decisions on, it's extremely important. And we have these plots located throughout the country on all jurisdictions of land, including tribal lands. And I know that we've been working with the states, with the tribes in regard to developing inventory teams that can go out and collect this data. And, again, it's the basis for much of the management work that we do.

Community assistance and cooperation. You know, that's one area that Forest Service, I've really been pushing. It's a great agency, they do a lot of great work, but they need some help in working with communities. And I say that because the chief has shared that with me. And again, I mean, much of the history of the Forest Service, they were concentrating on managing that particular forest and doing the best job that they can. But what we've found over the years and the importance of partnerships and the importance of one of Secretary Vilsack's priorities, and that's landscape level management. Don't just manage a particular forest if you want to look at managing that whole landscape which many times involves tribal land, private land, state land. And in order to do that, you really have to work on developing those community relationships.

And then finally, international assistance. The U.S. Forest Service has a phenomenal international program. And so,

again, they work with entities overseas in regard to illegal logging, trying to prevent pests from coming into this country. And then, finally, the last thing I want to mention, I had an opportunity to go down to the World Forestry Congress several years ago in Buenos Aires, and having that opportunity to meet with indigenous peoples in South America and some of the issues that they're dealing with, I think that's something that our Indian people here in this country need to take a look at and see if there's a way that we can help come together as indigenous peoples worldwide.

Okay. This just gives you an idea of the forest systems lands that are located throughout the country. It mentions here a lot of that land and forested land and state and private. And in regard to tribal forested lands, we've got about 18 million acres of forested lands in this country. Very, very important. And then, again, I just want to throw this up there in regard to the goals of the Native American outreach within the Forest Service, partnerships, program development.

Running out of time here so take note, and if there are questions or -- I've got some cards here that are going to be given out, and again, you'd be able to get in contact with me and follow up on any of these slides.

Very quickly, I don't know, Janie, if you've touched on the sacred sites policy. That's something that is a very, very high

priority of Secretary Vilsack. We're looking at getting that out the door here shortly. But basically, what it boils down to is that there's so much common boundary between forest systems lands and tribal lands that this is a huge issue, and the secretary has gone out, he's met with tribes, he's incorporated that feedback back into this report that's going to be coming out. And again, it's a very, very high priority of his.

And then, of course, this has been in the news lately, all the wildfires that have been occurring. Forest Service and NRCS, we've been partnering very much so in regard to helping folks deal with the aftermath of these fires, the flooding, the issues that result from the aftermath of these fires, and we've been coordinating that very, very well. Okay?

[CD4 Track 8]

Joanna Stancil: I think we do have one question, at least, here. Chairman?

Michael Jandreau: My name is Mike Jandreau. I'm the chairman of the Lower Brule Tribe. The question I have, maybe a little bit selfish, but the Lower Brule Reservation, one half of it is known as Fort Pierre Grasslands, was extracted from our tribe in 1905. In 1952 an effort was put forward to return those lands and over the years, we've met with Forest Service people talking about co-management or return of those lands to us as a part of our ability to economically survive.

We've been curtailed -- as our population grows, we've been curtailed in the utilization of land by farming and ranching operations because of the loss of this land. The Forest Service, through the director there currently, a fellow by the name of Ruben Leal [phonetics] had been very generous in working with us with a lot of activities. But I guess the question I have is, is there ever really going to be an effort to allow us to have those lands returned to our rightful ownership and opportunity for co-management? I know that the Standing Rock Tribe is in the same situation, and the Oglala Tribe is in the same situation, with former lands of theirs currently being utilized in national grasslands program.

Arthur Blazer: Well, again, Mr. Chairman, these kinds of issues are policy issues that are discussed at the highest level, at your level, at the chairmanship in talking with officials of the administration. Again -- and every one of these issues is so unique.

Michael Jandreau: The only problem is the conversation happens at that level, but somehow flowing down through the process, it never goes anywhere.

Arthur Blazer: Okay.

Michael Jandreau: And there's agreement, we -- you know. Over the years, we've met with Reagan's people, we've met with Clinton's people, and everybody said, "Hey, that's rightfully

yours. It should be returned to you." But the conversation then becomes lost in some big morass and I'm just wondering if the policy currently is, is that once that those conversations are held at that level, whether the real, practical solution will be handled more administratively than it has in the past.

Arthur Blazer: Well, I agree with you. That's the way it needs to happen. And again, in the position that I'm in now, being the person that I am, I would be very interested in having further discussion with you or any of the tribal leaders in regard to these kinds of situations. But, again, you realize that they're very complicated. Many times at the forest level, at the reservation level, so much of what happens in a positive way is personality driven, people wanting to make it happen. And so, you know, all of these very complicating factors. I'm not saying it can't be done, but I would like to have that continuing conversation with you. Thank you, Chairman.

Joanna Stancil: All right. We have a couple more.

Mark Wadsworth: Mark Wadsworth, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. I went through USDA Forest Service BAER training back in 2009 in Denver, and part of that, wildfire, forest fires, rangeland entered our mix. One of the situations that I had ran into when you look at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, BIA, Bureau monies, we're really down and low on the totem pole for funding for rehabilitation efforts. And I see that through Forest Service

they had, like that year for instance, was a \$40 million allocation, Department of Interior through BLM had their own BAER-Bar funding too, and then you had the Native American tribal BAER-BAR funding. And one of my questions to that regional forester was, "Is there any way for the tribes to apply for that forest service BAER-BAR money?" And the answer was, "No, you're dealing with the BIA. You have to access that." And, I guess, I just want to let you be aware of that, that was the communication that I had back in 2009.

But also, I would like to see some sort of possible MOU or MOA, or maybe this had been done in the past with other tribes that I'm not aware of, that we could form some sort of BAER team with the Forest Service and with the BLM. Because I just came off a 16,000-acre fire within our rangelands which encompassed some of our forest lands and, you know, we kind of struggle in some of those aspects of getting that money effectively to us. In some cases, the expertise of what's been done out in your area that we could rely upon and utilize on our area.

Arthur Blazer: Well, again, I appreciate this question. And what I'd like to say is, first of all, I had mentioned earlier the Intertribal Ag Council being one of our very, very important partners. Another very, very important partner to the Forest Service is the Intertribal Timber Council. And it's these kinds of issues that we'd like to bring up with them

because, again, there's strength in numbers. And if you have a lot of the tribal forestry programs that are having this type of issue, we can bring that to the forefront and have that discussion starting within USDA, but then having that and taking it over and discussing it with the Department of Interior, also.

Currently, in the position that I'm in, I co-chair a National Wildland Fire Leadership Council, and in that position, our primary goal right now is the implementation of what we call the National Cohesive Wildfire Strategy. And that's basically taking a look at issues like you're dealing with collectively within all federal agencies that deal with wildfire and coming up with solutions, where it's not just the BIA program or a Forest Service problem or a Bureau of Land Management. It's collectively looking at these things and figuring out how to address them. So, I want to make you aware of that. And again, I'd like to just continue this discussion with you if you'd so choose. All right. Thank you.

[CD4 Track 9]

Joanna Stancil: We have two more questions, and I'm going to have to ask you to keep them quick because we don't know how long the café is going to be open to serve you.

Gilbert Harrison: Good afternoon. My name is Gilbert Harrison. I'm from New Mexico, Navajo Nation. We have a problem there that I'm not sure this is the right area, but it's

a Russian olive [indiscernible] -- it's a new species that's outgrown and just basically taken over, not only along the river areas but also in the mountain areas, and it seems like there's a -- you know, how do we control these kind of invasive plants and weeds that overwhelms individuals?

Arthur Blazer: Well, the Russian olive, the salt cedar, the tamarisk -- again, I'm from New Mexico, so I'm well aware of what you're talking about. And, again, what I'd like to ask you to do -- and I've told many of the tribes to do this, is that, again, when I was a state forester and working with NRCS, working with the Forest Service, working with individual tribal entities that have these riparian zones that have been invaded by these plants, we've been able, on many cases, to combine funding sources and come up with some pretty substantial projects where we've gone out and been able to eradicate some of these invasives, and then follow through with the restoration and putting in native plants into these sites. But it's very labor intensive, very expensive. But, again, by combining resources, you can get some good work done.

Joanna Stancil: All right. And our last question will be from Mary Thompson.

Mary Thompson: As quickly as possible, Mary Thompson from North Carolina. A lot of the NRCS programs that we have are great programs and we appreciate that. And as we all know,

funding is always an issue, but sometimes I wonder whenever the tribal appropriations are not there or are very limited and we want to go into the states allocation of funding, sometimes it seems that it's the communication breakdown between your state coms [phonetic] and your tribal liaison as to whether or not you're even eligible to participate in those programs. And so, I guess, just my point to you or comment to you is, are aware of the communication breakdowns or are there, between the state coms and the tribal liaisons, and encourage us to work on some - - from that end so that tribes may be eligible to participate?

Arthur Blazer: Well, I guess, what I can say to that, I'm well aware of these kinds of breakdowns that can occur. What I would tell you though, again, just be aware of all of the support mechanisms that you can draw upon. You have your local tribal liaisons within your particular state. If that doesn't do that trick, ratchet it up. Get a hold of folks like Joanna and Janie. Again, I mean, if you know something is not working the way it should, you just keep going up the line until you get somebody to have good, meaningful discussion with you. And don't -- if you're turned away at that local level, just keep raising the bar.

Mary Thompson: Yes. And you have a lot --

Arthur Blazer: And then --

Mary Thompson: I'm sorry. But there's a lot of good state

comes out there that [indiscernible].

Arthur Blazer: Oh, no. I totally understand that. And they're faced with a lot of different issues. But, again, that's why I'm so excited about working in the position that I'm in for the secretary that I'm working for, because one of his highest priorities is diversity. And that's why all of you are sitting here today because, again, people that deal with the kinds of issues you're dealing with are the people that live them. And the kinds of issues you're talking about, the kind of support that you're wanting to get, we're wanting to listen to you and help you. And so, again, the folks that I mentioned to you, call on us and we'll do everything we can to have that meaningful conversation come together for you.

Mary Thompson: Thank you.

Joanna Stancil: All right. We're going to -- thank you, Butch, very much.

Arthur Blazer: Okay. Thank you.

Joanna Stancil: And you're welcome to join us for lunch if you're able to stay. We'd love that. We're going to go down to the first level, to the cafeteria.

Female Voice: Enter on the café side.

Joanna Stancil: Enter on the café side. And we'll have an area cordoned off for us so we'll just come together, get what you're going to get, and then join us in our --

Female Voice: Do we leave everything here?

Joanna Stancil: Yes. Other than your purse and your bags.
I would not leave your purses.

Male Voice: We will return at two o'clock, everyone. Two
o'clock.

[End of transcript]