

**Council for Native American Farming
and Ranching, Meeting: August 14-15, 2012
CD6 8-14 Track01 to Track05**

[Start of CD6 Track01]

Joanna Stancil: I think, unless you have any more specific questions of Zach, then we'll move on with -- are there any questions that you want to address? I was just talking to--

Zach Ducheneaux: I can -- I'm at your disposal from now until whenever you're done. So, if you have any questions of me, just catch me whenever, call me whenever. I just want to thank you all for the opportunity to visit with you and be part of this process. I really think you guys are set up to do some good.

Edward Soza: Will you be here tomorrow also?

Zach Ducheneaux: Yes, sir. You guys are going to be tired of me by the time you're done, Mr. Soza.

Male Voice: Are we back in session?

Joanna Stancil: Yes, we are.

Zach Ducheneaux: Thank you.

Joanna Stancil: Welcome back, everybody. We'll get started. If there are no specific questions that you would like to ask Zach at this moment --

Edward Soza: Can I ask one?

Joanna Stancil: Okay. Zach.

Edward Soza: I'm Edward Soza, California. Maybe tomorrow or this evening, when you're talking to people, you can cite the program of women and children. They are our future.

Zach Ducheneaux: Yes.

Edward Soza: The program that we have, that IAC has, for maybe the youth.

Zach Ducheneaux: You bet.

Edward Soza: The youth are our future. They're going to receive a lot of this than we will.

Zach Ducheneaux: Yes. Just quickly to touch on what Mr. Soza is talking about, we partner with Native Women and Youth in Agriculture. We have a staff member that shares time between two organizations. We really feel it's important to get our kids back into agriculture, so much so that we went out and scrambled up enough money to put 100 kids in our symposium last year. Our symposium centered around Youth in Agriculture, and we're looking to do something similar again this year. So, that's really critical. And if we don't get our kids into it, we're not going to get there. Because Indian country farmers and ranchers are older by four years than non-Indians, with a shorter life expectancy, so the math doesn't add up.

But, yes, I'm at your disposal, the staff is at your disposal. Please use them.

Joanna Stancil: And you are going to be at the reception this evening as well?

Zach Ducheneaux: Yes.

Joanna Stancil: Okay, excellent. So, there might be some one on one. Thank you very much.

All right. Next on the agenda, we have -- thank you all for coming back from that little bit of a respite and excitement. Is Research, Education, and Economics, Elvis Cordova -- yes, and Jim.

Elvis Cordova: Thank you very much, Joanna. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm glad we're all back here, safe and sound.

It's a pleasure to be addressing you. My name is Elvis Cordova. I'm the chief of staff for the mission area that handles research, education, and economics. I bring greetings from Dr. Woteki, our undersecretary. She apologizes for not being here; she had a prior commitment. But I would like to give you an overview of what our mission area does, what our programs and outreach activities are with Indian country, and give you a little bit of an overview of the extension program, which I'm joined by Tim Grosser, the national program leader for --

Tim Grosser: Tribal programs.

Elvis Cordova: Tribal programs. Thank you very much.

A little bit about myself. I've been with the USDA for about six months, one day, seven hours, and 14 minutes. It's been a pleasure to work with the Office of Tribal Relations. I'm originally from El Salvador, I grew up there. So, the indigenous tribes to my country were the Lempa, Pipil, and Maya. I grew up in Boston. And prior to joining USDA, I was at the Farm Credit Administration. I've also worked at the U.S. Department of Energy, and prior to that, at the United Nations.

And so, to dive in, to tell you a little bit more about what we do at REE, I wanted to just give you a little bit of the organizational structure. You've heard from some of the other mission areas, and our specific one has four agencies and one office within it. You have the Agricultural Research Service, Economic Research Service, National Ag Statistics Service, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and the Office of the Chief Scientist.

To give you an overview, the Agricultural Research Service is essentially the intramural agency for USDA. It has -- it's one of the largest. It has approximately 1200 research programs in four major program areas focusing on nutrition, food safety and quality; and all production and protection; natural resources and sustainable agricultural systems; and corn production and protection. We have about 1000 -- I want to say

like -- I'm sorry, 100 locations across the countries and five overseas laboratories.

Next on the list is the Economic Research Service, and it essentially focuses on providing economic information and research that will help policymakers make better decisions as related to food agriculture, the environment, and rural development. Essentially, the Economic Research Service produces reports that can come from many different origins. They could be requested by Congress, they could come from internal discussions and needs identified, or they can come from stakeholders who are identified that a specific issue is of importance to them.

The next agency is the National Agricultural Statistical Agency, and it is essentially responsible for reporting statistics of U.S. agriculture throughout the country, including farm finances, chemical usage, production, and most importantly, the U.S. ag census which occurs every five years. We have Michelle Radice from the National Statistics Service with us today. So, I just wanted to highlight that she's here with us. And there is some information that she has brought. I will provide you with some, but she also has put some on the table that'll provide you with more of a flavor for what they do.

Next is the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and this is essentially the mission area's extra bureau agency where

it provides grants to mostly land-grant universities, working with them to advance research on education, extension programs, focusing on environment, agriculture, and health. Mr. Tim Grosser, as we had pointed out, is here from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

And last, we have the Office of the Chief Scientist, and that office specifically is tasked with providing sound research and ensuring that that research is held to the highest standards. It identifies and highlights specific department-wide agricultural research, education, and extension as well as through with other government agencies to advance scientific knowledge throughout the country as well as abroad. The role of the chief scientist is currently held by the undersecretary of REE, which is Dr. Woteki. There she is smiling at you, happy to be here.

And so, one thing I did want to highlight to you is the REE action plan, and this essentially was developed last year which guides the activities of the REE mission area agencies for the next five years. There are seven general areas that they're focusing on which are local and global food supply and security, responding to climate change energy needs, sustainable use of natural resources, nutrition and childhood obesity, food safety, education and science literacy, and rural prosperity and the rural-urban interdependence.

Within each of these are specific goals that are guiding the agencies as they develop their programs, as they develop their budgets, and as they really reach out to the different stakeholders in their agricultural research community.

Most recently we had a listening session at the National Congress of the American Indian in Lincoln, Nebraska where we sought to really engage Indian country and get some feedback on where we could be strengthening our ties with Native American communities.

We are currently in the works of developing a draft statement that'll essentially guide our activities with Indian countries as they pertain to these particular research areas that we're focusing in on. We hope to have that within the next couple of weeks, working with the Office of Tribal Relations, and hoping to be able to engage a lot of you as we move forward with those activities.

So, what are we doing in Indian country? And essentially, I wanted to provide you with a quick snapshot of some of the past programs and initiatives that have gone on by agency. So, essentially, starting with the Agricultural Research Service, we've been working to foster indigenous crops that can be a potential source of income for Native Americans such as quayule. I hope I'm saying it right.

[End of CD6 Track 1]

[CD6 Track 2]

Elvis Cordova: Okay. And that crop can be used for latex. We're also focusing on programs that develop the control of evasive weeds in both land and water to help with agricultural productivity. Area scientists are also working to fund the Colville Reservation to teach science and mathematics to high school students, and at the same time, promoting biofuel education and development within that reservation.

We're also collaborating with North Dakota State University and the Native American Sitting Bull College to restore native rangelands in that area. We're providing gleaned foods, education, and other resources to minority and small-scale farmers to help them really enhance their agricultural development and their productivity. We're working with the Colville Confederated Tribes with canola plantings to help them with their processing initiatives that they have as they relate to canola.

We're also working with the University of Nevada in Reno to host an annual workshop for high school students from the -- Paiute Tribe?

Joanna Stancil: Paiute.

Elvis Cordova: Paiute Tribe and introducing them to jobs and natural resources and watershed health strategies and new technologies that can really benefit the Great Basin rangelands.

We are also working with the Paiute Tribes to assist in biological control of salt cedar and identify opportunities and restoration efforts for their lands. And we currently store seeds for five Native American tribes in our germplasm collection.

When we look at the Economic Research Service, there is an internship program, the WINS program, the Washington Internship for Native American Students, which provides American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian nations the opportunity for young students to intern in Washington, D.C. so that they may learn more about economic and social science in those research projects.

We're also working to build stronger partnerships with minority-serving institutions by awarding them with research grants. ERS hopes to use the Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics, the RIDGE program, to research food access and availability issues in Indian country.

We are also working on studying the effectiveness of food distribution programs in Indian reservations, programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. These studies have found that essentially while SNAP is more prevalent and can be more beneficial than the FDPIR program, in certain cases, the FDPIR program is in greater use. These are ongoing studies that

really are looking to understand more of how these factors affect Indian country.

We're also looking at the depth and severity of food insecurity among American Indian households. Some of our reports have showed that given the worst economics condition facing American Indians, food insecurity levels are generally higher than non-American Indians. And so, this helps to shape our policy leaders so they'll really be able to funnel resources to provide support in those specific programs.

We're looking at analysis on farms on reservations that are less likely to participate on the Environmental Quality Incentive Program and compared with farmers that are not on reservations and looking to see what the correlations are between those two programs, or those two factors.

And we're also investigating how different types of wealth can affect the development of casino and other gambling establishments in Native American tribal areas.

When we look at NASS, the National Agricultural Statistical Services, a lot of the activities are focusing in on the outreach efforts for the 2012 Census of Agriculture. The NASS is working in close relationship with the Tribal Assistance Network and outreach specialists to really be able to reach out to Native American communities and just highlight the importance of being counted in this census that is coming up this year,

it'll start after December. NASS also tested the Census of Agriculture questionnaire on reservations to ensure that the content addresses the many unique and land tenure arrangements that are sensitive, and as well as the demographics of tribal communities to make sure that these questions really capture that information, and that that information is also helpful to tribal leaders as well as policymakers at the federal level.

NASS works closely with the Intertribal Agriculture Council, the United South and Eastern Tribes, affiliated tribes with the Northwest Indians, and several other local groups and organizations to really provide opportunities to strengthen communication, provide briefings and have consultations and information sharing that can help both NASS and the Native American community to move forward, reaching out to prospective claimants, as well to help them navigate to the Keepseagle claims process by providing them that data that can help them. The NASS Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics has a tribal member who represents the American Indian community and provides the point of view and advises the Secretary of Agriculture of the needs of Indian country.

And then there is also the county estimate system which provides census data to American Indian agriculture on farm counts, land tenure, agricultural production statistics, financial information, and other demographic data so that both

the communities and the federal government can really know what the clear snapshot of the concerns, needs, and how to really move the resources that can help out in those communities.

The National Food and Agriculture Research efforts are essentially centered around two goals, and they are to better enable tribal colleges to recruit and graduate students in the food and agriculture sciences, so that we can really strengthen the amount of qualified candidates that are moving into this area and that can provide specific geared and focused research that will affect Indian country, too. We're also looking to empower individuals and communities to increase their economic opportunities and the quality of life by improving their nutrition and health, protecting and enhancing their natural resource, the environment, as well as identifying areas for rural prosperity that can really make a difference in those communities.

A quick snapshot of investments. In the 1994 institutions, NIFA has invested approximately 764 to each student in 32 migrant universities in that system. NIFA has also awarded \$14.2 billion to the 1994's for research and other grant projects, and granted approximately 165 awards for formula funds that totaled approximately \$19.6 billion. It has funded 36 FRTEP projects, totaling approximately \$3 million.

[End of CD6 Track02

[CD6 Track 3]

Elvis Cordova: And now I'll hand it over Tim Grosser who will talk to you a little bit about cooperative extension in U.S. I'll be available for questions later. Thank you for your time.

Tim Grosser: Thank you, Elvis. Good afternoon. Tim Grosser. I'm originally from Northwest Pennsylvania, did my educate at Penn State University, and spent most of my career in international economic development, and the past seven years working with the tribal land grant colleges and universities on their grant program, USDA grant programs to those schools. It's a pleasure to be here.

How many know what the term "land grant" means? How many have heard of it and how many know what it means, and who can name a few of them? Land-grant university. Not you, Janie.

Male Voice: Oklahoma State University.

Tim Grosser: Oklahoma State University is a land grant.

Sarah Vogel: North Dakota State University.

Tim Grosser: North Dakota State, Texas A&M, UC Davis, Penn State, Michigan State -- there is one in every state -- University of Arizona.

Chris Beyerhelm: Do they still consider Texas A&M a university?

Tim Grosser: System. I think it's a system.

Female Voice: I could've told you that was coming.

Male Voice: [Indiscernible].

Tim Grosser: [Indiscernible] a neighboring institution.

Chris Beyerhelm: I've got it in my notes.

Tim Grosser: Just a little bit of history, one hundred fifty years ago this year, Lincoln and Congress established the USDA, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. land grant system. Land was granted to the states at that time to set up colleges and universities in agriculture and the mechanic arts. And the notion, in addition to the people's department, was to allow students, farm families, rural people access to higher education, especially in food and agriculture.

But it was a way of getting away from the Ivy league schools, which were only for the wealthy and well to do, and really taking the university out to the rural areas with the intention of modernizing the rural areas, bringing technology, science, and actually economic development. One hundred fifty years ago today.

In 1890, that same legislation was extended to historically black colleges and universities in the Southeast. So, we have 19, 18 black land grants in the Southeast with that same notion, to provide African Americans who could not get into the state land grants, access to higher education especially in vocational and agriculture.

It took a long time, but in 1994, that same legislation was extended to tribal colleges and universities, making them part of the land grant system with the same purpose, to provide students, mostly on reservations who could not get to or did not want to or didn't have the means to, to go to the state universities, a way of getting higher education, taking universities out to the reservations and then being part of all of the federal programs that supported that particular system. It's unfortunate that they called it land grant, originally, but since the federal government felt that it couldn't grant land to set up these institutions, they provided a series of formula and grant programs to establish these institutions. And those institutions are concerned with research, extension, and education in the food and mechanic arts. So, that's what I'd like to talk about just a little bit.

Who has benefited in any particular way from an extension agent or an extension system? Anybody here gained any kind of information or knowledge or -- all right. But not many. It is a system that the U.S. Congress set up in the early 20th century to take then that university knowledge and science that was being developed in the university systems further out into places where the university wasn't readily acceptable, to take scientific knowledge to bear on problems that local communities needed solving, taking the university further out to the people.

The characteristics of the U.S. Extension Service are it is a cooperative system, federal, state and county; federal providing funds and leadership; states providing the university system the science, the research knowledge; a structure for hiring extension agents; and then the counties providing office space, funding, in many cases, and local advisory boards to determine what are the needs of those communities that science and extension will help solve. It's needs based. It has an advisory board. It works on the demonstration process, not telling people what to do but allowing them to demonstrate new technologies, new science activities to solve problems, new varieties, thoroughly trained agents. And Extension Service and my agency does not really have farm programs as such. The Extension Service deals with knowledge, although we do manage some grant programs. But it is about bringing information so that people can solve their own problems.

The U.S. extension model then as federal, county, and state, there's about a little over 10,000, 11,000 people, federal, state, and county, in the extension system in the United States, and theoretically, all of the 3000-plus counties in the United States with historically the exception of Indian effort.

In order to address -- this is a very quick, kind of, timeline, there's a lot of history behind all of this -- but the

extension model in Indian country, because the states could not, would not, were not adept at doing extension programs on reservations in Indian country, the federal government decided to address the issue by creating formula funds and grant funds specifically to conduct extension activities in Indian country outside of the major extension system. Working with the Indian governments, working with tribal colleges, working with the 1862's, funds were legislatively authorized for this purpose fairly recently -- 1990 and 1998. So, it's very recent that extension was receiving dedicated funds for extension in Indian country.

Every other county, every other state receives consistent funding through their 1862 institutions for the extension system; Indian country does not. And so, hence the reason for these programs. Part of that is the relationship is very strong between Indian country and the federal government through treaties and legislation, and less so within the states.

So, we've got two grant programs basically. One is the FRTEP that was mentioned -- Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program. How many have heard of FRTEP? Okay. It is funding that goes to the 1862 universities -- University of Arizona, Montana State, Nevada and so on -- to conduct extension with federally recognized tribes. The other grant program goes through the tribal land grants, the 1994. They have an

extension system where they receive grant funds to conduct extension activities on their particular tribe, on their reservation through their institution.

And you can see the funds are not large. We get \$3 million a year to conduct the FRTEP, \$4.3 million a year to conduct extension through the 1994. And hence, Indian country and even the U.S. extension system concedes that Indian country is not adequately or thoroughly served by extension services.

So, it basically -- depending on how you figure out -- reaches about 10 percent of Indian country. Some of the numbers that we've been able to collect from our programs: 37,000 youth, 16,000 farmers and ranchers, 88,000 community members are touched in some way by extension programs. Indicator there of the kind of quality of programming or the change that's actually taking place.

[CD6 Track 4]

Tim Grosser: Some of the pictures about what extension activities mean in Indian country. I believe, is it Edward?

Edward Soza: Yes.

Tim Grosser: You said it earlier, the youth are the future.

Edward Soza: Yes.

Tim Grosser: Not only of Indian country but this country in general. And so, a lot of extension is focused towards

reaching youth in the schools, on the afterschool programs, in reservation communities, summer camps, but primarily with getting them interested in a sense of inquiry, getting interested in science, in food agriculture, in nutrition, in exercise to make them healthier, and hopefully better able to enter into institutions of higher education. If not, to be healthier, stronger citizens.

There're also a number of programs. In New Mexico, there's a very good Navajo Technical College, a veterinary program. So, there's a lot of technical information that students are receiving. It is a lot about gardening, about engaging the generations from the older elders to the younger people sharing that knowledge, getting them interested in growing food and taking control of their own food situation. This is actually Little Big Horn College. Passing on traditions that are important to people and the knowledge that the older generation has.

And this is one of my favorites. It's an extension program, FRTEP program in Washington State where they're getting kids out on a starry night, looking up at the stars. Humans have done that for tens of thousands of years, and they're still doing it, and the next generation is looking out there to see what is out there and what that means for us here.

A very quick snapshot of extension in Indian country which has a long history but if there are any questions specifically about our programs that we have for extension or any kind of things you'd like to say, we would be happy to hear it. Sir?

Joanna Stancil: Mark?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes. I guess, one of the situations that is always talked about in our extension program on the Fort Hall Reservation through our representatives is that, I guess, what I want to know is, every year our extension agent goes through a grant process.

Tim Grosser: Danielle Gunn?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes.

Tim Grosser: Yes, she does.

Mark Wadsworth: So does everybody else across the board, right? Across the board within Indian country, right? Well, that -- how does that differ from the way states do it? Do states have the same process of having to apply annually for extension agent or -- how can we rectify that? I think there should be some sort of --

Tim Grosser: Two different questions there.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes.

Tim Grosser: The regular extension system does not have the same process of having to competitively apply and wait for its funding. States are provided with what they call formula

funding. Congress authorizes and appropriates a fairly large amount of money that gets divvied up to all of the state extension systems through their land grant 1862s on some formula basis based on the number of farmers, the number of rural population. And then, those state universities then can distribute that to their county extension offices, hire staff for programming, and it's pretty much year after year. They do have to apply but it's a very [indiscernible]. It's not really a [indiscernible]. And it is pretty much guaranteed year after year.

Another case with Indian country and FRTEP with the 1994 extensions. So, there is that -- basically, in my opinion, it came down to the major universities were afraid that if you grant Indian country the same kind of formula privileges, it's going to take away from getting the shrinking extension funds. And so, there's never been equitably embraced by [indiscernible] to actually include Indian country in the formula distribution. So, there's a big difference. It's not fair. That's been historically the system, and I can't justify it.

What is happening though in a certain way, in a very small way, is that it's happening in Wisconsin, it's happening in North Carolina, to a certain degree it's happening in Montana, is the state cooperative -- the big extension systems are really starting to realize that they need to serve all the people in

their state through extension services. Part of that is coming from a push in Washington, some of it is coming from -- there's a bit of a sea-change in certain states reviewing extension and their citizens. And so, we're starting to see extension reaching out to Indian country on its own. Wisconsin is a great example of that happening. It's not happening in all states. There are still some historical things going on, but there is a change. At the rate of change, it's going to take a long time for it to really be a fairly, completely whole system. But there is change happening there, for whatever it's worth.

And there's the political pressure; I think the [indiscernible] offices, I think they're trying to apply to really look at this poignant situation and address it equitably. Especially in light of NASS's census is really starting to be able to provide the data on the number of farmers and what is Indian agriculture in this country and how big it is and how that should be part of a larger formula that could serve [indiscernible]. It's a good question though, and it's one that the people are really wrestling with today's [indiscernible].

Janie Hipp: I want to add just a little bit. And Tim and Elvis, thank you very much. Office of Tribal Relations has a really strong working relationship with both of them, and we're trying to address these issues. What happened in the early days of the FRTEP program when it was EIRP, there was actually a

consultative panel that was written into the law when that program was created. And for many years, it served as basically an advisory body to what was the predecessor of NIFA to actually guide how FRTEP agents were placed, and just kind of tried to get some protocol across the board and that sort of thing. What happened to -- two farm bills back, one farm bill back?

Tim Grosser: The 2008 Farm Bill.

Janie Hipp: The 2008 Farm Bill, Congress made some changes to that portion of the law and placed an air of confusion and for the lawyers, an air of certainty but it kind of put everybody in a tailspin because it basically took away the voice of that consultative panel and it thrusts the FRTEP program into a full bore, competitive program. In the interim between the creation of FRTEP in the first place and the 2008 Farm Bill, all of federal government had very pervasive Federal Acquisition Regulations, the FAR, which were kicked into place, which very tightly controlled competition for federal funds.

And so, by this kind of culmination of events, we found ourselves in a really horrible place, which is a rising demand - - this is not horrible. I mean, this is good. It's good in one way and tragic in another. We have a very strong and rising demand for extension services. And then we have this legal situation that really ties NIFA's hands. Their lawyers really have basically had the interpretation that they have to be

competed every year, right? And so, there's just -- and it's because of the way the laws were written and the sequence in which the laws were put in place. We don't make this stuff up. It comes over from Congress.

And so, this is an area that's near and dear to my heart because I was an extension agent for 17 years, and Tim knows it, Elvis knows it, Joanna knows it. We're trying our best to figure out a solution, but we're hitting the wall here. Because Congress is not increasing the amount of funds that go into this program no matter what we do, and we have a rising desire and need for the services, but then we also have this weird legal quagmire that we're in that just applies to those programs. It drives me absolutely up the wall.

[CD6 Track 5]

Note: Some speakers are speaking far from the mic so there remarks are indiscernible.

Jerry McPeak: Did you say you were Janie Hipp?

Janie Hipp: Yes. I'm sorry, I'm Janie.

Jerry McPeak: Jerry McPeak, [indiscernible]. I too was in extension service in Oklahoma, Mark. The counties were paying out part of the funding for that extension service program had to come through our county governments. State doesn't put anything but the county governments will put something in. Like with the Creeks where I'm from, we kick part of the money in, we

put part of the money in to get the extension service personally.

Tim Grosser: Which we do too. We pay for their office, lights, bills.

Jerry McPeak: Yes. And so, it can become a co-op deal.

Tim Grosser: Oklahoma [cross-talking]

Zach Ducheneaux: -- providing tribal funds for their extension [indiscernible].

Jerry McPeak: Where we're headed here, of course, the personnel makes so much difference. Where we're headed here, we've talked some about getting the youth involved in the - what's were going to decide, I thought maybe, it's going to be those people here. That's a good way of getting it there; that is the mobilization factor, if we have the right kind of people there to get that done. And in our case, I'm not sure that we do [indiscernible].

Zach Ducheneaux: Any other questions? Extension, [indiscernible]?

Sarah Vogel: I have a question for Elvis. When you were talking, you mentioned very quickly this one sentence, about the Keepseagle case. I didn't quite catch it.

Elvis Cordova: Sure. [Indiscernible] the data collected by the National Agricultural Statistical Service demographic data allows [indiscernible] it's public knowledge -- can allow

Native American communities to be able to get access if they're eligible for Zoos' Keepseagle settlements. So, to provide you with the information [indiscernible]. [Indiscernible] interpret if you would be eligible for [indiscernible].

Sarah Vogel: Maybe Cobell. But the Keepseagle case, people had to file an actual claim, turn it in, but we did use the ag statistics data to build our economic injury report.

Elvis Cordova: Sure.

Sarah Vogel: And, I mean, there's a difference.

Elvis Cordova: [Indiscernible].

Female Voice: What NASS data was used for. Because Keepseagle is '90 to 2000, it's older data, but it helped target areas where outreach could be performed. Where all the agencies could go and say, you know, to help people sign up for Keepseagle and then eventually help them through the process. But it just targeted -- folks didn't know where to go to publish the Keepseagle information. This was available. Here is how you sign up. Here is where you go. It was NASS data that said, "In this county, there's a high population of American Indian producers. You probably want to make sure that you are targeting outreach for Keepseagle here."

Sarah Vogel: Yes. Yes, [cross-talking].

Female Voice: And I want to clarify, Sarah. I mean, I really didn't get in the weeds with Keepseagle, but what we did

in the shadow without you knowing it is we actually sliced and diced data for all of our field offices so that they could put the Keepseagle fliers out. And so, we really tried to penetrate and figure out exactly what the NASS data showed us about where people were. So, that's --

Sarah Vogel: Yes. And we used material like that to sort of project what the demand would be. So, I guess, both ways, yes. Okay. That's what I was double checking. Thank you.

Elvis Cordova: Thank you, [indiscernible].

Joanna Stancil: All right. Mary has a -- I'm sorry. Did you [indiscernible]?

Zach Decheneaux: Elvis, too. Somebody was mentioning yesterday, was there a possibility that some of these ARS service centers are possibly going to be closed?

Elvis Cordova: Yes. Essentially there had been [indiscernible] closed, but there is talk about how [indiscernible] as long as they are having [indiscernible] farmer, rancher [indiscernible] that can benefit the community. Janie knows a lot [indiscernible].

Janie Hipp: Yes. It's not every ARS facility. It's just some. And so, what I'd -- the secretary is trying to make these transfers of these facilities, carry some sort of re-purposing for the purpose of beginning farmers and ranchers and really reaching out to the new farmers and the next generation, et

cetera. Congress allowed us to place ARS facilities in surplus and to not have to go the regular GSA route -- government services administration, declaring surplus property, it takes about four years [indiscernible]. A long time. But Congress passed a law that allows us to re-purpose those and transfer those properties to either tribal colleges, Hispanic-serving institutions, 1862, the big land grants, or 1890 institutions. So, any of the land grants can actually take over those physical properties, okay.

And so, what we did, what I did -- and I'm working with ARS staff, which are part of this mission area -- is to take a look at -- and with OTR, of course -- take a look at where tribes are in relation to those particular properties. And I've been on the phone basically reaching out to tribal headquarters, intertribal organizations, and as we've been having White House Rural Council roundtables, we've tried to mention that if there are any in that area and to try to make partnerships happen, kind of do some matchmaking between tribes, tribal governments, tribal non-profits, and the larger institutions so that they could kind of work together to re-purpose the institution. Does that help?

Female Voice: Thank you for that. I appreciate that you're looking at ways to re-use these types of -- well, just that you're bringing a depth in this rural council. But also on

the formula funding for states in the competitive grants for FRTEP extension programs, I guess, for us though, this is a chance to take a look at reviewing and rewriting some of the policies. Thank you. Thank you.

Elvis Cordova: And so, just in closing, really, thank you very much for listening to us, [indiscernible]. At the central core of REE's mission is education, and so this is important to us. We just want to make sure that we have the right information as well as learning [indiscernible] tribal leaders around the country at the leadership level. [Indiscernible], very committed to strengthening ties with Indian country. And myself as well, we have a standing meeting every week with the wonderful Mr. John Laurie [phonetic] to figure out other ways that we could really engage Indian country.

We are really looking at the October timeline; there is the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science. There is a conference going on in Seattle, we've partnered that up with the consultation with the Muckleshoot Tribe to really be able to allow that section of the country to learn about our programs, internship programs, [indiscernible] opportunities that exist with [indiscernible]. So, do not hesitate to reach out to us, please. We're more than happy to learn, work, and grow together. Thank you very much.

Joanna Stancil: Thank you.

[End of transcript]