

**Council for Native American Farming
and Ranching, Meeting: August 14-15, 2012
CD2 8-15 Track 01-07**

Contains Public Comments

[Start of CD2 Track01]

Joanna Mounce Stancil: If everyone could take their place, as people are arriving and getting settled down, I have a couple of announcements. For those who are joining us as guests today and perhaps individuals interested in giving public comment, we need everyone to sign in on the sign-in sheet and to also indicate whether or not you want to be on the list for providing public comment at 10 o'clock today.

Also, for council members, we've been told that people sitting in the back of the room are having a hard time hearing us so that we really are going to have to use the mics more efficiently to ensure that people hear you, and do acknowledge yourselves so that they can be part of the transcription. Thank you.

All right. Our next presenter is Lawrence Shorty with USDA's 1994 Program. Lawrence?

Lawrence Shorty: Hello, everybody.

Participants: Hi.

Female Voice: Good morning.

Lawrence Shorty: My name is Lawrence Shorty, and as Joanna said, I'm the program director of the USDA 1994 Program. We are

located in the Office of Advocacy and Outreach, and we have been working to do a number of things but especially focused on assisting and working with the tribal colleges and universities to develop their land-grant capacities and their tribal economies to ensure the U.S. food security. And our program is focused primarily in four areas. One of the program areas in general is to assist the Office of Advocacy and Outreach and the department in its outreach to native farmers and ranchers and producers. We operate under a Memorandum of Agreement with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, which is the consortium that represents the 1994 land grant institutions, to assist in fulfilling the mandate of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 which requires USDA to establish programs ensuring that tribally controlled colleges and universities at American Indian and Alaskan Native communities participate equitably in USDA employment, programs, and activities.

We work with a leadership group at the department that includes membership from the mission areas as well as membership from the tribal colleges and universities that are selected by the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. The USDA membership is recommended by the secretary. Janie Hipp is one of their representatives, as is the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Dr. Joe Leonard. We meet twice yearly, and we also will meet by teleconference, and we have subcommittees that meet

on specific topics that make recommendation to guide the 1994 Program. The meeting times that we typically have follow the schedule of the tribal colleges' Capitol Hill visits, which occur in February. And then we work to have a meeting in late summer or early fall.

We have a Tribal Land-Grant Liaison Program. We have two positions that are situated out in the field that assist the 32 currently operating 1994 land-grant institutions to develop their capacities. One currently is situated at Sitting Bull College at Fort Yates, North Dakota, and we have a vacancy currently and that position was originally situated at Little Big Horn College in Montana. We have one staff member that assists in providing services to land-grant schools in the Great Lakes area. And so with those two liaisons and our one headquarter staff, we serve 32 schools.

We have a Tribal Scholars and Internship Program. We've been partnering with the department and its agencies to identify students actually positions and opportunities for students that those students can apply for, thereby helping USDA to increase its diversity, but also, it also helps money get into rural tribal economies, especially into the schools by helping the schools develop their curriculum in a number of ways. Money paying for the tuition helps the schools bolster and provide necessary funding for their staff and for their overall

university development. But also, by creating opportunities in those rural areas, money also gets into internship opportunities, because those internships are paid, money also gets into local communities. But further, it also enables us to engage with the schools to identify what their curriculum needs are and what they will be so that we can build those tribal colleges' capacities. Remember the land-grant institutions help ensure the U.S.' food security, so it's an important investment, and we're very pleased to be able to assist USDA and the agencies in doing that.

We have a fellowship program that's called the Terra Preta do Indio Program. And the fellowship program focuses on the land-grant faculty and staff, with the idea being that if we can work with them to get them better connected to USDA's agencies and its programs, we can better meet the mission of our program and what USDA is committed to doing.

It also helps us to create additional I guess ad hoc liaisons in that they are able to navigate within their systems and be able to access what USDA has, thereby creating a much stronger partnership between USDA and the tribal colleges and universities. And if there are any questions, I'd be glad to answer these now.

Jerry McPeak: Jerry McPeak from Oklahoma Creek Nation. We have several new tribal colleges in Oklahoma. Most of them have

not come in existence except since probably the year 2000. Do they have accessibility to these land-grant capacities?

Lawrence Shorty: Not currently, but I know that the plan has been and the suggestions have been that we'd look at how we can work with AIHEC to position them so as they get their accreditation status and apply and receive land-grant status that we'll be better able to integrate and work with them.

Jerry McPeak: Followup. Thank you. And you say "apply for land-grant status," so they apply to?

Lawrence Shorty: They have to work with their congressional representative, and then it's passed through legislation in order to get the land-grant status. So the term "1994" refers to the year that the schools got land-grant status.

Jerry McPeak: And only those before that have it?

Lawrence Shorty: Well, there has been an addition as of 2008, and that school came in through Alaska, this Ilisagvik College. And so they followed that mechanism of applying and was able to get their land-grant status.

Jerry McPeak: Through Congress?

Lawrence Shorty: I would like to ask Tim to assist me in this answer because he's been working with the schools for a much longer period than I have.

Male Voice: As I understand it, there is legislation either in this upcoming Farm Bill or in this year's appropriation to make two tribal schools from your state land grants. It's already in the process, so they have been working with it, and it looks like it probably will happen. Muscogee is one and I'm not sure of the other one off the top of my head. So it's in process.

Jerry McPeak: Thank you.

[Track 2]

Lawrence Shorty: Mr. McPeak, if you'd like we can review and see what schools in Oklahoma are making that application.

Jerry McPeak: That would be cool. That would be a yes, cool, that's a yes. Cool, that's a yes.

Joanna Stancil: Okay. Sarah?

Sarah Vogel: Sarah Vogel, North Dakota. Could you talk a little bit about what your observations are in terms of development of agricultural-based or agriculture career-based curricula in the tribal colleges?

Lawrence Shorty: That is a really good question. We have been exploring a number of ways through our partner, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium and its land-grant manager as well as through our partnerships with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, especially Tim Grosser's area, to work to try to identify what the needs of the schools

are. And we're avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach, of course. And with our own liaison program, we've been working to be a little bit more targeted in identifying not only what those specific needs are but identifying how they can better access and work with the USDA area service centers so that those service centers can be more supportive on a state by state basis to the needs of developing those schools as land-grant institutions. In addition, kind of following in the models that have been established by the 1862s, the first series of land-grant schools in the 1890s, which are the historically black colleges and universities. And so we're still in that process of engagement.

In fact, there is an upcoming IAC, an Agricultural Council meeting and a Food and Agriculture Council meeting that's happening at the end of August, by which our liaison is going to continue to work to see or to try to or actually, he's going to work to identify further areas of collaboration between the schools. And so in North Dakota, that is happening, and we are looking at other specific opportunities in the states that we have been able to engage the Food and Agriculture Councils. That includes Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. And this year, we're working on New Mexico.

Sarah Vogel: Thank you.

Lawrence Shorty: You're welcome.

Joanna Stancil: Are there any other questions for Lawrence? Thank you. Thank you very much. Oh, Sarah?

Sarah Vogel: Do you see much of a role for agriculture for the tribal colleges based on what you're hearing?

Lawrence Shorty: I do very much. Answering from, like, a historical basis, many people, North Dakota especially, New Mexico especially, I'm from New Mexico, but from what we hear from our liaisons, historically, the people, the tribal people there have been engaged in agriculture, and there are some, I think some fantastic and terrific opportunities. There is a great opportunity to enhance the local economies by doing that. There is, as you know, a big desire to make local foods available to fight against obesity, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. And having and working to enable tribal producers in those areas provide those food stuff for tribes, tribal schools, I think there is a great opportunity. And I think there is a greater desire as more information comes out about ways to improve outcomes based on or through dietary intake. And I think that, from what we've been hearing from students, from what we've been hearing from different opinion leaders, that there is a desire to make that more real. And we are working to help translate that.

Sarah Vogel: I hope this council can work with you.

Joanna Stancil: Thank you.

Lawrence Shorty: Thank you.

Joanna Stancil: Thank you, Lawrence. All right. As we're getting, approaching right on time for the public comment period, I do want to cite a few guidelines for how we're going to work together today. So far, we've identified six potential individuals from various organizations that would like to make public comment. The public comment period is from 10 to 12 today. How we're going to set that up is because we only have six people identified, we're going to allow up to 10 minutes per person to make their comment. It is set up to where you'll make comments only. If the council wishes to ask questions of our public commenters, they can do so or they can ask for clarification. Otherwise, our presenters are to present, our commenters are to present comment and not to ask questions of the council. That's how the federal guidelines are from the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

So, in doing so, I have a list here, and it looks like first on the list, only because that's the order I wrote it down, is Gary Matteson, Farm Credit. You may use one of the mics. Everything is being recorded today, so if you, either side would be great.

Female Voice: Or up here.

Joanna Stancil: Or up here at the podium, either way you'd like to go.

Gary Matteson: That way I can look at all of you.

Joanna Stancil: I think that's great.

Gary Matteson: It's easier to dodge things being thrown
[cross-talking] --

Male Voice: It's going to be harder to get back out of
there, Gary.

Gary Matteson: Thank you, Madam Chairman. My name is Gary
Matteson. I work for the Farm Credit Council, which is the
trade association for the nationwide Farm Credit System. I
guess the first thing to point out is that we are not part of
USDA or the federal government. We're chartered by the federal
government in 1916 to be a private lender, a cooperatively owned
private lender, so we're a series of coops around the country,
83 independently operated coops that lend to farmers and
ranchers and producers and harvesters of timber and aquatic
products.

One of the significant constraints that I want to put on
the table so you understand the role and nature of what Farm
Credit is capable of and is interested in is that we are bound
by statute and by Congress to supply constructive credit. And
I'm using that term as a way to distinguish us from USDA and FSA
programs. We have a regulator just as commercial banks have a
regulator. In order to make loans and have that regulator
approve those loans, we have to make sure that we are supplying

constructive credit, which is to give credit to somebody in such a way that it doesn't make them worse off. Someone comes in and wants to borrow \$5,000 for a couple of heifers, we can't say, "Hey, we got a great idea. How about half a million, go buy a lot of them?" That would be not constructive credit.

Significant to our recent occurrences in our world, our regulator, just this past spring, promulgated a new regulation that requires Farm Credit associations to address, in their annual business plans, how they are going to do outreach to nontraditional agriculture, to include in that outreach any measure of diversity and inclusion, which would relate not just to the typical race, ethnicity, those sorts of ways of identifying diversity, but also diversity of farm size and farm type.

So as Farm Credit associations write their business plans this fall for what they are going to do next year in 2013, they will be including how they are going to do outreach. I think this is important for you to know so that you, in your respective areas of influence, can reach out to the local Farm Credit association to help them understand how they can connect with you because they are now in this. In the environment of this new rule, they are looking for ways to reach out to populations that they may not previously have served.

[End of CD2 Track 2]

[Track 3]

Gary Matteson: As a way to stimulate greater understanding of all of those 83 local associations and how to do that outreach, the Farm Credit Council, the trade association here in D.C., has used Ag Census statistics to map where various minorities that USDA counts are located to physically place them on maps. We have done that for the noted minority populations that USDA uses, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics being an ethnicity not a race. I forget who else is in there. But we've got them mapped in order to provide that to those 83 local associations to say, "Hey look, there may be some folks in your territory that you're not aware of that you don't know that they are there. Here is where they may be located at the county level," so that they can be more effective in that outreach. We're trying to understand where minorities are in the U.S. and to be able to communicate that to our local associations.

Again, that's using USDA Ag Census info. This is not information that we can collect. We as a private sector lender are not allowed, under the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, to collect information about somebody's race or ethnicity. The presumption being if a lender, any lender, any commercial lender collects such information, the presumption would be that they use that in making a loan decision. So the prudent thing for

any lender to do is don't collect it. So we're in kind of another world of the goal is outreach but the way to measure it is rather fuzzy in terms of specific accomplishment. But that's the way we are.

Okay, so all of that as background, the substance of my comment here today that I'd like to make is, to reflect back on what Zach from the Intertribal Ag Council said yesterday, Zach, when you were up here presenting about your report on tribal technical assistance, that more cooperative extension, more of that technical assistance, more involvement from FSA and other USDA programs is certainly a valuable goal, and you should be -- I would commend you for trying to amplify the involvement of that on Indian lands. But I would caution you that for the long term success and sustainability of farming and ranching on Indian country lands, that's not enough.

There needs to be private capital involved. There needs to be a greater source of commercial credit available for those businesses that grow beyond the capabilities of USDA programs or even SBA programs. I don't think that Chris or anybody else here from USDA would suggest that you're the only solution. I'm looking at a degree of success, in my mind, for Indian country that is well beyond the capabilities of what USDA and government programs can provide. And what comes with that vision of success in my mind is the discipline of a commercial lending

environment that the difference between an FSA loan and that sort of relationship and applying for a USDA program is substantially different in nature and in the upside outcomes than it is from accessing private capital in a competitive commercial environment. There is a very beneficial aspect to the discipline of borrowing money from a commercial lender that is asking very tough questions about business outcomes and profitability and long-term future gains.

I would say that we recognize that the complexity of mortgages and loan transactions in Indian country are certainly recognized as barriers, but that's not an excuse. That's not an excuse for commercial lenders to engage with Native American borrowers on Indian lands. And I don't want you to inflate this statement to think that I mean that I've said that access to credit should be easy. I'm saying not the opposite but I'm saying that what Farm Credit seeks to do as a cooperative lender is welcome potential borrowers wherever they may be, whatever their relationship is with either tribal lands, fee simple lands, their own operations wherever they may exist as potential borrowers of Farm Credit.

I think that the -- hopefully you'll be hearing from Kent Schescke of FFA also. I didn't see Kent here when I walked in. Kent and I, through our respective organizations, have collaborated quite a bit to try to bring the capabilities of the

leadership training and the business concept training that FFA provides through its normal SAE, Supervised Agricultural Experience programs. We're trying to bring those capabilities that we see in youth and amplify those through Farm Credit's sponsorship of continuing those kinds of activities for youth in the area of our desire or our mission element, to serve the needs of young, beginning, and small farmers.

Farm Credit cannot discriminate in lending except for young, beginning, and small farmers. We have, as part of our statutory construction, a mission area that requires us, each of the 83 associations, to come up with specific programs to serve the needs of local young, beginning, small farmers. Sometimes, those programs may be lower interest rates. Sometimes, they may be financial skills education. The kind of program that I'm suggesting we collaborate with FFA on is to amplify FFA's youth leadership and skills training with ongoing training from local Farm Credit associations and certainly at the national level where we've been sponsors and involved with the Intertribal Agricultural Council Youth Conclave.

So, if you put that together with what I said about credit availability and the need for private sector credit, I'm looking at the youth, Native American youth as the way that is -- maybe it's the easiest way; maybe that's the way to say it -- the easiest way to inculcate, to bring in a culture of commercial-

minded lending and business operation of farm and ranch operations on tribal lands. It's not that old dog, new tricks, I'm an old ex-farmer, it's harder to teach me new stuff. But have a great deal of faith in the future of youth, and I see that as currently where our greatest efforts are being put and certainly in collaboration with FFA in order to give them the tools so that they can succeed in their farming and ranching businesses in the long term. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Joanna Stancil: Thank you. We have two representatives from the National Congress of American Indians. So first will be Sherry Black -- oh, I'm sorry. Sarah has a question.

Sarah Vogel: I was just wondering if you brought business cards and could distribute them.

Gary Matteson: I did.

Sarah Vogel: Good.

Joanna Stancil: All right. Thank you.

Sarah Vogel: Can we have questions?

Joanna Stancil: I'm sorry. Does anyone have questions or clarifications that they need from -- all right, Mark.

Mark Wadsworth: A clarification. Mark Wadsworth. You refer to new regulations.

Gary Matteson: Yes.

Mark Wadsworth: Is this regulation that is impacting not only your coop but other lending institutions across the

country, or is it just specific to you?

Gary Matteson: No, it's specific to Farm Credit local associations and the banks. The other part of that that I didn't delve into is that it also extends to human resources internally as far as who gets hired and amplifying the Equal Opportunity Employment factors that we already have to deal with.

Sarah Vogel: I think Janie was ahead of me. I think as those outreach plans are developed, if there were any way to link in with this committee, I think this committee is going to have a lot of outreach opportunities to the clients and categories of folks you're trying to reach.

Gary Matteson: Okay. All right. Thank you. We hope to be able to continue reporting to you and getting better ideas of how we can serve. We're a complicated sort of environment. I'm not going to be so bold as to say we're kind of like Indian nations, that there are so many of us and we all do our own thing. But that's how Farm Credit, the Farm Credit system acts. It's 83 independent actors out there that are each doing their own program, and there is a certain lack of coordination that repeated contact and information from you is certainly going to help.

Sarah Vogel: I think if you shared your communication model with this group, you'd get feedback.

Gary Matteson: I'll let the chairman recognize [cross-talking] --

Janie Hipp: This is Janie. I just wanted the rest of the council to know that Gary has gone out of his way over the time that the Office of Tribal Relations has been open to reach out to us and to strategize and be creative about how we can work with him, the Office of Tribal Relations, but also how we can have these kind of integrated credit discussions with FSA and with Farm Credit and with us because there is a lot of -- as he indicated, there is a lot of projects that tribes are talking about that are really not in your authorities to lend or RDs but would be a good commercial investment for a tribe and really speak to the need for having private commercial lending kind of all along the way with us. But I just want to thank Gary for his support to the office and for his creativity in working with us.

Gary Matteson: Thank you.

Joanna Stancil: Are there any other questions? Porter?

Porter Holder: Porter Holder, Choctaw Nation, Oklahoma. As a customer of yours, and you may have said this and I may have missed it, do you participate in the USDA Guaranteed Loans as second primary?

Gary Matteson: Yes, very much so. Overall, a system is -- commercial banks use FSA guarantees more so than does the Farm

Credit system, but I -- an estimate, let me say it that way, an estimate of I would say about six or seven percent of system loan volume is under an FSA guarantee.

Porter Holder: Thank you.

Gary Matteson: And that's been particularly helpful in the last few years in the dairy industry, I know.

Porter Holder: That's, to me, them two organizations working together, because I have experience with Farm Credit. It's all been great.

Gary Matteson: Thank you.

Porter Holder: I mean it's [indiscernible]. And to have these two organizations together, work together for the farmer, rancher is outstanding.

Gary Matteson: As far as I know, every system association is a preferred lender. And actually, the first preferred lender was a Farm Credit, when that program started, that first preferred lender was a Farm Credit system institution.

Porter Holder: Thank you.

Joanna Stancil: Janie, did you have another comment? No? Are there any other questions? Thank you very much.

Gary Matteson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

[Track 4]

Joanna Stancil: All right. Moving right along because we're adding to our list as we sit here, Sherry Black, National

Congress of American Indians. And then following her will be Gwen Salt, also from NCAI.

Sherry Black: Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to talk. My name is Sherry Salway Black. I'm Oglala Lakota originally from Pine Ridge. And I work for the National Congress of American Indians as the director of the Partnership for Tribal Governance, and it's an entity that really works at helping tribal governments to build their capacity around a variety of different areas.

Gwen and I are going to share our time this morning. Gwen is our legislative policy expert in the area of agriculture. What I'm going to start out talking about, well, there are three items we're going to talk about today primarily. The first one -- and I do have materials on this. There was no room to put them out there on the back, but I'll make sure that you get all of the materials that we have today.

The first item is on a native financial education and consumer protection initiative that NCAI is working on in partnership with a variety of other entities, and it relates to the Keepseagle settlement, a piece of it does, so we wanted to share that information with you today. I also staff an effort called ONR, said "honor," Our National Resources, which is an alliance of native national resource organizations that has come together over the past two to three years to really look at ways

in which efforts around all natural resources can be coordinated and can break down the silos in both the tribal level and the federal level too. We've been a little bit dormant the last few months waiting for NCAI to hire a legislative person dealing specifically with natural resources, which we just did about a week ago, so we're going to look at ramping that effort back up again.

And the third one which Gwen will focus on, NCAI's paper that focuses on the Farm Bill and what the recommendations are. And also, I know Janie had wanted us to mention that through NCAI, National Congress of American Indians, resolutions are passed in two of our three meetings typically, and we've had many resolutions passed that deal with agriculture. One I wanted to reference was one passed in 2010 on food sovereignty and tribal food policy councils. Again, it becomes the agenda of NCAI when these resolutions are passed. And I have copies of that as well. And the other thing is our annual conventions. I know USDA has been playing an increasing role in NCAI's annual conventions by having a resource room. And also, we are going to have a focus breakout session on agricultural-related business and the issues in the upcoming NCAI Convention in Sacramento.

So let me get quickly to the first piece. There is this watershed moment happening right now. Folks are familiar

obviously with Keepseagle. Folks are familiar with the Cobell settlement. The fact that these two are coming down at almost exactly the same time in combination with individual tribal trust fund settlements -- 41 were settled in April; the announcement was made in April -- and just the immediate payouts from those is \$3 billion. Over the long term, it's \$5 billion, plus there is another 60 tribes awaiting settlement of their claims in the pipeline, so I don't know what the amount of money would be on that. But when we sat down and realized this, that they were all coming down together, we thought, oh my gosh, \$3 billion is going to be coming out in Indian country and what does that mean, most of it, over \$2 billion to individual recipients. So we wanted to just put out some information to make people aware of the potential good that this will do but also the potential for Indian people being targeted for scams too.

So we convened two meetings so far, one July 10th, one July 23rd and 24th, with federal government folks, with native organizations to really take a look at what could we do to get information out, what's the best way to get information out. And Keepseagle was coming very quickly, so we were able to get a one-page alert, and I have copies for you, that went out in the mailing to the Keepseagle recipients. We had Intertribal Agriculture review it, and we worked with the Federal Trade

Commission which does this all the time to put out consumer alerts.

And one of the things, like one of the issues we had with, we don't want people to feel like we think they are going to get scammed. We don't want that. But we want people to be prepared. And the FTC did a survey in 2003 which indicated that American Indian and Alaskan Native people are at the highest risk for being targeted for scams, for financial scams, and that scared us. So we put together information, but we wanted to also see this as an opportunity for longer term financial education.

One of the things, I serve on the President's Advisory Council for Financial Capability, and we're looking at ways to engage Indian country, and there is a lot of efforts going on at the tribal already to increase our knowledge about finances. So we saw this as an opportunity to do that as well.

There was an organization that really did a lot of good work in the 2000s, the Native Financial Education Coalition, which kind of went a little dormant in 2009 for a variety of issues, and it included private sector banks. It included nonprofits. It included government. It included tribes. And we're trying to reenergize that as a way to strengthen financial education across Indian country to identify the resources that are out there to do this. So Keepseagle is the one.

You may be the most interested in Cobell. If no one comes forward, the appellants who appealed originally, if they don't come forward by the end of August, August 27th, then the first payments in Cobell will go out as early as early October but probably not any later than the end of the year, and that will be \$1,000 to everyone in the class. That will be the first payment. And then there will be a secondary payment within six months. So again, you think, well, individually, that's not a significant amount of money, but it may be to the individuals but it will be to the economies in which it's in, so we want people to just kind of be aware of that.

The other piece too, and I know you just talked about credit, is part of this group, the Native Financial Education Coalition, is the Native CDFIs, Community Development Financial Institutions, which are lenders, alternative lenders, and we're trying to get them engaged not only -- they do a great work on financial education, but in looking at ag-related lending as well. They're an opportunity. There are 71 certified across the country. Out of 1,000 nationwide, there are 71 native ones, which I think is a very high number. They focus on small business, so there is an opportunity to teach them how to do lending, agriculture-related lending for small businesses. So I wanted to just reference that as well too.

So with that note, I'll go ahead and pass. We have all of this information and materials to give to you, but I'll pass it to Gwen Salt to talk about the NCAI policy work. Thank you.

Joanna Stancil: Thank you.

Gwen Salt: Hi. My name is Gwen Salt on the leg staff, as Sherry mentioned, that covers agriculture. For those of you guys who haven't been keeping up, the latest right now is NCAI has been working on the Agriculture Bill since last June. We've been trying to encourage tribal leaders to provide us recommendation, policy recommendations that they would like to see in the next Farm Bill.

As you know, there are certain issues that are probably sexy. Farm Bill is really not that sexy, so it's been very difficult trying to get tribal leaders engaged. The ones -- fortunately, we've had some tribal leaders who have been engaged who are actively involved in agriculture areas. However, through the greater of Indian country, it's been very difficult. But we did receive quite a number of comments and policy recommendations that we included in the package.

What we tried to do was Chairman Jandreau was instrumental in trying to push through the Indian Agriculture Act that we've been working on with both the House and Senate. Unfortunately, what happened, just because of the political landscape that's taking place right now and plus the budget issues, any new

programs or any new type of funding is very difficult to get in right now. It's not just in the Farm Bill. It's pretty much any policy work, any policy authorization that's coming through Congress is currently taking place. And so unfortunately, we were unable to get all the entirety of recommendations, from conservation to nutrition to energy issues to natural resources to rural development. But one of the key things that was added in the Senate version, S.3240, was the permanency of the Office of Tribal Relations and the fractionated land issue.

On the House side, unfortunately, again, because of what's going on, with the election coming up and so forth, we were unable to get a whole lot of specific tribal issues in there included in. So we've been working with them, and as you know, the House hasn't really moved forward on their House version. They are now currently in recess and they will be not be returning back until September the next month. So in the meantime, prior before they left, they had tried to pass a Disaster Bill which basically would address the problems of the drought that's currently taking place. Unfortunately, again, they were unable to -- they passed it but it was unable to go forward for the Senate to address it. Time ran out and so forth. So I don't know exactly -- it's really uncertain to see what's going to happen when Senate returns.

As you know, the Farm Bill authorization expires September 30th next month, and with its short timing, with the upcoming election, it's going to be very difficult to try to push through a bill. I know that Chairman Lucas on the House, who sits on the House Ag, has been trying feverishly to try to push through their version of the House Bill, and the Senate is kind of waiting. And I know that the Senate is very reluctant to push through another one-year extension. However, so whatever plays out towards the end of the year, it's something that just is uncertain, and we don't know exactly what is taking place.

I know that finance budget-wise, the cut of nutrition supplemental issues is one of the key things that a lot of other organizations are against, which would affect all the food stamps and so forth that a lot of the -- the public is now taking part of, and so there are a lot of issues. There are still a lot of issues that need to be resolved, and I'm not sure if that's going to get resolved by September 30th.

But one of the things that Sherry mentioned, we do have some materials that we have. These are the comments that we had received from tribes and other issues that were brought up with other meetings that we've had with tribal leaders. And it's kind of a compilation, a summarization of all the languages that we wanted to see in the Farm Bill. So even though with what's happening, we're still pushing through and trying to find

champions in Indian country, both on the House and Senate, to push a lot of these provisions through. So we've been trying to -- we're constantly working and monitoring that situation but we haven't given up yet. So anyway, that's pretty much where we're at and that's what NCAI has been working on, and I wish I had better news to share. Thanks.

[Track 5]

Joanna Stancil: Council members, do you have any questions for NCAI?

Sarah Vogel: This is Sarah Vogel. I just wanted to thank you folks from, and all the other folks from NCAI for all the support for Keepseagle over the years.

Gwen Salt: Thank you.

Jerry McPeak: I thought maybe I might be the one to. This is Jerry McPeak for Oklahoma Creek Nation. How is NCAI financed? Oh, no one knows.

Sherry Black: We didn't know who wanted to answer. Multiple sources. Membership from tribes is the primary source, membership dues. Individuals can be members. In fact, I just got mine in the mail in the e-mail to pay my individual membership dues. We also have grants from federal government, from private funders, and some corporate sponsorships too for conference kinds of things. Conference fees, registrations is a substantial part of the revenue as well.

Jerry McPeak: Thank you.

Sherry Black: Okay.

Gwen Salt: I just want to add we're a nonprofit, so a lot of that is pretty much contributions, donations that we do receive from individuals and memberships, majority of it from tribes and individuals.

Joanna Stancil: Thank you. Next, we have Kent Schescke from Future Farmers of America. After that would be Lisa.

Kent Schescke: Good morning. Thank you for being here. Thank you, Joanna, for introducing me. As Joanna said, my name is Kent Schescke. I work for the National FFA Organization. FFA is a national youth nonprofit. We serve students in agricultural education. Currently, we have about half a million student members across the United States. We have agricultural education programs in about 7,500 high schools. For students to be members of FFA, they have to be enrolled in agricultural education programs through their local schools.

FFA's mission is to help students develop their potential for their leadership, personal growth, and career success. We're really about helping students find what they're passionate about and how they turn that passion into a career, primarily looking at agriculture, not just farming but agriculture broadly defined. So we're thinking about production agriculture and all of those services and products that are needed to help

producers, but on the other end, all of the value-added side of agriculture as well.

One of the things that is a very important strategic driver of our organization is diversity and inclusion and looking at how do we do a better job of reaching out to students of underserved populations and involving those or how do we have decisions with key policymakers to create access to our programs. We started this really in this current cycle about three years ago doing a program focusing on African-Americans. Last year, we did a major program at our convention which has led on to a number of discussions really looking at Native American issues. And this year, we're working toward this convention program really looking at Hispanics, their contribution to agriculture, and lifting up those young people.

As a result of what happened to last year's contribution, and again, I want to thank Janie and John and others that really helped not only with the convention but some of the follow-on activities, we brought together a large group of Native American students at our convention last year, and we started really looking at the numbers. Currently, we have about 12,000 FFA members across 200 chapters in the United States. And while that's a significant number, we think it can be more. And one of the things that we're very committed to is how do we grow that number? How do we create greater access to agriculture

education for our students and help provide them the opportunities that we provide students?

We brought a number of students here to Washington D.C. last year. They had a chance to interact with leaders at USDA, Department of Ed, Interior, meet with their members of Congress, talk to a lot of the other leaders in the Native American community here in D.C., and really have some good introduction both eye-opening on both sides, opening for the policy leaders that were here, as well as eye-opening for the students to see really the role that they could play in terms of their leadership and providing a voice, especially for young people, around many of the issues that face Native American youth.

I'm pleased to be here today to tell you that we're excited about this group coming together. And if there is a way that we can help further the work that you all are trying to do in terms of working with and providing opportunities for Native Americans, particularly in areas of youth, we want to be involved, we want to be supportive, and we'd like to do whatever we can to assist in that.

That's really the end of my formal remarks. Other than that, I want to acknowledge Gary Matteson who spoke earlier. Gary stepped forward last year, was one of the folks that helped us financially bring those young people together. Somebody asked a question last week, "How are you financed?" Well, we're

like everybody. We got to go out and raise money. And it's the generosity of groups like Farm Credit that when we said, "We're bringing a group of these Native American students to D.C. Can you help us out?" Gary was, "What do you need? How can we help?" And so thank you, Gary, for that.

But I want to show a short video. It's about five minutes long, and it was a video that we really made last year, kind of leading up to and as a part of our convention and really used a way to really help us tell the story or let some of our young people tell the story of why they are excited about agriculture and some of the connections between FFA, agriculture, and the Native American community. So with that, Joanna, if you can launch the video, and after it's over, I'll take any questions the group may have.

Janie Hipp: This is Janie. While Joanna is queuing up the video, I was actually in the audience at that event, and I've been at FFA meetings before in the presence of 55,000 kids all in blue jackets. And I have never been so moved in all my life. And I leaned over to Ross Racine, and I said, "History is happening right before our eyes." When all of the kids got together, all 50,000 of them in Conseco Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, they always do, Kent, correct me, a recognition of state flags. And after all the state flags went up, all of the tribal nation flags that were represented by the children who

were there were recognized individually, and those flags were put on the stage. And Chief Old Person delivered an address to all 50,000 children and basically challenged them to look to each other side by side and realize they were all loving agriculture and food and they all had the same mission. And everyone was up on their feet. All of those kids were up on their feet, clapping their hands, and I could feel it. I could feel that I was seeing change happen right before my eyes. And it's going to take a long time for us to put further legs under that, but as long as I live, Kent, I will help you.

[Track 6]

[Video presentation]

Female Voice: The National FFA Organization celebrates Native American heritage. Native Americans have always been stewards of the land, living off the land and using resources to their ultimate potential. Native Americans have a rich history in FFA, agriculture, and agricultural education. There are over 200 FFA chapters that serve students who have self-identified as Native American. These chapters are found in 20 states across the country, reaching all corners of our map. Even though our lifestyles or language may be different, we all desire the same leadership attributes, and we all live to serve. Many values and rituals of Native Americans overlap those of FFA -- character, teamwork, stewardship, and sustainability. Just as

corn brings all our states together, it also plays a significant role in the native culture.

Howard Vigil: Nature takes care of its own. And we're getting away from all of that. We got away from it so far that we're living in an artificial world now.

Bryan Vigil: And today, we use the corn on top of the flag pole of Go Jii Ya because to us, it means life.

Clyde Vicente: Corn is very important to us Indians because we're able to get corn pollen out of it, and this is part of our culture. Corn pollen is what we do our blessings and our praying with. We also use white corn that we grind.

Female Voice: What does being Native American mean to you?

Dallas Montoya: Being Native American means to me, is that ability to be unique, strong, and free-spirited.

Female Voice: In many communities, the FFA has been transformational, setting the stage for a community need to be assessed and then acted upon.

Jasmine Blackwater: Well, the Monument Valley Chapter was founded in 1968.

Clyde McBride: It all started in a pretty interesting story. When I came up and was teaching here, I had a student with a horse with colic. A few days later, another student came in, and that kind of spread like wildfire, and they needed somebody up here to be able to take care of their livestock. So

what better opportunities to teach the students to take care of their own?

Jasmine Blackwater: In this facility, we have a total of 10 rooms, I believe. We have a regular classroom where we spend most of our time. The next room is our small animal prep room suite. It has 11 kennels, a small animal surgical room, real veterinary table, surgical lights, everything, an autoclave machine to clean our tools. In the next room, we have a large animal surgical room. We have a harness where we pick up large animals if we need to. In the next room, we have a whole padded room dedicated to our large animal recovery. Upstairs, we have two classrooms overlooking the surgical rooms. We also have a dirt arena and a concrete area. Our dirt arena is mostly, is what we would use for show practice when students show sheep. Our concrete area holds a silencer squeeze chute. It's one of a kind, only one in Arizona for [indiscernible].

Elissa McBride: I wouldn't go anywhere else. I love teaching the students here on the Navajo Nation.

Leon K. Reval: I think what FFA does is pull together that pride in showing again what especially Native American kids have done and have learned from the generations past on how to respect the land. What you take, you put back and I think that ability to continually to do that, to take care of the land and cherish the land for what it is and respect the land for what it

is, is what not only tribes and Native American kids do but what FFA does. So with that, look to your left, look to your right. If you see somebody from a reservation, go up and say hello. They do share the same, again, dreams, visions and goals.

Earl Old Person: I believe FFA was just one of those things that I was involved in that gave me leadership, that gave me respect, that gave me to honor others who I worked with.

Vanessa "Dee" Vicenti: The most important thing that I have come to know from my 14 years that is kids are kids and students are students no matter what their background is, where they were raised, and who raised them. All our kids have the same problems. They have the same issues. They have the same dreams. They have the same desires. FFA offers us the vehicle, and I hope that our native students will identify with the FFA and see themselves in that same bus, see themselves in that same vehicle.

Female Voice: As different as we are, we all desire the same no matter who we choose to love, how big our bank account, how light or dark our skin, who we vote for, how old or young, where we grew up, how strong our accent, or what language we speak. We have a need for the same thing. We all want a sense of belonging. We all want a place where we are respected, connected, and affirmed.

[End of video presentation]

Joanna Stancil: Excellent.

Kent Schescke: I guess I would say thank you for [cross-talking] --

Juan Garcia: If I can make a comment.

Joanna Stancil: We have a couple of comments. We'll start with Juan first.

Juan Garcia: Good morning, Kent. This is Juan Garcia. As a former FFA member, I appreciate the work that you all are doing. It was a good model for my career. I still have my blue jacket, Janie. I can't get in it. But when you have a blue jacket, it's one of those things that you keep forever, so I appreciate the work.

Kent Schescke: Yes, I have noticed that. I come here to D.C. and with sometimes other national officers, and people will -- unfortunately, we never kept a database of who those are. So people like yourself have to self-identify. They have to tell me you were former FFA member. And when I meet a former FFA member, the first thing I ask them is, "Do you have your blue jacket?"

Juan Garcia: I got it.

Kent Schescke: And I would say probably 80, 90 percent of them have. It may not be with them. They know where it's at. It doesn't fit them but they would. And the other one is that they remember those key things coming to FFA conventions or

serving on a judging team. And the other thing is they remember the ag teacher. They remember that person who had a huge influence in their life.

Joanna Stancil: Excellent. Thank you. Jerry, you had a comment?

[Track 7]

Jerry McPeak: Jerry McPeak from Oklahoma. You might have gathered from the couple of days I'm just a -- I don't know much about PC. I don't anticipate ever going to learn. When I first heard about the theme last year for your national convention, my first thought was probably, "Here we go with some bullshit."

[Indiscernible] Erica Flores who helped put it together, who is extraordinarily selfless and extremely effective. Where we come from and where nearly everyone is either Indian or part-Indian, we are actually sometimes in our area not a minority. It impacted those young people's lives tremendously. My son is an ag teacher. His kids got to be some of those who -- damn.

Kent Schescke: I bet you didn't see this side of me, did you, Jerry?

Jerry McPeak: Who probably carried their flags. It had a tremendous impact on all the kids there, and it gave an identity, a proud week for Indian kids perhaps who had not ever been viewed as being something special. For that week, they were the most special people in the United States. Those

programs have continued. This summer, my son's ag chapter, they let the little kids at the little school plant the seeds of the crops. They made that organic garden. Little kids planted the seeds. The ag kids and my son watered it in the middle of the night, those plants. Many of those kids helping were Indian kids. They've given almost 6,000 pounds of produce to senior citizens in our community. That project probably came from that convention. It was very impressive. And again, I wrote letters to the national folks [indiscernible] but that was impressive. Thank you.

Kent Schescke: One of the things I'd like to leave this committee to think about as you work forward is one of the things that we have been working on, and maybe a little background, we are a federally chartered organization. Our federal authority comes through the Department of Education. But when it comes to this issue, we're really trying to think about how do we work on a federally interagency basis between the Department of Ed, Department of Agriculture, in this case, Interior, working particularly in the BIE schools.

We noticed last year, and back to Oklahoma in particular, Jerry, that where we have public schools or near reservation lands, we have a much greater acceptance and it's easier for them because of the administration of school-based agriculture education to provide those opportunities, whatever we can do to

help and lift that up, that's what we want to focus on doing. But one of the things we did find out is that within the BIE school system, there are no FFA chapters. In fact, as we dug a little deeper, there is often a lot of bureaucratic impediment that gets in the way of having those.

And so one of the things that I'm committed to doing and with the help of our USDA folks here, how do we overcome that? And a lot of it is going to be how do we get to a federal interagency of looking at this and saying this is something we need to fix. And whether we fix it through things like the Farm Bill or we fix it through some of the educational legislation or we fix it through whatever we can, we need to fix it because we got to figure out how we create better access. And part of it is I don't think it was intentional. I think it was unintended consequences, but the unintended consequences are preventing us from being able to deliver this program to thousands of young people across the country. And we'd sure like to figure out a way to fix that in the next three or five years.

Joanna Stancil: Mark, please.

Mark Wadsworth: Kent, Mark Wadsworth, Shoshone-Bannock tribes. We have a tribal school on our reservation that we initially started to work in in trying to do develop a criteria for agriculture-based programs, and it slipped through the cracks, probably due to the fact that there were changes that

happened. But I just want to know from you, when you mentioned that as a part of becoming an FFA member that those students have to have an agriculture-related course curriculum?

Kent Schescke: Yes.

Mark Wadsworth: Is there a curriculum that you could share with a school to fulfill that need?

Kent Schescke: Yes. We have. And again, education in the United States is more of a kind of a -- the federal government doesn't endorse any kind of curriculum. It's kind of left up to states. But there are lots of curriculums, and in fact, what we have found when we got the group of teachers, including Jerry's son and others together as part of this meeting, we found out that there are good teachers who were really doing exceptional job of teaching. They were bringing together the elements of the classroom and the exponential learning of the FFA, and they were adding in that cultural element to be able to bring forward some of the history, the heritage, the traditional practices that are in there, and that's what made it relevant and that's what really got some of the elders in the community excited about that. We'd like to work with that.

In fact, one of the things that I'm trying to do is, as I work across the United States with our state leaders, ask the question, "Are you working with any of the tribal schools?" And actually at the state government level, I think they'd like to.

They just don't know how to. So we're trying to figure out how do we further that discussion to where they get in and can help provide that technical assistance to schools to say, how do we put a curriculum in place? How do we help you either find a qualified teacher or be able to provide some kind of a certification to somebody that may be in that school already that meets those qualifications to be certified? And what's different about our teachers is that most of them have technical degrees in agriculture with a certification to teach. So in many places, even if you've got somebody in your community that has an agriculture degree, in a lot of states and probably even through the BIE school system, we can work with them to get provisional certification that would allow them to teach even though they may not necessarily have an education degree. But if they have an agriculture degree, there is a way to get them provisionally certified to teach in those programs.

Mark Wadsworth: And just last final comment, I was a member of the FFA.

Kent Schescke: Thank you so much.

Mark Wadsworth: And also that my FFA teacher, Mr. Mortenson [phonetic], was the one that influenced me to go into agricultural business, agricultural economics.

Kent Schescke: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you.

Joanna Stancil: Are there any other comments or questions?

Thank you so much for being with us.

Kent Schescke: Thank you.

[End of transcript]