

Council for Native American Farming and Ranching (CNAFR) Minutes

Wednesday, November 29, 2017
1pm – 5pm Eastern Time (ET)

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call: Mark Wadsworth**

Start: 1:00 pm call to order by Chairman Mark Wadsworth

Members present: Mark Wadsworth, Erin Parker, Gilbert Louis III, Sarah Vogel, Tawney Brunsch, Jim Radintz on behalf of Steve Peterson (Farm Service Agency or FSA), Shawn McGruder on behalf of Winona Lake Scott (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights), Ron Harris on behalf of Leonard Jordan (Natural Resources Conservation Service or NRCS), Linda Cronin on behalf of Ben Keel (Office of Tribal Relations or OTR), Jerry McPeak

BIA representative Douglas Lords, Deputy Bureau Director, Trust Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs, is present.

Margaret Goode, Shannon McDaniel, and Sherry Crutcher are not present (pre-arranged).

Not present: Angela Peter, Roselyn Yazzie.

We do have quorum.

Angela Peter joined the call at 2:10 ET. Roselyn Yazzie joined the call at 3:16 ET.

2. **Blessing**

3. **Welcome and Review of Agenda/Meeting Materials: Abby Cruz**

Review of agenda. Attachments sent via e-mail: agenda, subcommittee list, full list of all CNAFR recommendations, CNAFR contact list, September 2016 recommendations, January 2017 recommendations, and October 2017 recommendations.

Introduction of the new Office of Tribal Relations Director, Ben Keel.

Discussion of current status of Keepseagle case, from Sarah Vogel, and specifically the cy pres funds. Any updates will be posted to the Keepseagle website, located here: <http://www.indianfarmclass.com/>.

4. **Public Comment Period: Mark Wadsworth**

There were no speakers during the public comment period. The public comment period officially closed at 2:09 ET.

Ferdinand Notah from Navajo Nation spoke at 4:08pm ET and had Farm Bill and recommendation related questions.

5. Sept 2016/Jan 2017 USDA Correspondence Discussion: Diane Cullo

Diane Cullo: Customer service is one of Secretary Perdue's strategic goals – which is both internal and external customer service, which ties into the CNAFR. We have a draft letter in response to the September 2016 and January 2017 correspondence, but so as not to have any surprises upon receipt, I wanted to let the CNAFR know that it is more of a state of introduction as opposed to going through each recommendation, recommendation by recommendation. This decision was made because the letters came in before the Secretary's term started, so USDA wanted to see where our relationship currently stood and how to move forward from here. Also, I would like to have the Secretary participate in a portion of a future meeting.

Mark Wadsworth: If the next meeting is in DC, the Council invites the Secretary to attend in person.

Erin Parker: Recommendation/motion: The Council recommends that Secretary Perdue attend the next Council for Native American Farming and Ranching meeting. Sarah Vogel seconded this. All those in favor? Aye. Any opposed? [none] Motion passes.

Tawney Brunsch: Can we expect a response to the October 2017 recommendations, and if so, when?

Diane Cullo: Yes, those will be responded to.

Mark Wadsworth asked if Diane Cullo could speak to the proposed reorganization of the Office of Tribal Relations (OTR) into the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE), and stated his support for the current structure of OTR. Diane Cullo spoke to the second phase of the reorganization, which established OPPE and she stated that OTR will be supported by other mission areas which will help regarding outreach and effectiveness. OTR is very small and has lost about 48 percent of funding over the last eight years and this reorganization is not taking OTR outside of the Office of the Secretary and is not substituting anything for the direct report. The goal is to enhance OTR's internal and external operations. Following the consultation on the USDA reorganization at the National Congress of the American Indians' Annual Convention, the comments were taken to heart and it was realized that the OPPE reorganization might hinder the relationship with Indian Country, so OTR is now working with, and not under, OPPE and the organizational structure is more of dotted line, and not straight line, to OPPE. The administration also realized the importance of bringing on a Director, who is a political appointee, into OTR, which is why the Council was introduced to Ben Keel

earlier in this meeting. Please do not hesitate to e-mail, call, or text Diane Cullo with questions.

Mark Wadsworth: So is there another hurdle that OTR has to go through [in terms of reporting/approval]? Follow-up question: OTR struggles with monetary issues regarding the Council – is this being addressed? Can it be budgeted as a direct cost? Answer: This is one of the budget hurdles that Diane is working on.

More discussion regarding OTR staffing, funding, Farm Bill, etc.

Diane Cullo asked for questions and then ended the presentation.

Jerry McPeak: On the October 2017 recommendations, recommendation 5 – it is very real and very important. Diane Cullo is no longer on the call but Jerry McPeak asked Abby Cruz to follow-up with Diane Cullo via e-mail and let her know. This was completed at 2:56pm ET on 11/29/17.

General discussion regarding the outstanding recommendations.

Tawney Brunsch makes the motion to resubmit the September 2016 and January 2017 recommendations that were submitted to Secretary Vilsack. Erin Parker seconds the motion. [See more specific details on the motion below.]

Sarah Vogel: These recommendations were not personal to Secretary Vilsack.

Mark Wadsworth: We are not addressing an individual in particular, but the Secretary, whomever he/she might be.

Sarah Vogel: Recommendation/Motion – The Council authorizes the Chair and Vice Chair to draft a letter to Secretary Perdue regarding any of today’s recommendations, the pending recommendations (submitted in September 2016 and January 2017), and the ongoing recommendations (which are the recommendations in the recommendation tracker that are still open). In other words, the Council would like updates on all recommendations that are not closed, as well as the ones that are submitted today. This is in response to Diane Cullo stating that recommendations previously submitted to other Secretaries might not be addressed and Council members feel that this is good to bring these recommendations to the attention of OPPE and the Secretary, and to get updates. Tawney Brunsch seconded the motion. All in favor? Aye. Any opposed? [none] Motion passes.

6. Break

7. CNAFR Working Session: Mark Wadsworth

Mark Wadsworth: Each committee chair will cover what the committee is working on.

- Subcommittee Read Out
 - Land Management – No report out
 - Credit and Credit Desert – Discussion of outstanding recommendations related to this subcommittee. Jim Radintz will get AI/AN numbers to Abby Cruz for distribution. Jim Radintz will also give Abby Cruz information regarding recommendation 11 and also updated lending information.
 - Youth and Education – Discussion regarding outstanding recommendations related to youth and education and youth loans.
 - Food Security – Question regarding recommendation 29. Linda Cronin will check on this and send a response to the group.
 - Administration – General discussion regarding recommendations 44-47. OTR has been added to this subcommittee list.
 - Farm Bill – This committee met five times since the July 2017 CNAFR meeting. After an in-depth review of the “[Regaining our Future](#)” document, the subcommittee wholeheartedly endorses this document. See the proposed recommendation below.
- Proposed Recommendations

Recommendation/motion from the Farm Bill Subcommittee: The Council recommends that the Secretary and key USDA staff involved with the Farm Bill debate should meet in person with the Executive Committee of the Native Farm Bill Coalition. The Native Farm Bill Coalition has drafted and is proposing to Congress an array of modifications to federal laws governing USDA programs. These recommendations are contained in a report entitled "[Regaining Our Future](#)" and are designed to reduce barriers to the full participation of Native American farmers and ranchers and Native American owned food-based businesses in various federal programs affecting farming, ranching, food production, exports, crop insurance, farm and business loans, and many other services and programs offered by USDA.

Reason for Recommendation: After 30 years of study and deep participation across Indian Country by farmers, ranchers, legal scholars, agricultural scholars, tribal leaders, and experts on the past and current situation of agriculture and ranching in Indian Country, a document named "Regaining Our Future" was developed, which has a series of detailed recommendations for modifications to current law so as to increase Native American access to USDA programs. This document has received the support of all major Native American tribal organizations and all major Native American farming and ranching organizations. It has been presented to many members of Congress and is currently under consideration in the Farm Bill debate. It is essential that the Secretary and other USDA officials who are working on adoption of a new Farm Bill fully understand these proposals so that USDA representatives will be prepared to discuss these recommendations when members of Congress request USDA insight and guidance. Should Congress decide to adopt all or some of the proposed modifications to existing law that are contained in the "Regaining Our Future" report, it would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the modified programs, if the Secretary and his staff were in a position to share technical insights and real world answers and solutions with members of Congress.

The Council for Native American Farming and Ranching has carefully reviewed the entire "Regaining Our Future" report and fully supports the adoption of the recommendations of the Native Farm Bill Coalition within the "Regaining Our Future" report.

Angela Peter seconds the motion. All I favor? Aye. All opposed: [none] Any abstentions? [none] Motion passes.

Open discussion. Tawney Brunsch discussed question/answers sent to Colby Duren, which were: 1) Waiver of FSA guarantee fee, which is currently at 1.5 percent; 2) A recommendation for GAO to conduct an analysis regarding credit in Indian Country; and 3) Making more loan capital available.

Mark Wadsworth: What he heard from Diane Cullo was to ask Congress/Farm Bill for funds for the CNAFR.

Recommendation/motion from Erin Parker: The Council recommends amending pending recommendation 48 to recommend that the Secretary of Agriculture authorize the continuation of the Council beyond July 2018 as a continuing *discretionary* advisory committee (and not a permanent statutory advisory committee). Sarah Vogel seconds this. All in favor? Aye. Any opposed? [none] Motion passes.

Mark Wadsworth: Supports more outreach for FSA and NRCS regarding county committees. The election process is not coming through clearly to tribal members on reservations.

Linda Cronin: Any feedback from NRCS, FSA, Council members, etc. is appreciated.

Ron Harris will do research regarding if tribes in New Mexico can establish tribal conservation districts like they do in Arizona and he will follow-up with Roselyn Yazzie. He will also do research on access to outreach funding in Alaska and follow-up with Angela Peter.

Discussion regarding how to keep the subcommittees active.

Sarah Vogel requested updated lending information/data from Jim Radintz.

8. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn the CNAFR meeting. Motion seconded. Meeting adjourned at 4:42pm ET.