



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

United States Department of Agriculture  
Council for Native American Farming and Ranching  
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Mark Wadsworth: Alrighty. Good morning everybody. We'll reconvene. Today is Tuesday, April 05, 2016. Approximately 9:40 in the morning. We're going to do a brief roll call. Mary Ann Thompson.

Mary Ann Thompson: I'm in.

Mark Wadsworth: Jerry McPeak. Jerry McPeak, not here. Angela Peter. Angela Peter, not here. Edward Soza. Edward Soza, not here. Sarah Vogel.

Sarah Vogel: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Gilbert Harrison.

Gilbert Harrison: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Porter Holder.

Porter Holder: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Mark Wadsworth. I am here. Derrick Lente. Derrick Lente, not here. Tawney Brunsch.

Tawney Brunsch: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Pilar.

Pilar Velasquez: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Val Dolcini. Val Dolcini is not here. Jim Radintz.

Jim Radintz: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: And Leslie Wheelock. Leslie Wheelock is outside the room, and so is Angela Peter. We'll go through --

Sarah Vogel: Here she is.

Mark Wadsworth: Yeah, Angela Peter is now here. Looking at the agenda, it looks like we'll go through and have a blessing. Gilbert, if you may.

Gilbert Harrison: Anybody else want to lead? If we could bow our head, please. Heavenly Father, we thank You for another beautiful day. Thank You for giving us this sunshine. And all the things we have good in life that we take for granted, we thank You very much. We don't thank You often enough, but we do appreciate it. We enjoy this trip here to this beautiful county in Cherokee, and we wish them well. Take care of their land.

And again, for the second day, we pray that You give us clear minds so we can express and make decisions and recommendations that will benefit our native people in their farming and ranching efforts. We pray this in your name. *Hozho na'ha' lii. Hozho na'ha' lii. Hozho na'ha' lii. Hozho na'ha' lii.* Amen.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you, Gilbert. Dana, you're the next one on the agenda.

Dana Richey: This is Dana Richey, the Designated Federal Officer. Why don't we begin the meeting with introductions of those people who are in the audience? Why don't we begin here?

Please stand up and give your name and the organization that you're with.

Mary Ann Thompson: You can get the mic for the record.

Dana Richey: That would be helpful. Thank you, Mary.

Raymond Foxworth: Good morning. I'm Raymond Foxworth with First Nations Development Institute.

Joanne Dea: Good morning. Joanne Dea, the USDA ombudsperson.

Arthur Neal: Good morning. Arthur Neal, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

Kimberly Henson: Good morning. I'm Kimberly Henson-Ahrens. I'm with USDA Rural Development.

Tommy Cabe: Good morning. Tommy Cabe, the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian's tribal forest resource specialist.

Sarah Schelling: Good morning. Sarah Schelling [phonetic], intern for the Office of Tribal Relations.

Sedelta Oosahwee: Good morning. Sedelta Oosahwee, acting deputy director, Office of Tribal Relations.

Gale Marshall: Good morning. My name is Gale Marshall from Oklahoma Choctaw. I coordinate Let's Move! in Indian Country working closely with the USDA Office of Tribal Relations. And I'm a small cattle farmer about 30 miles east of here.

Josiah Griffin: Good morning. Josiah Griffin, USDA Office of Tribal Relations.

Amanda Burley: Good morning. Amanda Burley from the USDA Office of Tribal Relations.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you all. For the record, Leslie Wheelock is here.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mark Wadsworth: We'll go through a review of the agenda, the remainder of the day. We're going to go through the tribal upkeeping stuff. Josiah will go through with that. With us up next, Leslie Wheelock will go through an update on the activities through OTR. CNAFR Charter Renewal, we'll go through that with Dana Richey. We'll have a short break. And then we'll go to the ombudsperson, Joanne Dea. And then we'll go into FSA Loan Programs update with Jim Radintz. This may go into our noon lunch hour, but that's fine. We might go half-hour to 45 minutes.

After lunch, we'll get an update from the Intertribal Ag Council with Zach Ducheneaux. And then we'll get a presentation about SNAP EBT for farmers market from Rogelio Carrasco, a SNAP farmers market coordinator and Food and Nutrition Service. And then we'll have a review of the recommendations, discussion of issues, then closing comments, and then we'll adjourn. We'll just go right into the next item. Josiah.

Josiah Griffin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As a matter of public record, the Office of Tribal Relations contracted out with the Harrah's Cherokee Resort & Casino for each of your hotel rooms. With that in mind, we will still ask that you provide the receipts for checked bags, taxi, parking, any of the other incidentals aside from food and miscellaneous purchases to OTR's administrative assistant Cynthia Eaton in a timely manner and we'll make sure that your reimbursement is processed promptly.

Gilbert Harrison: Josiah, what is the daily medium rate here for meals?

Josiah Griffin: I would be happy to double check on that. And if you don't mind, Mr. Chairman, I will be back in a time that you allow to provide that for public record as well.

Mark Wadsworth: Great. Also, do you have a schedule for this people to go back and forth to the airport? How are we working that?

Josiah Griffin: Yes, sir. That was provided at the initial email that I sent around to everyone. It looks like, at least for tomorrow, the flights are broken down into two groups. And without pulling up my email, I'm just going off from the top of my head here, the first group that flies out about 7:00 to 7:30 will be leaving here promptly at 5:00 in the morning. I believe that there is a group that leaves around about 10:00.

We should have another shuttle here about 8:00 in the morning.  
And then another, if I remember correctly, about noon.

Mark Wadsworth: Those shuttles, do we pay for that when we go down there?

Josiah Griffin: For Native Council members, the Office of Tribal Relations is also contracting out with the Eastern Band of Cherokee to ensure that your round trip is covered.

Porter Holder: I think my flight is out at 6:00 in the morning.

Josiah Griffin: I will double check on the itinerary and I'll make sure that you're there in time.

Porter Holder: Okay. Thank you, Josiah.

Dana Richey: Josiah, could you resend that email so that people have it at the top of their inbox, that schedule?

Josiah Griffin: Most certainly.

Dana Richey: Thank you.

Gilbert Harrison: One other question. My flight out of ABL is at 7:00 in the morning. If we leave here by 5:00, it takes over an hour to get there. Do you think there will be enough time to get checked in?

Josiah Griffin: Yes, sir. I brought that question before the Eastern Band's transit. They said that due to the size of Asheville's Municipal Airport, that you should have plenty of time for check-in. If that does prove to be an issue, as I'm

collaborating to make sure that Porter makes his flight, we'll make sure that you're taken care of as well.

Gilbert Harrison: Okay. Thank you.

Josiah Griffin: Thank you, sir.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you. Leslie, go straight into the session.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Council. On behalf of the Office of Tribal Relations, I just wanted to give you a really brief update so that we have a little bit of time to ask questions. We might actually be able to pick up some of the time that we have this morning. Once again, I want to thank Mary Thompson, and the Tribe, and Andrew who isn't in the room, but all of the folks who helped us to get to where we were this morning because it was a very special place. We very much appreciate our tribes when they host us. They appreciate us being in their space, and we appreciate them joining us in our meetings and otherwise. It's been a really successful visit.

I think it has been cheap, and I have a report on that for later. But what I wanted to do was, a couple of things, to make sure everybody is getting the news and events that we put together. So in your binders, under tab 5, you have a copy of something that is arriving in your email weekly that Josiah puts together for us kind of with the help of everybody peppering him

with emails all week long. This comes out weekly. These are the *USDA News and Events*.

We had started to talk to Josiah about making this shorter because it's gotten very lengthy. Then we found out that people in our county offices are using it and other people around USDA are using it, and we decided just to kind of leave it alone for now, I think. But if there's something in here that you would like to see changed, please let Josiah know because this is his baby. We're very happy with it. We're very happy with the product. We think we've got something going out there that hasn't been out there for a long time. Mr. Chairman.

Mark Wadsworth: Could I say something to Josiah?

Leslie Wheelock: Yes, sir.

Mark Wadsworth: What you've done with this is fantastic. Every time that comes out on a monthly schedule or whatever you get it out, I usually receive it four to five times through other people forwarding it to me. It's got around to everyone. You're doing a bang up job and I hope you get a raise over that.

Josiah Griffin: What's funny, sir, is my Director is sitting next to you. [sounds like]

Mary Ann Thompson: Chairman, Josiah, I do appreciate this. I share it. I send it out. And hopefully we'll start getting some of the tribal folks' interest piqued and they'll start utilizing these resource. Thank you.

Leslie Wheelock: We have people in USDA who have been so proud of it that they have stripped off Office of Tribal Relations and put their own departments up here. So I just want to let you know that's how successful it's been. Sarah.

Sarah Vogel: I just want to echo. I think it has been getting better and better and better. And right now I'd say it's fabulous. It's really good. Easy to use, easy to reference, and lovely.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you. On behalf of Josiah, thank you. The other thing that you should be seeing is our monthly report. The monthly report for the Office of Tribal Relations is under the next tab for January and February. We just issued March and didn't have time to get it printed and get into the folders. These are duplicates, almost, of reports that we prepare for the Secretary every month. They tell the Secretary what our office has been doing. If you notice, there are a lot of things out here that you may never hear about from myself or from other people because our office is seen as a point of contact for the White House and all of the tribal work that is being done across the federal government. And so the place [sounds like] based on opportunity initiatives very often have either a White House across federal or a secretarial initiative behind them.

So if you have questions about them, like why Pine Ridge and why not MySpace or anything else that you want to know about these monthly memos, please ask me about them. I know, Angela, you might have a question - what's the Arctic Executive Steering Committee and how does it affect me - except that we had breakfast. So I hope you know. I just need to keep you up to date because we've got several, or a couple I think, of the organizations up in that space that you're working with. And I want to make sure that those that are in the Arctic region, that we're keeping them informed as well. And so that's what that second thing is.

Out of the February report, one of the things that you might take note of when I announced it among the staff at the USDA, we got this little interesting gasp. Like how could they take on anything else? The small, but mighty Office of Tribal Relations is moving into the point position for Let's Move! in Indian Country with the Administration for the remainder of the administration. We are going to lean heavily on Gale back here, in the back of the room, who has been the leader on this initiative since its beginning. It sure seems that way. Gale has made everything that we've done on Let's Move! in Indian Country possible.

Josiah has jumped on that bandwagon with both feet with our nutrition program, as well as pumping out information and

getting it moving in both directions - both Let's Move!  
information back to our office, and our nutrition program  
information over to the Let's Move! folks. I think that Josiah  
and Isabel both had photographs taken with the First Lady this  
year as a result of the work that our office has been doing in  
the, and Gale, on the Let's Move! initiative. Josiah will be  
managing that for our office, and for the Department, and for  
the Federal government.

So Let's Move! in Indian Country is now about to be housed  
in OTR. We're going to continue relying on Indian Health  
Service and our other friends around the Federal government for  
assistance in making sure that we keep that program at the front  
of everybody's agenda in the federal government through the end  
of the administration. Next thing behind --

Mark Wadsworth: Leslie.

Leslie Wheelock: Yes, sir.

Mark Wadsworth: This is awesome. I think that Gilbert  
really was wanting these updates and being able to review the  
activities and stuff. And I, as a Council member, too, really  
appreciate this.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you. It had really occurred to me  
we put it together every month and send it to the Secretary, and  
it's a really nice way to keep you up to date on what we're  
doing in our office. Again, if you ever have any questions

about those notes that tend to be rather cryptic. Ours is I think the longest report that the Secretary gets because we have so much going on and because we don't do metrics. Everybody, all the other agencies, have these little metric reports, well, big metric reports they give to the Secretary because he loves numbers. Ours tend to be very wordy and I catch grief for it every so often, but it's a very quick briefing of everything that we've done in a month and sometimes it's kind of amazing that we get everything done.

Mary Ann Thompson: Mr. Chairman.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Mary.

Mary Ann Thompson: Leslie, this is the first time I've seen this report and I really like it. I don't know, I need to make sure I'm on the email list whenever these are coming out.

Leslie Wheelock: Josiah, it does get sent out to our Council members monthly, is that correct?

Josiah Griffin: I will make sure that that's what happens.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you. I would get that one, right?

Leslie Wheelock: It may not have been yet.

Sarah Vogel: I get it.

Leslie Wheelock: We'll take care -- you get it?

Sarah Vogel: Yeah.

Leslie Wheelock: Okay. Sarah gets it. All right. We just must have missed it. Sorry.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you.

Leslie Wheelock: And then behind the next tab is one of the things that we promote around the United States Department of Agriculture. When school is in session, a lot of our children in rural America and especially in Indian Country, they get their only meals at school. And when school is not in session, we know that we have a lot of kids out there who go hungry. One of the programs that tries to stem that is our Summer Meals Program. The Summer Meals Program is available. Unfortunately, the one thing that is not included in the cost of the program is the cost of transportation and administrative fees for the folks who put the program together that are sufficient to help them do all the good work that the people do in the summer.

So you heard me yesterday asking the young people here in the school year whether they had signed up for summer foods for their youth. That takes some special effort in your home areas, in our tribal areas because there has to be a place where the youth are convened. Tawney, I know we worked out on Pine Ridge, and that's really tough. It would be tough in Navajo. It would be tough on most of our reservations because we don't have school buses running. We have families that don't have cars.

We have people who are miles and miles away from each other. So we try in all kinds of imaginative ways to pull youth together. We look at mobile vehicles going to playgrounds.

Our Food and Nutrition Service didn't realize that Pine Ridge has a swimming pool, and so we might be showing up at the swimming pool this summer. So things that are like that where we've got youth convening and where we can get them summer foods. Angela, Alaska is a big challenge. As you well know, we have elder convening. So we started talking to the Alaska Native Health Consortium about some way of combining the elder drop box with the youth drop box. That's very different from the program that the Lower 48 knows. So that's a bit of a challenge, but we're going to continue working on that.

For Alaska Native fish camps, it's kind of hard to tell people that even though they've got all this food around them, we still need to feed them. So we're working on it. But that's our Summer Food Program. Organizations can still sign up for this program. Josiah has attached to the back of this some sponsor deadlines. So we do have to have locations, and those are where our sponsors come in either for getting food to a location or for sponsoring a facility where youth are gathering together. That could be a summer camp. It could be a sports program. Use your imagination. Swimming pools. Anywhere the kids come together, we can work it out to get them food.

Mark Wadsworth: Mary.

Mary Ann Thompson: Question. On the Food Service Program, is there a set aside for Native Americans?

Leslie Wheelock: No, there's not. Every year there's a focus of the Food and Nutrition Service on tribal areas, but they don't focus on all of them. They focus on them by state. And so Oklahoma is one of our big states this year. Josiah, do you know the others?

Josiah Griffin: New Mexico.

Leslie Wheelock: New Mexico. So they try to build up the systems state-by-state and hope that those continue into the next year when they need them again. But they're pretty much constantly knocking on doors trying to get help with these programs, with the Summer Food Program.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you.

Leslie Wheelock: You're welcome. I wanted to tell you about a couple of things that are open right now. The Regional Conservation Partnership Program - well, Angela might disagree with me - but it's a terrific program for combining resources of multiple jurisdictions and getting money out into our spaces working with conservation. We've had many tribal success stories about this resource. And as part of regional conservation teams, most of our tribes have been working on waterways as part of this partnership. Because the water as we

all know tends to flow on and off of tribal lands, and so as many partners as you can get around these spaces, we've been joining in those partnerships.

This program is currently open for applications. And the pre-proposals, as they may tend, pre-proposals are simply a comment or a letter saying we're planning on applying or thinking about applying and here's what we have in mind so that the teams who are going to have to review these applications coming in can be put together and get ready for the applications coming in. They don't require tribal resolutions for the pre-proposals. In the final proposal, if your Tribe or government usually requires some kind of a government resolution in order to support a large application, then that's when you would want that resolution.

This is grant money. This is not loan money. Angela might tell you the first year we had some hiccups in getting the money out there when it was needed, but I think we've resolved all those by now.

Angela Peter: Yeah. Christie Sincada [phonetic], poor thing. She was young, but after that --

Leslie Wheelock: She got some gray hair now.

Angela Peter: Yeah. But it is a good program.

Mary Ann Thompson: Chairman.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Mary.

Mary Ann Thompson: Tommy, do you know if the Eastern Band of Cherokee is participating in any of this Regional Conservation Partnership Program?

Leslie Wheelock: I don't know just off-hand. [Background conversations]

Mary Ann Thompson: But maybe you can just take it as a resource or reference.

Leslie Wheelock: Yes.

Tommy Cabe: No, but we do participate in the Community Force Open Space Program.

Mary Ann Thompson: Great.

Tommy Cabe: Tommy Cabe, Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you.

Tommy Cabe: I'm sorry, we have a lot of things going on in our office. I did not mention this yesterday and I regret not mentioning it, but we are participating in the Community Force Open Space Program. We are one of two tribes that actually successfully participated in the program and had purchased 108 acres jointly with funds from the USDA Forest Service. The objective here is that ultimately we have a forest management plan attached to this parcel of land of 108 acres. It gives the Tribe an opportunity to move with deeded properties in ways that we can't move with trust properties so we can demonstrate

botanical research, seed banking, and opening it up to the community and create a partnership with the town and the community in which the property resides in. So it's a tremendous opportunity for us to be able to do this and to demonstrate that that area was once ours, originally anyway. We're bringing that type of work up to 20 percent in trying to demonstrate a multitude of things. We did not see that anywhere in this --

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you. Could you write me a letter on that program?

Tommy Cabe: Yeah.

Leslie Wheelock: I would love to do a blog on it and put it on our webpage.

Tommy Cabe: We actually have an event. The Forest Service is having this huge event in the Southern Research Station first week of May. In May 6, we're having a fieldtrip out on Hall [phonetic] Mountain. We're discussing the successes of the project, the challenges of the project. It's going to be a great day, and we can open up --

Leslie Wheelock: I think I'm on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan that week. Thank you. I mean, seriously, I would like to somehow take that success story and put it out there because that's what our Tribal leaders tell us gets their attention more

than anything we do is success stories. So we tend to write up blogs about them.

Tommy Cabe: Yeah. Absolutely. I believe that we actually ended up moving a lot farther than the other tribes. I heard the other tribe, I don't know who it was, but they're not even closing their properties. So there are challenges everywhere in the Indian Country, but absolutely --

Leslie Wheelock: Great. Congratulations.

Mary Ann Thompson: Tommy, keep me in the loop on that, too, please.

Tommy Cabe: Yeah. And you guys, I think you're on the Council in the beginning stages of it.

Mary Ann Thompson: When it was just starting.

Tommy Cabe: Yeah. Maybe I'm trying to choreograph who all should be invited on that day, so absolutely.

Mary Ann Thompson: Great. I appreciate it.

Leslie Wheelock: Gilbert.

Gilbert Harrison: Gilbert Harrison from Navajo. This RCPP, I have a question about that. It says on the flyer here invest up to 260 million in partner projects to help communities improve water qualities. From the Shiprock area, the farming area, we experienced that Gold King Mine spill. We still have the residual effects of that just to -- The plume itself passed, but there's been a lot of residual heavy metal

contaminants within the soil, and then we still have spikes coming in down the river. That's really an issue on the quality of the water we have not only for farming and other agriculture use or livestock uses. Would a program like this be eligible to try to improve the water quality? This is, like I said, for agricultural aspects from the river.

The other thing, too, is we have a lot of alkaline that contaminates the water. So would this program be eligible to help us clean up some of the water that we used for ag?

Leslie Wheelock: This is Leslie. Gilbert, I think in part that depends on what is needed to do the cleanup, as well as the parties involved in it. What we can do is put you in touch with our Natural Resources Conservation Service. Do you know Keisha Tatem?

Gilbert Harrison: Yeah, Keisha.

Leslie Wheelock: She is the best person to ask that question of because she actually knows the space and has been working with the Navajo Nation in order to try to figure out some of the natural resources needs that they have. They may well be a good applicant for this program. I can't tell you offhand, but they might be.

Gilbert Harrison: Okay. But for the members here, we still have issues with the water. That's a lifeline for that. When we have a little bit of rain or some disturbance, we still

see spikes of contamination coming down the river. So that's a big issue for our local people, especially the families because a lot of people live along the river. And you know how kids are, they like to jump in the water. They like to play in this and that. So from that aspect, there's still some questions.

Then also, as far as using the water for ag, there has been some questions of what happens if livestock drink this water. We've been told that it's safe. But the people that say it's safe, they don't want to eat any of the beef. It translates into crops. If you use some of this contaminated water, what happens in the crops? Are they contaminated? Are they safe for human consumption? Like alfalfa, the alfalfa that I raise, will there be traces of minerals in the crops that I harvest? These are some of the lingering questions that we have and it seems like we don't get a good, straight answer. We ask people from EPA. We have people from CDC. We get mix information, so that really creates a problem. So it's going to be like that.

We have heard that EPA is going to declare the headwaters where this contamination started as a Superfund project, but they said it takes ten years just to plan and get everything in place to get a project to clean up the water and it takes another ten years to complete it. My goodness, 20 years. It's sort of boggles the mind. What happens in the meantime? So those are some of the questions that we still have. When you

talk about quality of water, that came to mind on what can be done at the local level. Thank you very much.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you, Gilbert.

Mark Wadsworth: And also, Gilbert, when we get into these regional scenario applications, they'll probably have a myriad of agencies that each agency has to contribute their portion to the effort which expound here. But through this, it's being head up through the NRCS person.

Gilbert Harrison: It's probably going to take another five years just to determine who's going to take the lead role between EPA, NRCS, and the tribe, and the BIA. Because living in a trust land, things sort of get bogged down because of jurisdictional issues. Thank you.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you. Just a couple more things. As I mentioned yesterday, the application period is currently open until May 12th for both the Farmers Market Promotion Program and the Local Food Promotion Program. These programs are both detailed back in the back but they help especially our smaller and beginning farmers and ranchers to get food into production and get it to the marketplace. They're brand new programs and also grant programs. Not loan programs. We have a lot of loan programs, but these are grants.

And for those of you who are local here, there are a couple of workshops in North Carolina and a couple in Tennessee coming

up for those programs. Arthur Neal, who was with us earlier, has taken off and headed over to the Cooperative Extension office where he's participating in the SNAP EBT and farmers market sign up event. This is so that you can use a credit card. But SNAP recipients can also use their EBT card at a farmers market to purchase fresh produce. And there are programs that USDA funds that doubles up those bucks so that they can actually get twice the value of fresh produce. Mary, if you don't have that program here, you may not have it, I can put you in touch with the people who are running it.

Mary Ann Thompson: Good deal. We appreciate that.

Leslie Wheelock: Finally, there are a couple of hearings coming up. So the Committee on Indian Affairs, the GIO issued a report on broadband and tribal lands primarily looking at the FCC and the USDA. The primary thing that they ask USDA to do is to coordinate better with the FCC on their program. Most of this is FCC-focused, but we do have an upcoming hearing on Thursday before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs just on broadband with the FCC. And then I'm told there's another hearing that will come up probably in May before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on all of the tribal work that USDA does. So we'll let you know when you can watch that on television or on the Internet as soon as we have some idea when it's going to happen. And all of our agencies that work in

Indian Country have provided us lots of good information for that hearing. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mark Wadsworth: Just a quick question on the Promise Zones. Is there a third round coming up?

Leslie Wheelock: There is a third round of Promise Zones that we're expecting to announce in May. We had a number of different tribes participating in this third round in terms of submitting applications. They're going through reviews right now. There will be some finalization reviews coming up. And then, as I said, we're expecting the third round announcements in May. There will be, I'm guessing, from our office as well as several other offices a scramble to get all. It's not just tribal. We've got tribal, rural, and a bunch of urban Promise Zones coming up and we have to get them up and running and moving forward before the administration ends and get them some career people to keep working with them.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Mary.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you. Leslie, do you have a written copy of your report?

Leslie Wheelock: I do. This report?

Mary Ann Thompson: Uh-huh.

Leslie Wheelock: No, I don't.

Mary Ann Thompson: I missed that last bit of information you talked about, the grants, as you were talking about SNAP.

Leslie Wheelock: Right.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you.

Leslie Wheelock: You're very welcome. That's that part, and then you also have the EBT. That's what you're talking about, the SNAP EBT program.

Mary Ann Thompson: Okay. We've got that going.

Leslie Wheelock: Yeah.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you.

Leslie Wheelock: The one thing that I did mention that is not in any of that is doubling up of SNAP recipient dollars at the farmers market. For that, if you want to get a hold of them here, we can talk.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you.

Leslie Wheelock: You're welcome.

Gilbert Harrison: I have a question on the Office of Tribal Relations. I think it's a good office to do outreach and be a point of contact for tribes. So is your office, OTR, pretty stable in terms of what happens when transition comes in? I know that people in there may be appointed. It changes. But the office itself, what's the scenario on that? Thank you.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you, Gilbert. The Office was made permanent by the 2014 Farm Bill. The Director of the office is an Officer of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, similar to our Under Secretaries except that it's not a Senate-confirmed

position. Under Secretary is an Assistant Secretary. And the office has a number of staff. We are right now fully-staffed to our budgets. We have two sets of budgets. One is a budget that supports outreach. That is an internally compiled budget. And then we have our appropriated budget. Our appropriated budget supports three of us. The other one supports two people. And we hope that those will continue.

Additionally, for the USDA, the Secretary has asked for additional funding for our office. Our office is funded at about \$.5 million a year. That includes our salaries, our overhead, our travel. You name it. And our Secretary has asked for an increase of \$250,000 so that we could put a career Deputy Director in place who could keep the office running at the best fashion we possibly can through a transition, as well as through the travel. When I'm traveling, it's very difficult to do work unless I stay up all night, which I have been known to do.

But I think that the request for the Deputy Director was something that Janie had in place a few years ago, and her budget was cut to zero. So she not only lost that position, but she lost a lot of people who were in the office working for her at the time. So we do have to avoid things like that happening. And they happen at, well, I'll just call it serendipity. It has nothing to do with our office and a lot to do with our bosses up on the Hill who did see fit to make us permanent in the 2014

Farm Bill. So we're hoping that this appropriation request stays in the budget appropriation as it moves through Congress, and that we have the ability to put somebody in place as soon as we get that funding approved.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you.

Mary Ann Thompson: Mr. Chairman.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Mary.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you. It's Mary Thompson. I appreciate you bringing up the SNAP EBT-Farmers Market signup event. We had so much going on this morning that I failed to mention this when we were going out live across the whole boundary. Becky, did you by any chance mention this whenever you were at Council this morning?

Becky Williamson: About the SNAP EBT thing? I did. It's all down there. I did the letter, but you were out there when yesterday -- [inaudible]

Mary Ann Thompson: Okay. But it's ongoing today? I see too many things going on this morning.

Becky Williamson: Yesterday, the girls reported. Then we had two people from yesterday. I don't know if there's going to be more today because they have to be back at the office. So we [indiscernible] people at the office.

Mary Ann Thompson: So at lunch time today maybe I'll slip over there and ask one of the Council members to give me a plug. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: That's it?

Leslie Wheelock: That's it, sir.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you. Looks like our next subject will be with you, Dana.

Dana Richey: This is Dana Richey. I'm going to be giving an update of the status of the renewal of the Council through the charter.

Gilbert Harrison: Dana, can you speak a little -- thank you.

Dana Richey: This is Dana Richey. I'll be giving an update on the renewal of the charter. As I mentioned yesterday, the timeline is that the current charter expires next week, on April 14th. And also speaking to the timeline, the terms of all members expires on September 8th, 2016. So those are the two dates that we are managing events around. A proposed charter, you have on tab 9. As Leslie mentioned yesterday, there's one page with some highlights that describes the change in composition of USDA members that is in the proposed charter. And then behind that you have the text of the draft charter that is in Departmental Clearance now.

I spoke yesterday to the person on behalf of USDA who manages the charter renewal process, and she told me that she expects the charter to be approved and accompanying documents in approximately four to six weeks. I don't know if anyone has had a chance to review the charter or not or if you have any questions about the charter or the process, but I'm happy to take any questions that you may have. If you've had a chance to read through the charter, the most significant changes as I see it is really the USDA composition that is described in page one.

Mark Wadsworth: Dana, as I was talking to you yesterday, the changes of taking basically one of the FSA slots and opening that up for a NRCS person, I really am in high favor of having NRCS at the table. Since we have a lot of conservation for both our individuals and for the tribes themselves, that's a good addition. But I did talk to you before kind of in a broad -- and I'd like to bring it up for the Council, is that if you go to the state committee meetings -- well, they're not state. They're federal. Generally you have three major players that you work with which is a revolving position between the Rural Development, the Farm Service Agency, and then with NRCS as the three main committees that we have to deal with. And I like to have that reflected in who sits on this Council as representatives from the USDA departments. But I do see that we do have a revolving member. I know that there are a heck of a

lot more agencies than the three I just mentioned and I would like that participation as well. So I don't want to really cut one to get the other, but I just want to bring that up as a discussion point of view. Yes, Gilbert.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you very much. I wanted to kick around the idea of even maybe how can we get somebody from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to be either a member or to be sitting on the Council? Because they are pretty much instrumental in a lot of the issues that we discuss now, particularly as it relates to the land and the questions surrounding trust issues. How can we get them involved in an ongoing situation or solution to really represent BIA in terms of what they can do to recommend some of the changes or even just give us advice on some of the issues we come across? Because I think they are our sister agency, and somehow I like to get some ideas on how can we get somebody from them to sit regularly so they can be our messenger to BIA. I'm sure we can do something like that.

Dana Richey: This is Dana Richey. To answer the mechanics of your question, Gilbert, we did continue in the draft charter that a representative from BIA will continue to be a non-voting member of the Council. I understand your question is broader than that, but I did want you to know that we have carried on that there will be somebody from interior who is a non-voting member.

Pilar Velasquez: This is Pilar. I'm sorry to interrupt. We have somebody who is trying to get on the call to participate in this discussion from the Office of the Assistant Secretary. So if we can facilitate that before we go any further with this. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes. Josiah. [Pause]

Operator: Welcome to AT&T teleconference service. Please enter your access code followed by the pound sign. To join the conference, please enter your -- your password was not recognized. Please re-enter. There are two participants on the call, including you. You are joining your conference as the host. For a menu of available commands, press star/pound.

Dana Richey: Hello. This is Dana Richey, the Designated Federal Officer. Who has joined? Do we have someone -- ?

Jeff Knishkowy: This is Jeff Knishkowy from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights at USDA.

Dana Richey: Welcome.

Jeff Knishkowy: Thank you.

Female Voice: Could he repeat his name?

Dana Richey: Jeff, could you repeat your name? Some people couldn't hear you.

Jeff Knishkowy: Yes. Jeff. The last name is Knishkowy. You want me to spell it?

Dana Richey: Please.

Jeff Knishkowsky: K-n-i-s-h-k-o-w-y. And I'm Special Counsel from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.

Dana Richey: Thank you, Jeff. Are there any other comments or questions from the Council members?

Mark Wadsworth: Sarah Vogel.

Sarah Vogel: I very much support the proposed realignment of the federal officials who served on this. I think the addition of the NRCS, as Mark stated, is critical to the effective work for the folks who are serving the Native American farmers and ranchers in communities all across the country. And I really like the idea of the rotating membership in lieu of always having the Office of Civil Rights because the rotating membership is going to involve not only the Office of Civil Rights, but possibly other key offices as time turns. Of course, anybody who wants to come and attend these meetings such as the Office of Civil Rights, if they want to come, all the time they certainly could. But I think I really like the proposed realignment of the federal officers.

Dana Richey: Thank you, Sarah Vogel, for that comment. Are there any other questions or comments that the Council members have about the proposed charter or the renewal process?

Sarah Vogel: I also want to say I really am very happy and very grateful that the Secretary and the Department as a whole

is proposing that this Council be continued. The Council was created, and now there's a certain lifespan which expires later this month because of the Keepseagle settlement. But this is now going to be owned and operated and instigated by the department. I can't wait to tell all the other lawyers in the Keepseagle case and our clients, other than Porter who's here, this is a huge deal and we're extremely happy that this is going on. I think it's a wonderful development and kudos, kudos, kudos.

Leslie Wheelock: Mr. Chairman.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes.

Leslie Wheelock: It was a recommendation of this Council to continue the workings of the Council. And I, on behalf of the Office of Tribal Relations, really want to thank Dana Richey for all the work that she has done helping us get this put together. We do have announced any question back at the USDA that may hold us up a few days on making sure these materials are finalized, but it's a question at this point. Thank you.

Mary Ann Thompson: It's a question as to whether or not it's reauthorized?

Leslie Wheelock: No. It's a question about some of the materials that are going through. There's a stack of materials that have been through multiple reviews, and they're still going through review. Every so often somebody will come up with

something during that review that we have to address internally. It has nothing at all to do with the reestablishment of the Council.

Dana Richey: This is Dana Richey. Thank you, Leslie. I appreciate that comment. Just to summarize, the questions or comments that we're getting through the department and the general services administration who manages or oversees the FACA process, Mary, the questions are more of just some mechanics or language that they felt we needed to add or delete in the charter so that it follows a template of federal charters. The Secretary gave his approval to reestablish the charter several months ago, and so I think that settles the question.

Mary Ann Thompson: Well, that's good, because I was reading that in this report here: "The request for approval of changes to the charter package for the Council for Native American Farming and Ranching reauthorized. Secretary Vilsack authorized the reestablishment of the Council extending the life of this FACA to 2018."

Dana Richey: That's right. So as soon as we have clearance from the Department, the charter will be finalized. The date that it is submitted to Congress is the date that the charter is effective, and then it's two years from that date. All right? So if that's May 1st, then its May 1st, 2018 that

the charter would continue to be effective and then expire on that date.

Dana Richey: I appreciate that. This is Dana Richey again. I'm very confident that it will be about another month because I think we have passed the high hurdles to get it done. Certainly it should be in place before the next meeting of the Council, which we talked about briefly yesterday and I think we'll talk about more this afternoon is maybe it's set for July, August.

Mary Ann Thompson: Good deal. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes. This is Mark Wadsworth, Chairman of CNAFR. I would like to say for Jeff. I guess I, as one Council member, want to express our gratitude to your department for the representation that you've sent to these meetings. Civil Rights is, of course, very important in some of the hurdles that we have encountered through USDA throughout the decades and to present. We would love to keep that door open with you. Also, we've had a myriad representative from your area and we appreciate everyone that came to the meetings, but then hope that you are participatory in the future seeing as I guess your Council position will become a revolving agency.

Jeff Knishkowy: Thank you. Can I just say a quick word?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Jeff.

Jeff Knishkowsky: Because I can't see everything in the room. Thank you, Mark. I'm very sorry I couldn't be there in person this time or Las Vegas. It seemed like the stars were not aligned for me to be there in person, but I hope to be for the next meeting. We're very fortunate that Pilar Velasquez was able to represent our office in person in North Carolina this week. I know Dr. Leonard sends his regards. He's very much interested in maintaining the Office of the Assistant Secretary's unfailing involvement. It's good that we are able to be collaborative as an example either with our involvement or in the work that [indiscernible] the Native American --

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you. Do we have any more further discussion on the changes to the charter? Do we need any official action from the Council itself or are we just waiting for the final results?

Dana Richey: This is Dana Richey again. No. There's no vote or recommendation or any input such as that needed from the Council members for the charter to be finalized by the department.

Mark Wadsworth: Sarah Vogel.

Sarah Vogel: Would you entertain like a resolution of support? I'd like to make a resolution of support for the reauthorization and the future makeup of the Council.

Leslie Wheelock: Mr. Chairman.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes.

Leslie Wheelock: We already have a recommendation for the reestablishment or reauthorization of the Council.

Sarah Vogel: And then maybe a resolution of support for the proposed makeup of the federal membership.

Mark Wadsworth: There's a resolution basically for the makeup of the Council as written.

Gilbert Harrison: I second.

Mark Wadsworth: It's been moved and seconded. Any discussion? All those in favor, raise your right hand. Any opposed? Motion passes. All right.

As far as the next schedule on the agenda, Jeff, we have a break. But is that what we want to go into next? Yes. And I appreciate Jeff participating on the call.

Jeff Knishkowy: Sure. I'll stay on for a while. Probably until lunch.

Mark Wadsworth: We are going on break. It will probably be a 20-minute break.

Jeff Knishkowy: Okay. So maybe I'll call back in. Is that okay?

Mark Wadsworth: Yeah. We can coordinate with Josiah.

Dana Richey: We'll resume at 11:00.

Mark Wadsworth: At 11:00.

Jeff Knishkowy: Great.

Mary Ann Thompson: Take a break.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you.

Jeff Knishkowy: Thank you so much.

Dana Richey: -- person about the per diem for meals expense and it is \$51 a day. Does that answer your question, Gilbert? Okay, thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Leslie?

Leslie Wheelock: Mr. Chairman, for a matter of record on the vote that occurred just prior to our taking a break on the motion by Sarah Vogel regarding the reestablishment of the Council and the makeup of the Council specifically, I wanted to make it known for the record that the Office of -- this is the Secretary of Civil Rights and the Office of Tribal Relations are abstaining at this time as we're still looking on the materials. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: I apologize for not asking for that.

Leslie Wheelock: That's okay.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Joanne?

Joanne Dea: Okay, so I'm Joanne Dea. I'm the USDA Ombudsperson. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this update to the Council. As I mentioned at the December CNAFR meeting, the Secretary requested that this office, my office, look at some FSA direct loan files to better understand the reasons for rejection for Native American applicants. This has

been my main focus really since we last met at that December meeting. At this point, I'm not able to share much more at this time about the work that I'm doing with that. I still need to connect with FSA to talk a little bit more about what I'm finding.

I'm also currently working on an internal report to capture my observations and the concerns and issues and themes relating to barriers. Also to get out more and meet with different groups, I'm trying to travel a bit more. So currently or most recently I attended a three-day tribal outreach meeting in Montana. At that meeting, there were producers, Tribal Colleges, FRTEP, BIA, FSA, NRCS, and RD representatives present as well including representatives from Washington, D.C. So I wanted to thank you for the opportunity to share my update and also for the opportunity to continue to understand more about these important issues that face Native American farmers and ranchers. I'm happy to take any questions.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Gilbert?

Gilbert Harrison: Did anybody else have a question before I -- but anyway, thank you very much, Joanne. The question I have here is you're looking at some data statistics. The Navajo Nation and they're quite large, the reservation itself. As of this date, I think we have only one or two active loans and one or two projects that are occurred there [sounds like]. That's

not because of lack of need. The need is there but for some reason, we cannot get programs established on the Navajo Nation as a good intent on the part of USDA but there's for some reason, it's not taking hold -- I don't know if that would be when you're looking at statistics and data. Maybe it would be good to look into the background of why it's not happening. The numbers tell you one thing but right now I'm saying there's no activity. But why is it there's no activity?

Joanne Dea: All right, thank you. Thank you for that comment.

Mark Wadsworth: Sarah Vogel?

Sarah Vogel: Yeah, I wanted to ask about this as well and I want to get to the Fiscal Year 2016.

Mark Wadsworth: Which tab are we on?

Sarah Vogel: We're on tabs 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15. Do we have a summary report for 2015?

Jim Radintz: I think that's actually FSA data, Sarah, rather than the Ombudsperson's data.

Sarah Vogel: I know but it's what she is obliged under the Settlement Agreement to review.

Jim Radintz: I believe we provided the FY '15 summary of the December meeting.

Sarah Vogel: Okay. I guess I didn't bring it. Let me ask a few questions. This week for Fiscal Year 2016, I guess I should ask Jim. Is it the fiscal year starts in October?

Jim Radintz: October 1st.

Sarah Vogel: So this would be October through --

Jim Radintz: I believe March or maybe as of February because I think these reports were run sometime during the month of March.

Sarah Vogel: This would be five or six --

Jim Radintz: Oh, yeah, it was prepared March 6th so it would be probably through February 29th.

Sarah Vogel: So this should be five months' worth of the activity in fiscal year 2016?

Jim Radintz: That's correct.

Sarah Vogel: Gilbert, I going to display my ignorance. You got to get us out there but what state or states is the Navajo reservation?

Jim Radintz: We are located in three states - in the state of New Mexico, the state of Arizona, and a small portion of the state of Utah.

Sarah Vogel: So just looking at Arizona for real estate loans, there was one real estate loan received from Arizona for a Native American in this five-month period. And in New Mexico, there was also one application received in this five-month

period. I guess one of the things that I had always assumed that the Ombudsperson would do, would look into the very things that Gilbert has been raising is, it isn't just people who apply and are rejected who go through the process of filling out an application form. One of the things that we learned in the Keepseagle litigation is that sometimes people are discouraged from applying and sometimes it has no fault whatsoever to do with USDA. Their parents maybe had a bad experience and so the next generation is frightened to go in.

This is something that I think USDA is very much interested in doing is reducing those barriers to people applying. And then of course once they apply, maybe they'll be accepted, maybe they won't; maybe they're qualified, maybe they're not. But if they don't come in the door and apply -- and this is what I have been talking about for years with you is like, please, look at the census data for the farmers who are in that area. How many farmers are on your reservation, Gilbert?

Gilbert Harrison: I don't have the exact number but I know what's in the San Juan Valley or that we have our farm board. We have over a thousand farmers.

Sarah Vogel: You have over a thousand farmers in one piece of the Navajo reservation and you have two applications in a five-month period during a drought when people desperately need help from USDA. So this is where I think the Ombudsperson could

do a job and it doesn't have to do with any fault of the USDA. It's just like tag teaming and trying to figure out why it is the people aren't coming, why is it that people aren't filling out an application. Do they need more technical assistance? Does the IAC need a greater presence there, the other CDFIs who can help people with credit rehabilitation so that they qualify? I mean all of those things are in there and now this is the vision that we have for the ombudsperson, so excuse me for being again cranky.

Tawney Brunsch: Yes, this is Tawney. I'll just say under tab 10, I looked at, of course, South Dakota's numbers and I see that we had four applications received from Native Americans and three were approved. Many of the Native American application numbers look like it's a 100 percent approval, which I think is a good thing, right? Even though there were so few applications, why can't we promote that more?

I think the real problem, the real barrier, lies in a simple thing like communication and education. That's where I keep talking and going back to our success stories because where you've got Lakota Funds, the grassroots organization that is working in the communities that knows our community members, if they're not calling me, I know people who might be interested; I'll call them. Once we have the success to build on and especially in native communities, it's going to be by word of

mouth. If you have success and you can talk about that one person that Lakota Funds work with to secure the FSA guaranteed ag loan, if they know that person, they're going to call me.

There's got to be more -- even though I'm sorry that you don't have the CDFI to work with, there got to be other grassroots organizations that you could use to help you build that pipeline. And I'm going to scream about this because it's good news. In my mind, it's sad that there were so few applicants but you know what? If you submit an application, you are very likely to be approved.

Sarah Vogel: Of course, I want to add that the application is defined. I think the statistics are kept when a completed application is turned in. To turn in a completed application is a partnership effort between the farmer and the office. And I think when people come in, the FSA people are very helpful. I would agree with that - that they're very helpful.

But I just don't want the Ombudsperson's review to look at -- and you said you've spent the bulk of your time since the last meeting looking at why people were rejected. By the way, people who had applied were rejected; I think the big issue is why aren't more people applying in various states, why aren't people coming in? What are the barriers to filling out a completed application because USDA is extremely helpful at my experience when somebody comes in.

And so I agree with Tawney. I agree, but to me if somebody is rejected for a loan, they also are told they have the right to appeal. There is a NAD process. Maybe you can learn something from why people are being denied credit but I think the big question is why so few applications. I'd like to hear from you, Jim.

Jim Radintz: Okay.

Sarah Vogel: I'm sorry.

Jim Radintz: No, that's fine. What do you want to do? I'll just ask the Chairman in terms of the agenda. Do you want to do that now during Joanne's time or do you want to just wait because I'm on the agenda next? It makes no difference to me. It's just from the standpoint of the process.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay, and I do apologize. I had the older Jim in front of me and I think there was a purpose to try to put both you and Joanne together because of the same subject matter. I apologize to you, Mr. Foxworth. We'll have to move you down the agenda after this discussion. But I, in a way, I think it's very related between the two if we could get them both at once. Can we have both together?

Joanne Dea: And Jim, before you start, I just want to say I do appreciate both of your comments specifically on success stories and then also your comment, Sarah, which relates to asking this broader question about, why aren't people coming in.

Just so you know, Ms. Vogel, I have started some conversations with state-specific staff as well to try and pull on that and kind of unravel that piece too, so some conversations have begun.

Tawney Brunsch: Joanne, I'm sorry but I'm just going to say that first of all, the state isn't going to know anything that's going on in Pine Ridge.

Joanne Dea: Okay.

Tawney Brunsch: Right. And so you're going to have to be figuring out who are the best on the ground contacts for that. Maybe Pine Ridge is different that way. I guess the state doesn't know anything that we're up to obviously and so the more you can find the local organizations or agencies that are serving that community, you're better off. The state isn't going to have the stats.

I also want to mention, I don't know if it would be up to you but I wonder if there would be a way to track those who have actually -- I know we enter them into our loan pipeline the first time they call about pursuing completing an application because we know one of the biggest barriers is just getting that individual to complete the application. Do you know what I mean? So that would be maybe a relevant number to be tracking too. How many are interested but don't apply because the application is too much to complete?

Jim Radintz: This is Jim Radintz. We can do that. We required in the 2014 Farm Bill to implement something called Receipt for Service. So any time someone comes in the office or calls, we will complete a receipt and give that to them that basically says you were in the office on this day. We discussed this subject and here's the action that was taken. They're given an application or they were referred to some other agency depending on what issue it was, that kind of thing. And that's an automated system. We do have some capability to -- unfortunately it's in a different system than the one we used to track actual applications but we have had some folks be able to crosswalk that data so we can see basically how many people that came in either subsequently submitted an application. So that is something we can take a look at.

Tawney Brunsch: That'd be useful data, right, because if you could see that there's a large --

Mark Wadsworth: Tawney Brunsch.

Tawney Brunsch: I'm sorry. That you could see that there's a large number of people obtaining applications or expressing that interest than a small number actually turning them in as completed. Then that would show you that the need is in providing some technical assistance or maybe having a cooperative agreement with organizations who could help, like Lakota Funds, complete that application process or are there no

calls even for applications, then you know it's a communications problem.

Jim Radintz: Zach isn't here, I don't think. This is Jim Radintz again. The IAC, the Intertribal Ag Council has been extremely helpful in that regard in particular. Zach has helped. He'll probably give numbers but it's a large number of applicants and potential applicants. If he runs into snags, he's very informed of our processes and procedures. If he encounters a situation or he thinks the field office is being unreasonable, he doesn't hesitate to email me and some of my senior staff. We intervene and I can think of three or four cases right offhand where a loan was made that perhaps wouldn't have been made except for Zach's intervention and contact with us. So that's something we can certainly expand on but it's been a very beneficial process.

Joanne Dea: This is Joanne Dea.

Mark Wadsworth: Hold on here one second but I know Gilbert's been really wanting to get something here.

Gilbert Harrison: I think there's two or three different sides to this whole story. The USDA, the Farm Service are trying to do a service. Then there's the other part which is the field people. They have experience. They have a tremendous knowledge of why things don't work. And finally, there is the customer side. I like to see some objective research into why.

Everybody's making an effort but nothing's happening. And that's why I ask though. It's not because of lack of need but there's something there that's causing nothing to happen.

It's just I have my own experiences and my own thoughts but I think you need to somehow get an independent survey of your customers to see what is it, why is it that they don't complete their application, why is it they mistrust the government. Those things need to be looked at and then we find these are the reasons. Then we have something to attack. I think that's out there.

I know on the Navajo, many people have bad experience so word of mouth is out there. You get a contract, it's cancelled because of all these other follow-up regulations. You've got to do these things within a certain very short time period which is good for off-reservation but on trust land, it's not good. So these things need to be laid out and say, here's USDA requirements but on the reservation, these are the actual things.

Let me give you one illustration. You get a contract. You have one year to complete it. Within one year, you have to do your environmental stuff. You have to do all of these other kind of things. That takes time. Then you have to foot the bill upfront. If your contract is for \$100,000 to do a

construction, you have to foot that \$100,000 bill upfront. Then you get reimbursed. Who's got \$100,000?

We talk about loan programs but even that takes time. So time and the other things enter it, into it, and which makes a very good program not feasible at the smaller level on the reservation. This is why I like to see some independent undercover agent, excuse the language, go out there and actually find out what are the issues at the grassroots level. Then you have a handle on what is it you're trying to solve. Right now we're just saying, let's try this, let's try this. Thank you very much, Mark, and thank you very much Joanne, and members, thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes. It was Leslie who's up next.

Leslie Wheelock: I just have a very quick follow-up on Jim's comment about Intertribal Ag Council because Tawney was shaking her head. I had a conversation with Zach about whether he's covering the whole state. The end of that conversation, I think he is coming down to work at Pine Ridge. At least initially, I had him scheduled with the Food Sovereignty group that Nick Hernandez is pulling together. But also I think that there's probably a relationship with your office. That would be really good to establish and to help with getting some more people to get those applications for that.

Tawney Brunsch: This is Tawney again.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Tawney.

Tawney Brunsch: I just want to say that I think Zach's program is amazing. He's doing excellent work. Unfortunately, it's, again, it's that distance barrier. He needs to be cloned by about ten times. Do you know what I mean? Because it's hard where he's more than adequately serving his area up there but that's on the other side of the state. That's four hours away honestly. It's not efficient for us to rely on him to serve our farmers and ranchers. Honestly, we can be doing it. It's just that -- or we can connect. We've used the Polycom. We use our Internet, the online resources, and stuff but the truth is he's doing a good job. He just can't serve all the areas where it's needed. Yeah.

Mark Wadsworth: Just kind of -- go ahead, Mary.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you, Mark. Thank you, Chairman. Tawney, I'm in agreement. IAC has not been really serving the southeastern area. Now, we do have a representative now as of our last board meeting with ISD [phonetic]. So they've delegated a representative to serve our area, but she's primarily in the Great Lakes region. To stretch her down into the southeast, whether it's Cherokee or the Seminole tribes or the Choctaw or the Miccosukee down in the southeast, we are not getting the benefits of IAC.

Joanne, I'm wondering about some of the things with these numbers here and I keep looking at them and I've been looking at them for the last two years. North Carolina is not even included in this. And sometimes when North Carolina is included in this, it's Robeson County, the other end of the state where your applications are coming from. I'm wondering if you're getting all of your numbers from FSA or are you going to the state level or the county level to see where that might change?

Joanne Dea: This is Joanne Dea. To answer your question, the information that I'm getting is similar to the sheets that you have in the binder so it's coming from FSA and it's coming out of the skim [sounds like] system. Is that correct?

Jim Radintz: Well, yes. This is Jim Radintz again. Yes, it's coming out of our system that we can track everything down to the county level so we know every application that comes in. We know its disposition, if the loan is denied or approved and if it was denied, why it was denied. And we provide all of that information to Joanne so it rolls up from the local level all the way up.

Mary Ann Thompson: All the way up, and specifically with the Eastern Band of Cherokee, our tribal lands and our tribal member farmers are scattered out through a set of five different counties. We have land that is 70 miles away. We've got some

scattered sites out there. So a lot of our tribal members then are relying on some of the county USDA programs.

Becky Williams sits back here and she works with Swain and Jackson Counties but we have Graham County and Macon County. We have other counties out there, and I just keep thinking that I need to do more outreach and that the FSA programs need to do more outreach too and target those tribal member farmers out there. We've been doing a little bit with the Tribe here and doing some outreach with some of the farmers here. Why those numbers are not included in any of your statistics here? I don't know. And I guess maybe I'll speak with Becky in some of the USDA programs and those other counties to see why our numbers are not included.

Joanne Dea: Thank you. Again, this is Joanne Dea. I mean I think throughout these two days and other sessions that I've sat in with the Council, distance, remoteness, applications being difficult - there's a lot of pieces that feed into why people aren't coming in. A couple of other areas got mentioned today or have been mentioned over time to just the long mistrust, individuals that may have been turned away in the past which then has caused kind of this unwillingness to try and that could have been maybe they have been turned away a couple of times. So there's a lot of reasons that add into this. I think trying to unravel that.

So one other suggestion was for me to get more in touch with those folks that are practically on the ground who have their kind of ears at that point and they really know what's going on. So I would ask your help, any of you as council members, if there are individuals that you think will help me to understand more what is going on specifically in your state that will only help me to try and kind of tease this apart.

Mary Ann Thompson: And it seems that though from your office, you would be able to - I don't know - put out an email to North Carolina and say, North Carolina USDA, can you identify the counties where we have tribal members out there farming? And surely they can give you the five county areas or the ten county areas if it's in Robeson County, if it's in Jackson's way, Martin's [phonetic] way. And then you know which counties to go to within the 50 states here that all of these pertains to. So you could reach out to each state individually and request that information from them and then target those folks there.

Because I did actually pull out my binders for the last several years and pulled the agendas out. I've taken these reports and looked at them and compared them, and seriously I think you could establish the same information from two years ago in this binder. It's not changing any. I've realized you're just now getting into the position and getting on the

ground and running with what your mission or goals are. There's so much work to be done but I'm hoping that by focusing in and targeting these areas and these groups that you can come up with a little bit more solid numbers to report back. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Also just a comment, Joanne, before, there is a FSA liaison within every state to tribes, that has been designated for years. Do you have a list of those liaison names with the tribes? That you could directly contact them because they should be knowledgeable about every -- well, about this particular situation?

And also, I'm seeing as this Council is going to pass the charter, maybe we should all just concentrate solely on just lending too. Maybe we should start looking at participation into the other FSA programs by tribal members for disaster assistance, feed programs. Are we getting those numbers as compared to the non-Indian populace? I really think that when in some cases, we might pick up people that we didn't know about. But in that other cases, we'll see where we are very deficient in getting the information to that. Not only FSA, maybe we should look at NRCS programs where you might have heard of other things. Just a comment, I don't know. What do you think about that, Leslie? Is that something within the structure to kind of look at?

Leslie Wheelock: From my perspective, I think it would be helpful to have more of the information on why people aren't applying whether it's -- regardless of the program. I mean that's one of the questions that we ask when we do outreach and when we talk to people. The answers are kind of all over the board. You've gone through some of them. Sarah and Gilbert have all mentioned and Tawney will mention some of those reasons. As I said earlier in terms of outreach, a blog would help whereas all the work that we do doesn't match up. And somebody mentioned another tribal member - I think you did - coming in and saying, Tawney, look what I did, look what I've got, and look how this works. And so our best advertising is all of you and all of the current customers that we have. I don't know how to make or help those people understand that they can serve that role other than to tell them that.

Mark Wadsworth: I show my ignorance. I don't even really understand a blog yet.

Leslie Wheelock: Imagine your mother sending you an email, a letter about something that happened at home.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Sarah?

Sarah Vogel: I don't know. Joanne, you've been Ombudsperson for how long now?

Joanne Dea: It's probably like a year and nine months. Again, this is Joanne Dea. A year and nine months. I launched the Office in June of 2015.

Sarah Vogel: Well, you got it. I mean unfortunately, I think the Ombudsperson was appointed quite with a lag. There is a significant lag. The Ombudsperson was required by the Keepseagle settlement. The idea was that the Ombudsperson was going to be inside USDA, able to go around, talk to people, figure out the barriers, and handle things in a -- sort of be the expedited person who could get to the bottom of things. Obviously, you have to look at the Ag Census data. Obviously, you have to deal with the key people. Obviously, you have to have great relationships with people like IAC. But I think time is of the essence.

There are a lot of people out there who for whatever reason are not -- and I think the FSA has done its bit. It was required to turnover, to develop these statistics at. It's also part of the settlement agreement so that people can keep an eye on loans, so that there could be an early warning, early detection system. We have been bringing up Arizona. Christine Webber brought up Arizona the very first meeting I think, the very first set of statistics. There's something wrong in Arizona. It isn't that it's necessarily USDA is wrong in Arizona or maybe it's there's no offices or the offices are not

in the right place or maybe it's the immobile office or you need to -- whatever. Who knows? But the idea was that the Ombudsperson would try to get to the bottom of many of these things and work collegially and not in adversarial way with people.

I am a lawyer. I'm on the other side of the case. I can tell you that litigation is not the way to figure out why people aren't coming in and applying. And 100 percent, we've been harping on this for a long time but to just look at those that have been filed and those that have been accepted and focus on the ones that have been rejected. I could predict why those people were rejected. I would predict that it is not going to be because of race discrimination. What I would predict that people may have been turned away at the door because of an unfriendly secretary or receptionist. That's possible. Jim is never going to know about that.

You have this charge of looking at the statistics and trying to figure out and see these patterns and do something about it. And so it's been your role under the Settlement Agreement that's running out in two weeks. I just wish in these next two weeks and any longer period of time it is available that you do your level best to figure these things out because you're in the best spot to do it.

Mark Wadsworth: Angela Peter?

Angela Peter: Yes, Angela Peter from Alaska. I would really recommend and I forget who spoke about this but Alaska would not have our 14 key CDs [sounds like] without Kristine Harper who is our tribal liaison. She is just like the person that we go to, everybody goes to. And she kind of directs them to me but any place that has a tribal liaison, I think that would be the place to start. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Also, I guess as a part of this conversation, we might as well work together on this. Did you want to add any of your presentation at this time?

Jim Radintz: Yeah, I can just go ahead and start and go through mine if that's okay.

Mark Wadsworth: Is that agreeable with the Council?

Sarah Vogel: Yes.

Mark Wadsworth: Go ahead, Jim.

Jim Radintz: Thank you. Okay. First of all, I apologize. I put together a PowerPoint presentation and then neglected to tell Dana that I need a projector so a minor detail there, huh. I thought about that late last night. So what I'm going to do is like I said, I have a PowerPoint deck. I'll go through it and I have some other updates I want to give you. I'll make sure that I get the actual slides to Dana and Josiah so they can distribute them to everyone and get them in the proceedings.

But I just did want to update you on some things. Just to refresh everyone's memory, 2015 fiscal year that started October 1st of 2014 and ran through last September was a record-breaking year for FSA. We made the highest amount of real estate loans directly guaranteed ever and that's ever including back in the 1980s. We did \$3.1 billion worth and just over \$1 billion worth of that was direct lending. We made \$2.5 billion worth of beginning farmer loans which was again a record amount.

As far as targeted underserved, what we used to call SDA, we broke records there too. We did \$827 million in that. We made over 6,000 microloans. From Indian country, we made a total of 1,649 loans for \$126 million. So that's what 2015 wound up.

In terms of 2016, our funding levels available are pretty similar to what we had in 2015. We've already obligated nationally \$3.3 billion since October. So we're seeing a big surge in demand primarily because of the condition of the agricultural economy, the commodity prices especially for the grains and so forth are down. The dairy industry has been struggling too. So we're seeing a big increase indirect but especially in loan guarantees. A lot of the lenders are getting additional scrutiny from their oversight authorities. And so they're looking more for guarantees to allow them to continue with their existing customers but we're also seeing increases in

our regular direct lending as well. Our operating loan lending is up about 16 percent over this same time last year.

The real success story is our microloan lending is up 40 percent over last year. Last year was a big increase over the previous year. We're approaching the 19,000 mark in microloans since the program started. It's about \$425 million. Those microloans are performing actually a little bit better than the portfolio overall. Again, IAC and Zach and some others have done an awful lot of work in promoting and utilizing the microloan program especially in Indian country. So no small amount of credit is due IAC.

I guess the biggest concern I have right now is I fully expect that our operating lending, both direct and guaranteed, the loan funds will be generally depleted in July, which is way before September when our fiscal year ends. We normally don't get additional funding until October then. We have alerted the Secretary, and he's asked for some additional information and asked us to work on some potential alternatives to address that situation. We're looking at several different possibilities right now.

The one positive thing in terms of Indian country is that of course the law requires us to set aside or hold loan funds specifically for what's called socially disadvantaged in the law. So that should provide some additional funding

availability because of course Indians qualify for that. They won't be competing with the larger applicant population. That should help a little bit, but I still think generally because of loan demand all over the country, we're going to see a challenge there.

Again, the Secretary is very engaged and very interested. I would just say that that's taken a little bit of time for me to get used to. The Secretary has been very interested in our loan programs. More so I think than other Secretaries at least who recently have been, which has been really great in terms of the support that we have gotten. Our programs have grown substantially. Our loan portfolio since 2008 has grown by about 30 percent across the board. Our funds are appropriated annually. So a lot of that is driven by the amount of funding that Congress gives us. The Secretary and the Administration have been very supportive of Farm Loan Programs.

Interestingly, in the fiscal environment we're in, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have seen fit to basically fund the loan programs at the levels that were recommended in the president's budget. There are not a lot of programs in the government that have experienced that. Yes, Mark?

Mark Wadsworth: Yeah, Mark Wadsworth here. On the socially disadvantaged funds, you said was enacted by law? Is that correct?

Jim Radintz: Yes sir.

Mark Wadsworth: Is that funding dictated to each individual state as an amount of funding or is that dictated on a national level, a pot of money that is utilized by individuals? I'm just wondering if you're at \$5 million designated for Idaho and how much of that \$5 million in the socially disadvantaged fund is being utilized. And that's where I'm trying to go with this question.

Jim Radintz: The law requires us to look at the number of socially disadvantaged farm operators in each state from the Ag Census. Excuse me, I stand corrected. For that portion of it, we actually use, I think, the rural population census - the every ten-year census. We make an allocation, but we also hold funds in reserve at headquarters so that each state gets money to loan but we know that our funding models are not perfect. Demand will be higher in one state than in another. And so we want to be able to, if Idaho has a surge of applications for whatever reason that they may spend all of their funding and then we can supplement that from our national pool.

So we try to manage the funding in a way to maximize -- we want to make sure that every targeted dollar that we can goes to

the SDA applicants. We've been pretty successful at that. We ordinarily hold those funds in reserve either until they run out or until like the last week of the fiscal year. We don't want to leave any funding on the table if we can avoid it. But generally, we use that authority that we have to try to make sure that we absolutely fund as many socially disadvantaged farmer applications as we can. That's our focus.

Mark Wadsworth: I just want to expound on that prime example, and I think that's the way it should work across the board throughout USDA as a whole. Because my concern - and I hope that when we get the NRCS person and I made this request previously too when we were at D.C. - is that with NRCS, with their socially disadvantaged or their tribal allocation, if they mirror that sort of scenario that you're talking about, I really would like to know that. Because for instance in the state of Idaho right now, we have so much more demand through that pot of money that we are just depleting it. It's just become a competitive grant scenario with the population that wasn't served for decades.

I think the audience and the people always have to remind ourselves is that we weren't even a part of the game until 1990 and any language towards tribes at that time. During that effort of trying to first initially educate people through outreach efforts as such. We're to a point now, we're finally

at that point where we're participatory. And now we're drowning [sounds like] the funds but that's the only funds that are available.

So I hope that that's the case with NRCS - that they are reserving that national need from other state allocations. Because I think that if they have a surplus in one state, they should be able to transfer it to another state with the high demand, is what I'm getting at. I commend you on what you just talked about with your reserve pot.

Jim Radintz: Well, thank you. The direction is clear and the statute from Congress and that certainly what we believe our charge is to execute. Like I said, we do work hard to do that. We have actually, even in some cases, allowed states to transfer non-targeted funds into the targeted account to reach applications if that was the situation they were in. Actually, we have program performance goals that are set as an encouragement. Those goals actually ripple down into folks' performance reviews. So that there is an incentive for them to get out there and get those loans made. We use sort of the carrot-and-stick approach a little bit.

Mark Wadsworth: Kind of the socially disadvantaged just kind of I always get this picture of the poor guy sitting in the corner and when the party is going and nobody's talking to him.

Jim Radintz: Well that's why about a year or 18 months ago, we tried to revise all of our language to really talk about underserved, because that's what we're really dealing with. The problem is socially disadvantaged is literally written into the statute. So when we talk about the actual funding part, we really have to refer to that term. But otherwise, in all of our literature and everything, we try to -- I agree with you Mark. I've heard that comment more than one time. So that's why we've shifted to underserved or targeted underserved for that very reason. So we're still working through that a little bit.

Mark Wadsworth: Gilbert?

Gilbert Harrison: This is Gilbert from Navajo. After visiting the machines downstairs, I may need a micro loan. My question is, you talked about the good response, excellent response to the micro loan. This is just a general across the board. Do you have any information as to what kind of a micro loan has been available and given to Native American farmers and ranchers? After all, that's our interest here. Do you have that type of breakdown?

Jim Radintz: I certainly do. In fact, I can give you the numbers right here for 2015. To the Native Americans we made 332 micro loans for just a little over \$9 million. So far this year we've made 175 micro loans to Native Americans for \$5.2 million. So I expect that we will eclipse both the loan number

and dollar number. The issue we face this year is funding. Although again with the fund reserve, I think we'll be able to match or exceed those numbers. And that's certainly what we want to do and we do monitor that activity fairly closely.

Gilbert Harrison: Percentage-wise, of the whole pot, how much does that constitute roughly?

Jim Radintz: It's between 5 and 10 percent.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you very much.

Jim Radintz: Well, you're welcome.

Mark Wadsworth: Mary Thompson. Yes, Mary?

Mary Thompson: Thank you, Mark. Well, maybe I should wait until you finish your entire presentation. You're not done yet?

Jim Radintz: No, I have a few more things I wanted to cover.

Mary Thompson: Then I would reserve my comment for later.

Jim Radintz: I just wanted to mention a few other things. I mentioned, I think most of us know there are some challenges in the farm economy right now with commodity grain prices being down and dairy prices being down. Even some of the beef prices for feeder cattle and so forth are not what they were several months ago. So we are facing challenges there.

Our delinquency rates though and our portfolio are up only slightly. We are working hard and we have directives out to our field staff to remind them that I fully expect them to use all

of the tools that we have in our toolbox, so to speak, to help folks continue. All of our restructuring programs and all of those kinds of things and we expect those to be fully utilized.

You'll find it interesting to know, we also can look at delinquency rates by ethnicity. Loans to Native Americans are actually performing slightly better than the rest of our portfolio. I'm not sure of all the reasons. I'm sure there's a variety of reasons why, but I think that's interesting to know. I think I already mentioned that our micro loan program in general is performing a little better than the portfolio overall.

A couple of other things that I wanted to mention, again, put in a plug for IAC. I know Zach and his staff have worked with some existing borrowers that have been having difficulties, and helped them work through getting through that, and also worked closely with some of our field offices. We're committed to continuing to do that. Our mission after all is to get folks on the farm and keep them there. That's to the extent that we have authority and the law allows us to do that. That's certainly what we aim to do.

We did launch a real estate micro loan program for direct loans back in January. It's \$50,000, which isn't a tremendous amount of money for a purchase. We have financed some purchases. We've only made about 30 of those so far, but those

funds can also be used for real estate improvements. So if you need to build a new barn or put in a drainage ditch, or any number of sorts of things like that.

Gilbert, before it slips my mind, I think you were talking about some of the NRCS contracts and cost-share kinds of things. One of the great things that I've seen happen in quite a few states now is we've used either -- well it's most convenient for a micro loan but if the dollar amount is larger, even a regular loan, we will actually provide the upfront financing to get whatever the conservation practice is put in place. We take an assignment on the cost-share payment so then when that provides upfront financing, the farmer or a rancher can go out and get the practice done. We would apply the cost-share from NRCS onto the loan and then restructure the remaining over five or seven years or whatever the cash flow will allow. That provides a really great way for us to get some of those things done that otherwise -- I know there's not a lot of folks out there that have \$10,000 or \$15,000 or \$20,000 or more, whatever it would be, sitting in their pocket. We are able to use our programs to help folks get in the door with the other programs sometimes.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you.

Jim Radintz: We are working on that. I had hoped I could tell you that we had launched our new guarantee program for small loans and the micro lender program for CDFIs. We ran into

a couple of legal snags with that, but we finally got those worked out with our general counsel staff here probably about two weeks ago. So I'm hopeful that we'll get the regulations published this month. I think that's going to open a lot more doors for us in Indian country in a lot of other places where I think the FSA doesn't have a footprint. And I think we can definitely leverage the CDFI and other local grassroots groups to get the programs out there to folks that really need them.

Just a couple of other things not loan-related but I was asked to update you on. FSA recently closed the sign-up for the Conservation Reserve Program. Acceptance and announcements are scheduled to be made later this month. FSA, I guess back in the fall, they announced the Grasslands Reserve Program and the sign-up period closed back in December. They're expecting to make announcements on that program later this month as well.

One more thing, FSA has a farm storage facility loan program that's operated historically. It was the bin loan program. Many changes have been made to that. It can now be used to finance everything from a bulk milk tank to a walk-in cooler for someone raising vegetables to even the one they always like to point to as a maple sap gathering and storage for maple syrup. So it's open now to a very wide variety of agricultural commodities, not just grain anymore. Actually we can sometimes package those. They can't use those funds for

packaging and processing. We can use our operating loan funds for that as long as it's at least half of the produce is being grown by the producer. So we can use a Farm Storage Facility Loan to put up cold storage, then we can make an operating loan for a packing line, for example, for vegetables or something like that.

All of those things give us a little more flexibility. We're really encouraging our field staff to look across the board and look at how they can combine the different FSA programs together for the benefit of the producers we're here to help. So that's probably one of our biggest initiatives, it's just encouraging folks to not just look at -- if someone comes in and says, oh, well I needed to do this. Okay, well here's this program, but to look beyond that.

A couple of other initiatives I wanted to mention. FSA is in the process of -- I think we're in our second sort of phase two pilot of something called Bridges to Opportunity. That is an initiative to really help make FSA more of the front door for producers to any kind of agricultural program assistance. A big part of it is a very sophisticated computer program. If Gilbert came in our office and said, well, you know, I've been reading a little bit about organics, and I'd really like to find out more how I could start converting to organic production. In a Bridges to Opportunity office, what they could do is go into

that system and find anything to do with organics. Whether it's the extension agent that specializes in that, even things like, oh, there's a seminar in two weeks at such and such a place.

For example, if there's a specific person, it will actually reach out to that person and give them your contact information and say, hey, Gilbert Harrison was in. He's interested in organics, would you please contact him, kind of thing. And we can actually give, then you, a written kind of a write-up of here's the different resources and here's some contact information and that kind of thing.

It started out in just 10 or 12 offices. Phase two is expanding to about 200, bearing in mind that FSA has about 2,100 offices across the country. It's a major initiative for us. It's something, again, that the secretary has taken a personal interest in. It really is a way again to leverage our office footprint across rural America and really do a better job of providing the kind of resources that producers need.

I just made myself a note for the record, and I wish I would have said that this morning in the council meeting, but just so everyone understands, FSA certainly can lend on trust land. We often do. As long as I can remember, from the time my career started back in the early '80s, we've been able to do that. One of my missions is to make sure that everybody knows and understands that. We've actually again worked closely with

Zach and some of his folks on some cases where we've actually purchased trust land and done some things like that, or purchased land that folks wanted to place into trust that maybe had been lost years ago. They wanted to have an opportunity to purchase it and get it back in Native hands. We do that regularly.

The one challenge we have sometimes is working with BIA. We've had some cases where we do have to get their concurrence or approval, and we share the frustrations of every one in a few of those situations. Leslie reminded me earlier, we do actually have a Memorandum Of Understanding with BIA now and I think that's helped some. We'll continue to work on that. Any time there is trust issues involved, it does add another layer of complexity to what we do. But we are continually committed to working through those things and making the system work and making our programs available to everyone.

Mark Wadsworth: A quick scenario. You were in the process of approving a new lending program for land buyback by divided interest amongst the tribal members?

Jim Radintz: Yes, the Highly Fractioned Land Program. That's actually a relending program where we would, for example, make a loan to, say, Lakota Funds who would then turn around and use that funding to make loans to individual tribal members to unify fractioned interests that's happened over the years. In

fact I had somebody at the meeting in Montana here a few weeks ago, and we've been trying to do some more promotion. We haven't been able to get any applications for that program yet, and I would really like to at least get one or two of those loans made yet this year if we can find and stimulate some interest.

Mark Wadsworth: Can you guys mesh your program with the current Cobell Land Buy-Back Program? I think it would be an excellent opportunity for you to get that information out because they're dealing with the exact same sort --

Jim Radintz: We've had some conversations with the -- you may have to help me Leslie there. The American [sic] Land --

Leslie Wheelock: Tenure.

Jim Radintz: -- Tenure Foundation. We've had several conversations with them about that very issue. We're continuing to work with them to see how we might be able to coordinate some of those.

Mark Wadsworth: Because I showed my superintendent and also the Office of Special Trustee on our reservation. They had really a lot of questions in that. Actually within the Cobell lawsuit, they'll go to these targeted tribes or the tribes that are on the list tribe by tribe by tribe. And they'll hire people within the reservation to educate about the buy-back program. If you could get in to that door, they could talk to

the very same people that you're trying to involve in this program as well.

Jim Radintz: Okay. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Also, I'll give you the name of somebody, maybe he can lead you on.

Jim Radintz: Please do.

Mark Wadsworth: And finally, most tribes, they all respect their elders as a group. Amongst tribes, all have a veteran's group, and they'll have a cowboy group, and also they have the powwow people. But one of the things that I think we're trying to get out to our veterans, and I'm very proud of that scenario within Indian country, is that out of all the designated minority sectors within the United States, Native American people as a percentage of their population, I think that the average for most people within segregated groups is like 3 to 5 percent of their population will serve in the military. Within the Native American Indian community, it's close to 20 to 25 percent, which is far above any other population within that veterans group. And you do have a lot of veteran-orientated lending or preference or --

Jim Radintz: Let me first say that reaching veterans is also a priority for us. We actually do monitor our lending to veterans. We don't have a specific preference per se, the closest thing we have is we have something called term limits.

Our programs are not intended to be permanent financing, although actually we can provide permanent financing. These limits don't apply to folks on the reservation, operators on the reservation.

But anyway what I was getting at is, beginning veteran farmers, if they've farmed ten years or less, none of the loans they get during that time count toward those limits. That's probably the biggest benefit that a veteran gets, but we have been working - it's both a departmental priority and an FSA priority to improve veteran participation, veteran hiring, veteran lending, and veteran participation in all of our different USDA programs.

As I said, we monitor how well we're doing with reaching veterans. The Deputy Under Secretary for our mission area, which is basically FSA, Crop Insurance, and Foreign Ag Service, our Deputy Under Secretary, Lanon Baccam, is actually the Department's Veteran's coordinator. He has pretty high expectations for us and what we need to do vis-à-vis veterans. And so we have been very actively engaged and we'll continue to be and look for other opportunities to continue to work to improve veteran participation in our programs.

Mark Wadsworth: Because again, I think that within FSA, they can approach tribes and they all have veteran groups. Do

you deal with the Veterans Administration or VA representative within the tribes if you want to get that information to those?

Jim Radintz: Okay. Thank you. That's more of a good thing.

Mark Wadsworth: Gilbert.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you Jim. I'm going to do something real sneaky. When I get back home, I'll put on my dark glasses. I'm going to apply for a loan. When we next time we have a meeting, I'll give an update.

Jim, I wanted to say that from what I hear, you have some very good initiatives - the USDA Farm Loan Services. I only wish we could get this kind of information across at the local level. Because many of the farmers in my area, we have community meetings but they're basically on the weekends or after hours. If there's a way we could get your local USDA folks to come in and talk at these meetings, I think it will make a difference too also. Because right now, most of the staff are 40 hours, 8:00 to 5:00, weekends off. That doesn't allow for a lot of communication. So if there could be something we could do in that area, it would really be nice because you have some good initiatives and good programs, but somebody needs to come in and tell our people at our chapter meetings. It could be nice if they could do it in our native

language because a lot of our farmers, that's what we talk is our native language. So thank you very much.

Jim Radintz: Thank you, Gilbert. On the issue of outreach, that's something where we've been in the past been lacking. We used to have a build-it-and-they-will-come mentality. Well, the office is there and if people need our help they'll show up. We learned that that just isn't the case. It wasn't too many years ago that FSA's outreach staff consisted of two people at headquarters. We have since then increased that staff substantially, which has greatly increased their ability to provide outreach tools to our field staff out there and also to communicate that the expectation for outreach, just as you mentioned, is significantly increased. They are engaged, I think one of the folks on that staff is specifically charged with outreach for Native American tribes and so forth.

There's a lot more activity there than there has been in the past. But as you all know, that's not the kind of thing that happens overnight. It takes a while to get that activity ramped up. If we just had a lot more folks like Becky here that were out in the community engaged in working hard to do the things that we expect folks to do. I think that's going to happen but it's going to be a process and it's going to take a little time.

Leslie Wheelock: Just a very quick comment. The Office of Tribal Relations, out of the 2014 Farm Bill, we had several veterans' initiatives. The FSA has a set of them, but they're also, as Jim mentioned, throughout the Department. We've put together a flier on these benefits that we distributed at the National Congress of American Indians two years ago that now needs to be updated now that the regs are out. And our office will work with our Veterans Affairs person in order to try and update those for the Council for the next meeting. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you. Mary.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you. Mary Thompson. Some of these grant opportunities there, I'm so glad to hear about. Especially, this might be a little tag message we can put out all over the place is that FSA does loans on trust lands. I appreciate that. We might have to use that Becky and get some things going here. But as far as Indians applying for the set-aside money for tribal members, and I know we're going to encourage the Native American farmers and ranchers to go there, but whenever those set-aside funds are depleted, then they're allowed to go into the general pot where they may qualify there.

Jim Radintz: That's correct.

Mary Ann Thompson: Also maybe that Native American farmer is a veteran or is a beginning farmer, or is a -- what was the

other one? The guy in the corner that Mark was talking about?  
The socially disadvantaged farmer?

Jim Radintz: That sort of covers all of the above.

Mary Ann Thompson: All of the above. But so now if I'm applying and there's no funding there available for my project, then I can redo that one into the veteran pot, or redo that one into the beginning farmer pot, or maybe redo that one into the Women in Agriculture pot or something like that. I think those farmers that fit in those different scenarios, we need to do some outreach with them, too. I appreciate your information - and if I can backtrack just a little bit - I have a comment that I wanted to make earlier with Joanne. And Becky, I hate to put you on the spot, and I hope I don't put you on the spot. I can still make comments on it.

Leslie Wheelock: We cannot do business without a quorum.

Sarah Vogel: We aren't going to be making a motion.

Mary Ann Thompson: We need you for a quorum, Angela.

Angela Peter: Go ahead, Mary.

Mary Ann Thompson: Okay, thank you. Joanne, what I'm going to attempt to do here is see if we can use our relationship with the Swain County USDA programs to maybe find some contact persons to supply information up to your office to trickle back up. And so I'm wondering with the -- well, just to get better numbers and everything. So Becky, I'm going to maybe

put you on the spot a little bit and see if you are aware of any applicants through the USDA programs you worked with down here from tribal members. Do we have any applicants? Have we had any applicants in the last two years?

Becky Williamson: Yes.

Mary Ann Thompson: Yes.

Becky Williamson: Before getting out, I will go and try to get the report now to share with you the exact number we had in Swain, Jackson and Macon. You're talking about just loan applications? They're working on getting that for us, right now the server's down, in Oracle [phonetic].

Mary Ann Thompson: But your answer is yes?

Becky Williamson: Yes. I do remember of one, it's in the making right now. And they came to the making in August. I'm not sure which county they were tied to. I believe it was Jackson County.

Mary Ann Thompson: How does that report or that number trickle back up to where that loan can be included or counted as part of the reporting that we get from FSA?

Jim Radintz: If I can add, it all actually comes out of the same system. So the report that Becky gets is actually just a subset of a report that my staff would run to provide you the information. All of our systems are inter -- well it's actually one just giant system. So that when Becky's folks put data in,

we see it at headquarters. And that's part of what's reflected in those numbers.

Beck Williamson: I can pull it out by county specific. They can too. It's been on the loan applications.

Jim Radintz: Yeah, our reported 3,000 counties gets a little bit outdated.

Mary Ann Thompson: Probably. But Joanne, now I'm wondering this, if Becky's information is reported back and it all goes into the same system, but separately she sent that exact same information right straight to you so you could extrapolate that information a little bit quicker I guess from the overall how many counties, 800 and something odd? I'm just looking for a way to help get these numbers, and as we're all looking for more specific numbers, just trying to figure out a way to do that.

I must say that we have -- I've only been aware of this for the last few years or so but the FSA programs do come to the Qualla Boundary and try to set up and do the outreach. Share information with the farmers as to what's available, what grant funding's available, and stuff like that. We're making the effort to do the great job. I don't think we're at that great job yet, but we're trying. So that's not going to work. I can't figure out how to get these numbers better. All right. Thank you.

Becky Williamson: Mary, [inaudible]?

Mary Ann Thompson: For the record?

Dana Richey: This is Dana Richey. After this, we're running substantially behind schedule and we need to get to the next speaker so that he can make a flight this afternoon out of Asheville Airport. So please go ahead and then we need to move to the next speaker.

Becky Williamson: Mary, whether it's through you, Joanna or whatever, we do have --

Dana Richey: Could you please give us your name? Sorry.

Becky Williamson: Becky Williamson. Sorry. We've come to the reservation. I've sat at Peter's and taken a NAP application. But to get them to come in and follow-up, we have to go to them and work it. Maybe our presence, now that we're going to have here at the extension office once a month, will help build that relationship to communicate with us and to participate with us. We can bring it to you, but sometimes you've got to be able to work with us. And I don't know if it's on a trust level, if it's a relationship, or exactly what it is, or they feel it's funding a handout. People feel kind of funny about things like that, and it's not. We're here to grow our agricultural economy here. Is there like a meeting that we can hold in the community so that they now who we are and what we

do? Maybe branch out to the different communities that's here on the reservation?

Mary Ann Thompson: I think that's something that's -- it's where we're going and it's where other tribes should also be going with there. Just to get that outreach out there. And we'll talk about it and sit down and we'll figure out something, but maybe as an example to something that could be done. Thank you, Becky.

Tawney Brunsch: If I could just add one thing. This is Tawney. Maybe a stronger presence of your -- you said the FSA has tribal liaisons?

Jim Radintz: Some states do have tribal liaisons. I know, for example --

Tawney Brunsch: Do we have one? I've never met him.

Jim Radintz: I expect they do. I know both Montana and North Dakota do. And I believe Arizona and New Mexico do. I don't know specifically about South Dakota.

Tawney Brunsch: Yeah. The fact that I haven't met him, honestly, would tell me that if there is one, they're not doing their job. Sorry.

Jim Radintz: I think that's a fair assessment.

Tawney Brunsch: There's a lot of room for improvement, and I'm happy to be your mouthpiece all day long. I think you guys are doing great work, but honestly, there's too much ground to

cover for just one person, one organization. And if we could partner, kind of leverage that relationship between the liaison, we have a great local office, and Todd Alexander and Martin. And that's really the reason that I was able to move forward with us getting approved. It is about relationship, on every level. So, great. That's all.

Porter Holder: Thank you. Thank you, Jim. Counselor, I have been advised of the agenda in front of me. Our next speaker will be Mr. Raymond Foxworth with the Overview of Programs of First Nations Development Institute. Can you come on up?

Raymond Foxworth: Certainly. Hi. Thank you all, first of all, for having me and inviting First Nations to speak and talk about some of our programs. Knowing that I think I am the last person between you all and lunch, I will try to keep this brief. So I'm Raymond Foxworth. I'm with First Nations Development Institute. I've been with First Nations for about nine years now. On the program side, I have the pleasure of working on our Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative, in addition to a bunch of other things we do. So I'm just going to tell you a little bit about First Nations generally and then talk a little bit more about our Food Systems Program and the work we do in that area.

I handed out a packet of information, just so you have that and know a little bit about us, I put in there our most recent annual report, an impact statement that we developed that talks about some of our programs and where we're going over the next five years. Also some information about some trainings that we have coming up, and then two reports that we've recently done. One is on programs that we supported under a senior hunger portfolio which was really targeted at supporting programs that were working to eliminate senior hunger in native communities. I think that just ties in to some of what we do related to Tawney's comment about talking about the successes that are taking place and the great work that's taking place in Indian country. That's a lot of what we try to do at the reports that we released.

The other one is a grant-making report that just gives you an idea of the requests that we've gotten over the last four to five years under our Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative, funding request from native communities, and what we've been able to support. It gives you an idea of the gaps with unmet need and things like that. So just a little bit about -- yes?

[Background conversation]

Raymond Foxworth: Just a little bit about First Nations. First Nations Development Institute is a 36-year-old Native

American controlled and operated non-profit organization. We are headquartered in Longmont, Colorado, right outside of Denver. We have a field office in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and then we also have one staff member that works remotely in Hopi. Fundamentally, First Nations was created to assist Native communities in controlling their assets and then also supporting the development of innovative models when it comes to asset control in native communities. And really to support these models, especially those models that are working towards asset control in culturally compatible ways.

In terms of size, we are 23 full time staff members. Our annual budget is about \$6 million. Most of that comes from private foundations and tribes. We get a small amount of money from federal grant programs and then also a small amount from a growing individual donor base.

Fundamentally, we are a grant maker, technical assistance provider. We also do some policy and advocacy work and coalition building around different topics or areas. We have five general program areas. One, we invest in Native youth. We have a Native Youth and Culture Fund portfolio which really supports programs that empower native youth in culturally-specific ways to retain cultural knowledge and values. So every year, we've been able to award about half a million dollars to

Native communities working in youth empowerment and cultural connectedness.

We have a financial empowerment program, which is really supporting areas of financial literacy, investor education, fraud and consumer protection, and entrepreneurship. We have a program that works in household and community asset building strategies. That's really supporting programs in native communities like individual development accounts, volunteering site assistance set-up. So that you know those VITA sites that people have access to those types of services.

And then we also have a program, a tribal and community institution development program, where we support programs. We have a program where we're supporting tribal domestic violence coalitions and providing technical assistance and training to them under VAWA. And then we also have an artist supporting program which is supporting organizations that work directly with native artists.

Right now probably the biggest program that we have is our Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative. The Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative of First Nations was created in 2002. It was largely created because of the leadership at that time, the forward-thinking leadership at that time, including Sherry Salway Black and others, really took stock of some of the grant requests that we began to see under a

different grant-making program we had at that time called the Little Eagle Staff Fund. They began to notice that a lot of the requests coming in were for food-related projects.

Around 2000, the leadership at that time at First Nations began a bunch of listening circles around Indian country to talk about how we can be more active in this space. So from there, we created the Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative. In the last five to six years, we've really ramped up support in that program area as an organization.

As the grant making in Indian country report states, roughly from 2012 to 2015, we've given \$4 million in direct grants to native tribes and organizations working on local food systems issues. Well, \$4 million, we're pretty proud of that number. The reality is the amount of unmet need is great. It's closer to \$30 million. So we probably in that timeframe have gotten \$35 million in requests from native communities and only been able to support about \$4 million of those requests. We're in the process of updating that document because it only goes to 2014.

Some other things we do aside from just grant making under our Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative, we provide training and technical assistance, not only to our grantees but to the public at large mainly targeting Native communities specifically. So in your packet of information, you have a list

of some upcoming trainings that we will be doing this year on two of our tools that we've developed. One is the Business of Indian Agriculture, which we developed in partnership with FALCON. This is the first year that we actually have funding to do actual trainings. We've released the curriculum in 2014, and that was in part supported by USDA. And so this year we have some funding to be able to roll out at least four trainings. We hope to be able to do that again next year.

In addition to the Business of Indian Agriculture training, we are also doing trainings on our food Sovereignty Assessment Tool which was released originally in 2004. We put out a second edition last year I believe. And so we'll be doing trainings on that. If you have folks from your communities that want to go, let us know, we do have a small pool of scholarship funding available. I also put a Save the Date in there for our upcoming L.E.A.D. conference, which will be in Oklahoma Cherokee, right outside of Tulsa, this year. We always do a food track at that conference as well.

Just some of the other things that we have on the horizon this year at First Nations. In the next month, month and a half, we'll be announcing grantees that were selected this year under our Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative and under our Seeds of Native Help program. Those will be forthcoming later this month, if not at the latest early May.

They've already been selected and notifications have gone out but we have not released it publicly. Those two grant programs are close to another million dollars in direct grant support to native communities working on local food system control, food in agricultural efforts in native communities.

We also will be selecting communities who applied under our Native Food Sovereignty Assessment grant tool. Those are \$10,000 grants for Native communities that want to conduct their food assessment locally. We hope that we will have another pool of funding that will come available June, July, at the latest August for communities that want to conduct their food assessment. And for those of you that have not seen the food assessment, really it's a tool that we designed specifically for Native communities to really allow for Native communities to collect and control data on local food systems in their communities and provided some really simple tools on how you can go about that. It's a really accessible document for communities to use.

I know that USDA just released a food assessment document, which is also great, talking about some of the research considerations when doing a food assessment. So I think it's a good complement to the tool that we have. I would encourage you all and others that you know to apply for those food assessment grants if that's something that is needed locally.

The other thing I included in your packet of information is from our sister organization, First Nations Oweesta, the First Nations Oweesta Corporation. They have a pool of loan funds available. I think it's funded by the Reinvestment Fund. And they have about half a million dollars in capital that is available for either native CDFIs or native tribes or native organizations. Their contact information is on that document. And if you would like more information on that Healthy Food Financing Initiative, I'd encourage you to contact them. You can certainly share that and the other information that goes out to the group. But that's a brand new opportunity that they just announced a few months ago. The pot of money is still there.

I think that's my short and brief overview about some of the things that we're doing at First Nations under our Native Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative. I mean our work is really aimed at supporting issues of food access and how do you get Native goods to market when it comes to food and ag. And also how do you preserve traditional food practices. Those are some of the primary areas that we support in addition to food policy development in Indian country. On some of the food policy work, we've had the opportunity and actively partner with the Indigenous Food and Ag Initiative, Janie Hipp. We've partnered with the National Association of Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations to really just talk about some

of the issues that they're facing in that USDA program. And so we're happy to provide some information about what we're doing and thank you for the invite. Any questions or comments?

Mark Wadsworth: Oweesta and First Nations have been around for several years now. There's your sister agency, are you both 501(c)(3)'s, through Oweesta and First Nations?

Raymond Foxworth: First Nations Oweesta Corporation was created largely as a lending arm. When First Nations began their initial work in the CDFI movement, First Nations Oweesta, when funds became available for Native CDFIs, First Nations had to make a decision about whether they wanted to be a lender or not. So they decided, no, we don't want to be a lender, created the First Nations Oweesta Corporation, which is supposed to specifically be an entity that lends to other Native CDFIs and also provides other technical assistance and training when it comes to increasing access to capital within Native communities.

So for instance, we partner on our financial education, our Building Native Communities curriculum, and things like that. So we are two separate organizations. They largely handle direct issues when it comes to loan products in terms of access to capital. We are usually handling things on the grant making side and sort of other programmatic, direct service-related initiatives. Does that help?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, it does. Believe me, I'm kind of a being a little bit hard in here and biased because that's the first real language I've ever heard from any corporation starting to talk about agriculture business as a sector unto itself. My education from the University of Idaho is majoring in Agri Business with a B.S. in Agricultural Economics. It's one of those areas within the Indian agriculture committee, just need tons of it because there's so much opportunity out for these individuals. My professional education is in agricultural business, and here I am managing our arrangements. It has a real strong business component to it, but so far as the exact science and studies and stuff, it remained contracted out. But for the business portion of it, we have cattle businesses, you know, for sales. It's just not only certain sectors, it's across - from fertilizers to equipment sales or whatever it may be. So when you're talking about your curriculum, the course that you're explaining there, is there an emphasis on ag business degrees that you're promoting?

Raymond Foxworth: That curriculum was developed with the tribal colleges and universities. FALCON, which works with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, pulled together a number of different tribal colleges, I can't remember the exact number, but it was over five. Some in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and started to talk about what a curriculum would

look like in terms of what do community groups approach extension agencies at tribal colleges and things like that, in terms of support for.

Right now, the current curriculum has five different modules that range from things like business plan development, accounting, to talking about land use and the different land issues, access issues that occur in native communities. Generally, there are five modules. It's a train the trainer. So it has an instructor module and also a participant guide. The idea is that we could train people locally, especially institutions that work locally, be it CDFIs or other grassroots community organization, so that they can begin to train members of their community on that curriculum directly. The participant guide is meant to give them direct access to tools that they can use, be it Excel worksheets and things like that, to improve the capacity and human capital when it comes to business operations locally.

Mark Wadsworth: Do you go through with your curriculum? You said expectations like the CFR expectations either through leasing or through grazing permits, is that addressed? Do you also talk about the situations of tribal trail [indiscernible] to sometimes right of ways and --?

Raymond Foxworth: Yeah. So those issues --

Mark Wadsworth: We differ so much.

Raymond Foxworth: Yeah. So the way we really designed it now is we have John Phillips from FALCON is mainly the trainer that we use on that curriculum. And what he's tried to do is vary the curriculum depending on the location of the places that we've had trainings. The other thing that we've done is bring in local USDA folks to talk about their programs to folks that attend those trainings.

The land issues is probably the most complicated to talk about because it does vary. Oklahoma looks different than Navajo. Pine Ridge and Oglala country looks different than the Pueblo Country. Certainly, that's probably the hardest one to teach. The way the curriculum is designed now is just to paint a broad brush talking about these different land use issues and considerations that producers need to think about in terms of scaling up operations. Whether right of way uses are applicable to that specific context, the trainer doesn't know. But it does compile that information in a centrally located place for access. The training component is probably the hardest one to figure out. Business planning, and things like that are more standard. So that is one of the challenges.

Mark Wadsworth: And I'd like to say, my hat's off to you. I respect you, first in that area that has a doctorate's. I can only do my first portion and I had enough of it. I really expressed it.

Raymond Foxworth: Oh, thank you. I'd love your contact information though so that I will send you a copy of the curriculum. It's the first edition. Anyone who has designed curriculum, you know those things go through many iterations. So open to comments and suggestions about how to improve it.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, sir.

Sarah Vogel: I have sort of a joint question for Ray and for Jim. Jim, a number of years ago, they started to have a requirement that any farmer's home borrowers, I guess I'm showing my age, FSA borrowers who may be new or were having issues had to go through farm business training. Is that still the case?

Jim Radintz: Yes, that's a statutory requirement. To look at financial management training.

Sarah Vogel: Right. Again, I might be a little rusty, but the ones that I know that were native who went to those programs that, I don't want to learn about soybeans. Three percent of Native farmers and ranchers, or actually 3 percent of natives who are in agriculture are crop farmers. The classes that are taught, say, by NDSU or the regular junior colleges that teach agriculture, are totally unhelpful. I mean, I can't say totally unhelpful but many pieces of it are completely dissonant with what the Indian farmers and ranchers need to know. I'm just

wondering if you guys have met, in the sense of, do you recommend their curriculum?

Jim Radintz: No, but that was one of the notes I made actually. We're continually looking for additional what we call borrower training providers. Now our training -- actually the law requires us to have a very focused kind of emphasis on the financial management part: to be able to keep records, set goals, assess progress, and those kinds of things. But we, again, certainly want and need additional training providers. The other side of that is, it gives potentially a selling point, because you can say, well, if you go through this program, you meet FSA's requirements. That is maybe a little bit of an enticement for folks to get involved. But I definitely made a note of that. I'm going to have somebody on my staff getting in touch with you about that very issue and potentially even becoming what we call approved borrower training provider which the law requires us to do as part of all of this. So we'll be glad to work with you on that.

While I have the floor, one more thing, I'm really interested in the Healthy Foods loans. I'm assuming that we can talk with Emily Trump, whose name is on it. And the reason why, this is maybe more for the benefit of the council, is that with the new what we call micro lender program that we're coming out with, that would be a perfect package because they could

potentially get wholesale funding from Oweesta and then turn around and lend it with an FSA guarantee which reduces the risk that the CDFI would have in terms of credit extension. So I think there's some really exciting possibilities here too, potentially. So I very much look forward to some further discussions, both on the training issue and on the funding issue.

Mary Ann Thompson: Yay, another success.

Tawney Brunsch: This is Tawney Brunsch. First of all, and that would be maybe I can negotiate a little bit lower rate with Emily. There would be a lot more potential there for us. First of all, I just want to explain to everybody the background that FNDI has, First Nations has with Lakota Funds. They were actually instrumental in even creating Lakota Funds 31, 32 years ago. And so we've always had that ongoing relationship.

I will say, just in the years that I've been Executive Director, we've utilized their assistance through VITA. I can't remember all of them, maybe the child development accounts or matched savings accounts for kids. Also we've had different farmer's markets. Most recently last year, we got some funding from FNDI for our Building Native Artists Program, where we were able to offer an equity grant portion on loans to artists up to \$2,500 or 20 percent, whichever is less. But that makes a big difference when collateral is an issue and it reduces the

payment, and we've leveraged that obviously. It's very beneficial for those artists.

With that, that I'm super excited. I actually asked Winkle [phonetic], so I know he's on the Oweesta site. If I can get a preview of the ag curriculum, because we're obviously already teaching our own curriculum, and we do realize that so many things are specific to Pine Ridge, especially the land issues, that we already supplement that with our own. But it would be very useful if I could see this curriculum.

And then we're probably going to have to talk to you into coming to Lakota Funds for us to deliver the train the trainer piece. But if I can review the curriculum in advance, I would love to say that we have a certified ag lending program that kind of solidify that technical assistance piece and see if we can encourage more farmers and ranchers to see the benefit in them working with us.

Raymond Foxworth: Thank you, though. I think I will send you the curriculum, absolutely. The other thing is we've been working with Oweesta. Right now First Nations Oweesta, they're piloting a small cohort of native CDFIs and walking them through the Business of Indian Agriculture. We don't have a certified training program like we do for the BNC, and that's what we're trying to figure out now. What does that process look like and should we make it similar to the BNC training? I think right

now, we've just said, let's offer it broadly until we figure it out on that certification side and at least get the information out there, because we feel it's a strong curriculum. But I think your input on that would be valuable as well. So thank you.

Sarah Vogel: I think too that FNDI is the largest economic development organization in the United States that deals with, well, economic development.

Raymond Foxworth: Yeah. I don't know if that one's true. I do know we are the largest private funder for Native food systems specifically in Indian country. I just hesitate about that because I actually think some Native CDFIs might be a little bigger than us.

Tawney Brunsch: Well, that you guys are the only intermediary.

Raymond Foxworth: Correct. National intermediary.

Tawney Brunsch: Yes. That's the keyword.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you, Raymond. I appreciate it.

Raymond Foxworth: Sure. Certainly. Thank you all for having us, and I'm glad it worked out this time. I know previous attempts have been made to get us here and I'm glad it worked out this time. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you. Well it's about ten to one, I think we'll break from -- I just talked to Zach, so he'll be up

at 2:00. We've got about an hour and ten minutes' lunch. See you back at 2:00.

Female Voice: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: We're going to break and go to lunch.

...

Zach Ducheneaux: Good afternoon everybody. Can you all hear me just fine? It sounds loud enough. Zach Ducheneaux with the Intertribal Agriculture Council. As always, it's a pleasure to be able to have this time to visit with you and share our experiences as we travel the country trying to help Indian producers participate in the USDA programs. We've got a few updates to provide, and then a smattering of proposed recommendations for you folks to consider thinking about as you continue your work making recommendations to the Secretary. Before that though, I'd like to see if there are any questions for me. If you have anything on your mind, any questions for me before I start? Very good. Thank you.

We kind of break this world down into three spheres - lending, conservation, and education and youth activities. We'll start with lending since we do have actually FSA and other lenders in the room. One of the updates that we've got to provide is that we are in the policymaking process of creating our own community development financial institution, the IAC applied in 2014 and was awarded a NACA grant to start that

process. We're the sponsoring agency. What our goal is, is to have the policies and their initial board in place by fall of this year so that that entity can get started in trying to capitalize a loan fund and start making some loans so we could seek certification by the Treasury Department within the next couple of years.

The reason we decided to do that is we continue to identify a segment of society that isn't getting served by existing credit products. We've got commercial lenders that aren't interested in making loans to buy trust real estate. We've got credit history issues that keep our folks from being able to participate in FSA loans as they're currently restructured. We've got recommendations on how to fix that. I don't know if we'll ever gain any ground because it's tied to the Fair Credit Reporting Act and all these other businesses, but we think that that is a place where more latitude could be given to a holistic approach to the farm business plan. But we can get into that a little bit later.

So what we have envisioned is more of a supervised credit because we plan on serving the folks that can't get in the FSA's doors as a primary customer base. We want to start to build credit where the bankable customers from the outsets. So we're going to try to take a holistic approach that we would like to see FSA and others take.

I always give one example that we ran into at Cheyenne River. We had a young man. He had an allocation of tribal grass, and that's kind of the golden ticket if you want to get into ag production. If you've got that allocation of grass, you're set pretty good. But in order to make more of it, you've got to be able to acquire the assets to turn that grass into more profitability; otherwise, you're just selling the grass. And we all know from our background in agriculture, that's the worst way to be a farmer or rancher is just sell your base products.

This young man came into our office. We tried to get him a FSA loan a couple of different times. He had credit history issues, so we couldn't even get the plan to be considered really. Because if you don't meet past that muster, you don't get to the next level where they vet the plan. In his business plan, if we could just get there, it would have been clearer that he could increase the profitability. Increase in his operation would help him clear up all of his credit issues and become more bankable to commercial lenders. So we hope to be able to provide that type of product to folks. We'll understand that they have credit issues coming in. We plan to have our staff out there providing financial literacy training right alongside the loan making and the loan vetting process so that we can build more credit-worthy customers.

As we move forward with our policymaking, we want to collaborate very closely with the Farm Service Agency and Farm Credit Services of America. Tawney and the folks at Lakota Fund have already paved the way for loan guarantees for CDFIs. We want to make sure that our products mesh very well with what's already going on so that someday we could become a preferred micro-lender or a preferred loan guarantee recipient.

Then we're also going to follow some of the path that Tawney and Elsie have plowed getting into the BIA sector of lending. Because one of the things that we've discovered universally in Indian Country is you can never have too many resources out there, and you can't go out and do outreach enough. We always tell folks that are having an outreach session include us, we'll come and do it. But we're going to come do our own as well because it may take us three times telling the same story to get someone to believe it's true, so we've got to go out there and duplicate efforts a lot of times. And we run into challenges with folks that don't want to provide duplicative services with same sources of funding, but we say you've got to reach out to them.

Jim mentioned a little bit yesterday about the microloans, and probably he gave a more detailed report about that. One other recommendation that we do have specific to microloans is to get a little firmer guidance to the loan staff in the field

that they're supposed to do this with a minimal amount of paperwork. We run into this paperwork conundrum, and we try to understand where the loan officer is coming from. They come from an environment where they used to have every I dotted and T crossed and had everything backed up, and then now there is this microloan product and the FSA expects them to go out there and forget half of what they learn and do this loan based on this thin stack of paper.

We like the thin stack of paper and we want to get people making decisions based on that, and we kind of like to draw a parallel between FSA and the paperwork to get, say, a \$200,000 loan in NRCS and the paperwork to get a \$200,000 grant. You have to do more paperwork to get the money that you're going to get back than you do to get the grant money at this point in time. I'm not saying we should make the grant application more burdensome. I'm saying we should take a look at the fact that - what's the loan loss rate on that, Jim, at the FSA? You're 2 percent, right?

Jim Radintz: Actually, I think we're a little below that right now.

Zach Ducheneaux: So you're going to get 98 point-something percent of the money back, but the stack of paper is taller than the entire conservation contract. So we need to continue to work together to streamline the bigger loan projects as well.

On conservation, we continue to have some shining stars out there in Indian Country. I get to brag on my own state again. We just came from their State Tribal Advisory Subcommittee meeting. And under statute, states are required to set aside 5 percent for socially disadvantaged - pool of money - for conservation dollars.

The state of South Dakota under Jeanette Ortelli's [phonetic] tenure decided we're going to do better than that, and they measured the amount of land within reservation boundaries. Now they just set aside, in addition to the 5 percent, willingly set aside 19 percent of the state's money to serve Indian reservations based on the land mass. And as Ross Racine, who's my boss, lives in Billings, in the '90s Montana was kind of the poster child for good delivery of services. So we've got a friendly competition going between our state chief and their state chief on who's going to do a better job of serving Indian Country. We've kind of got them right now.

In order to help bring Tribal Nations and Tribal Governments into this -- well, it is not really bringing them into it. It's bringing them back to a conservation mindset because we had that before the Europeans got here. We were the model of conservation. We were able to secure a Regional Conservation Program contract with NRCS to help develop tribal conservation activity plans. What we're going to do is start

with New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Alaska, and Nebraska. We have tribes identified there or tribal groups that are ready to take that step so we're going to work with them, and it's going to be a two-pronged approach. We're going to develop these management plans for their resources.

A component of that is going to help them quantify their carbon sequestration so that they may have a product that's marketable should that carbon market ever open back up in Chicago. But they might be able to get it marketed over in California as it is. So we're really excited about that. We're partnering with Indian Land Tenure Foundation very closely on that, and working with the Ponca Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, I believe Santa Clara in New Mexico, and might be the Tanana Chiefs in Alaska. But we'll check and coordinate and continue to keep you folks in the loop because that's the five that we started based on where they were and their state of readiness. We're going to expand the program over the next couple of years and start to take new customers on.

Mary Ann Thompson: Which program is that?

Zach Ducheneaux: Regional Conservation Partnership Program, RCPP. It's an NRCS program where regional cooperative efforts can receive EQIP funding or CSP funding to do these efforts, to bring these practices to bear on a grander level

than just what the local district conservations might be able to do.

Education and Extension is our other third leg of the agriculture stool we built. The first thing I want to do is thank the Council for their support in recommending to the Secretary that FRTEP be funded like it should be. That's absolutely critical and that could be a recommendation every single time. It has taken all I can do to bite my tongue when he has been in the room with you guys and talk about funding FRTEP from that Keepseagle money.

Sarah Vogel: What?

Zach Ducheneaux: Yeah.

Sarah Vogel: That's why he needs this resolution we're sending out today.

Zach Ducheneaux: Ross and I had to leave the room on that day because we were grinding our teeth pretty hard. That is a federal responsibility. I was really glad to see the resolution you guys passed yesterday reminding the federal government that Cy Pres funds are not meant to usurp federal responsibility. So hats off to you again. I appreciate that. We continue on an annual basis to compile information about funding levels and the need for FRTEP, and we sure appreciate you folks in your tribal capacities in helping us out making that case to the people responsible for it.

We've got a whole bunch of youth activities slated for this year. It's kind of a follow-up to the work that we've been doing with Janie Hipp at the Ag Summit that happened in Arkansas for the last two summers, and our emphasis to bring youth along on this journey at our membership meeting. At our last membership meeting, we had 80 youth. They had their own session of events and each one of them was able to fill out a youth FSA loan application to take home. When they get home they get to decide whether they've got the capacity, if their parents have the ability to help them, or if they've got an FFA or 4-H leader that can help. And our staff is in the process of following up with them right now to see how many of those we can actually put out on the dirt, get the money out there and get them producing.

We got everything from a kid that wanted to do a welding shop to a buffalo farmer or buffalo rancher, to show pigs, to a kid in South Dakota who wanted to get bum calves and raise them on a bottle and then sell them to start to recover that way. So it was really an interesting exercise and we plan to do it again in the future. Jim had a bunch of his staff out there, and I think they left that room exceptionally fired up about agriculture and FSA loan-making because it was pretty empowering.

Mary Ann Thompson: Question.

Zach Ducheneaux: Yes, ma'am.

Mary Ann Thompson: Are you also participating with the Youth Summit in Seminole Tribe --

Zach Ducheneaux: Yes, we are. Yes. We want to repeat that and move it around in regions next year. This looks like a good location to do it next year, so let's start that dialogue. I mean as far as agriculture goals, Seminole and Cherokee are the most engaged that we found in the Eastern Region. So we look forward to maybe having that out here in this neck of the woods.

Mary Ann Thompson: I'll pass it on. You've got some good staff that could take care of it, right?

Zach Ducheneaux: Absolutely, very good staff over here.

Jim Radintz: Excuse me, Zach.

Zach Ducheneaux: Yes, sir.

Jim Radintz: I think you had some statistics about how many of those youth loans, how that panned out. Could you maybe share that with the council?

Zach Ducheneaux: We completed about \$190,000 worth of youth loans in the form of an application at that session. We've got two of them on the ground and running now. Of course, you remember the IAC committed to an equity investment in each of those successful loan applications of \$500, and we've got two \$500 equity investments going out the door to help those kids on their way. The biggest challenge that we're running into with

that is we are trying to follow up right through spring sports season. And it is hard to catch up with those kids what with all the activities they're doing these days so we hope that as we get closer to summer, maybe a lot of those kids can come to the Arkansas convening and we can follow up with them there and give them a little nudge if they need it or find out from them why they decided not to pursue it because then we've got at least a set of findings what we need to do to improve their environment so that we can get them to doing these loans.

Jim Radintz: If there's anything we can do from my level to facilitate or enhance that, please let me know.

Zach Ducheneaux: Absolutely. You know I know your number. Just to delve into the regional youth summits that we're hosting this year, we've got one going on at the end of the month - well, close to the end of this month - at Gun Lake in Michigan for the Great Lakes Region. We've got the one at Seminole going on the end of this month. We're planning one in Albuquerque in I believe September, and we're looking at one in Reno in October.

Angela Peter: Do you have it in July?

Zach Ducheneaux: I'll see what we can do.

Mark Wadsworth: Hey, that's my meaty [indiscernible].

Zach Ducheneaux: As you go to Reno in July, stop in at Arkansas and see what's going on with those kids. You'd really

enjoy it, Mary. It would be worth the stop. Porter has been there and we've seen it. What we want to do is develop this notion of having these regional youth ag summits every year so that everybody knows it's going to happen, so we're out there continually seeking funding to establish that. What we really want to do is set that up so that we can go out and seek an endowment for that so that the activity will always happen and then we can start to work on the curriculum that we're putting in front of these kids at these meetings so that we can really be making the most of their time.

But the level of engagement of these kids is just phenomenal. I was visiting with somebody out here about the revolution, and we had Dave. Dave isn't here today so I can talk freely about it. David Anderson was one of those kids at Janie's first deal, and now he's just waiting for a tribal liaison position to open up right here so he can put that to work at home. That's something that we're hoping becomes the norm instead of the exception.

Another thing that we've been working with a couple of different groups, mainly cattle producer groups, the precipitous decline of the cattle market this year was an anomaly that hasn't been adequately explained to us yet. We feel that there is a very close link between that decline and the speculation that happens with the commodity future's market. The commodity

future is supposed to be a risk management tool for people that are actually engaged in the production of that commodity. Now the nation of China can play in their livestock feeder contracts, so we need to do more research on that and shed more light on why this is happening the way it's happening because we helped the FSA make a lot of loans to buy \$3,000 cows. Because of the speculation and the steep drop in our market, that cow is devalued by a third now. So it's an uphill battle.

Leslie Wheelock: With the price of meat.

Zach Ducheneaux: It's a test. And the fact that we don't have a crisis going on in the ag lending sector right now is a testament to the fact that the FSA has taken a different approach to making these loans. They try to make them with flexibility built-in in the front end instead of only offering that flexibility when things really go to heck, which they do sometimes.

One of the recommendations that we've gotten with regard to risk management is to seek parity for livestock insurance products with crop insurance products. If you're a crop farmer, you can go get a crop insurance policy and you defer your premium until you see what your crop produce is like. The livestock producers have the risk management agency products available to them. But when they say I want to get a policy on my cows, they got to cough up money right then and there before

they have recovered. And we'd like to see some parity. We don't necessarily want to see the crop guys have to pay a premium. We just like to have the same consideration as the crop guys. A deferred premium on that would go a long way towards getting more livestock producers to use that product.

Mary Ann Thompson: Question.

Zach Ducheneaux: Yes, ma'am.

Mary Ann Thompson: Zach, that deferred premium that you're talking about, was that legislative or statutory?

Zach Ducheneaux: I'm afraid I don't know. The crop insurance is a little bit out of my realm of expertise, I'm afraid. I suspect it may be statutory, but that's just speculation. That's something we have to take back and ask of the experts in risk management.

Mary Ann Thompson: So it is statutory?

Zach Ducheneaux: It's on all of our wish lists - our statutory wish list, our regulatory wish list, and our policy wish list. So wherever it's at, we're going to push on it.

Sarah Vogel: This is Sarah Vogel. I'm not sure I know the answer to that for sure, but my gut feeling is that it's set by the standard risk insurance policy. They have these very, very broad policies that are written as a rule by USDA. I mean crop insurance is a really sweet deal because you sign up for crop insurance by a certain day, you sign contracts, you file the

forms and all that but you don't pay a premium until after harvest, at which point you either have a harvest and you pay from your income or you have a loss and it's deducted from the payment made to you. Without that, I'm sure that the level of crop insurance would be very low.

But another reason to make a change is that with Native Americans, only 3 percent of them are crop farmers and 97 percent are livestock. So to have a reasonable crop, I mean a reasonable Insurance Risk Management Program, the deferred payment premiums would be extremely important. I think there's just not a whole lot of knowledge about the risk management agency in Indian Country. I mean all the crop farmers, they all have crop insurance. So they hear it from their agents who are blanketing the countryside, and there's competition too. All the policies are the same. The only competition is in-service with the crop adjusters and the crop insurance agencies, and they don't have that with the ranchers. So that's a great idea. Would you find out?

Zach Ducheneaux: We'll get it figured out and we'll continue to communicate.

Sarah Vogel: You know who would help on that? There is a National Association of Crop Insurance Companies and they got more power than the Farmers Union and Farm Bureau combined.

Zach Ducheneaux: I would imagine, yeah.

Sarah Vogel: They love issuing premiums. They love making money. They have deferred payment premium. They would certainly go for it.

Zach Ducheneaux: Absolutely. Thank you.

Sarah Vogel: There is a really strong national association.

Zach Ducheneaux: I'll make note of that.

Mark Wadsworth: Zach, also RMA is one of the few groups within USDA that actually can go through the Congress and get their own bill passed. It's just amazing that you are dealing with probably the major hidden subsidy programs in the United States. Really we keep that in too. It will amaze you that one of their products currently is approached by one of our local insurance companies to insure it against drought, and that drought insurance policy allows me as the insurance holder to pick the dates that I think that there would be a drought.

Zach Ducheneaux: Ain't that something?

Mark Wadsworth: You can go after national averages. In participating within your area, you get a pretty good chance of picking the right dates for the drought condition in your area. It's quite a deal.

Zach Ducheneaux: And again, that's something if you were able to get a deferred premium on, Mr. Chairman, you jump all

over it because you find out whether you either have the loss or the production before you have to pay.

Mark Wadsworth: Within our limited financial prediction and with price drop and stuff, we thought that cool decision that was snuck in within other piggyback, right on another bill probably opened the door more for Canadian and Mexican beef that there wasn't a demand on because it wasn't American beef.

Zach Ducheneaux: That's what I suspect too. They talked about all of the bigger cattle that were being slaughtered. So there was a glut on meat, but all those bigger cattle are coming from up there. Because they were holding them until you can get the legislation revealed, so there's no other reason to feed cattle that are selling for record prices.

A couple of other recommendations, and then if you have any questions or I'll sit down and shut up, whichever you guys choose.

One item that we continue to run into challenges -- and this is more towards Rural Development. We don't have any need of them in the room. There is a provision called Substantially Underserved Trust Areas where the Secretary has the authority to wave match requirements within very well-defined lines in Rural Development programs. We think those provisions should be written larger so that they are applied to all Rural Development in Indian Country. And not a lot more people get into the game

because right now, because of the match requirements, only governmental institutional-type entities can access those Rural Development funds - your tribal colleges, your tribal governments themselves. A community clinic might be able to access it if it didn't have to come up with 50 percent of the capital in addition to build a same day surgery suite or something like that. We could open the doors wider if we would apply those provisions more broadly.

There is a huge emphasis on beginning farmer and ranchers department-wide, and there is some incongruities between the agencies. FSA is trying to get beginning farmer and rancher started, and the single most valuable tool to beginning farmer and ranchers is an NRCS conservation contract. It helps them improve the productivity of their land and they can't qualify until they've had effective control for a year. So what we envision is a scenario where we go and help a producer get a loan with Jim's agency, and we go right across the hall to the NRCS and get their EQIP application started and they get contingent approval. They can be approved and then count on that contract to help with their cash flow for their practices. After one year's time, it's funded. But this way, they don't have to wait a year to even make that application and get considered. We think that's a -- I see Jim wrinkling his nose. I don't know if he likes it or not.

Jim Radintz: I'm just wondering - and you probably know this - that one year that NRCS imposes, is that a statutory thing?

Zach Ducheneaux: Yeah, it is. And it's something that we need to fix. But any effort to fix statutory language will have a lot more weight with the recommendation of this Council as a body that sees this as a challenge that needs to be overcome. That's why we bring even those issues to this body. We understand it's making recommendations to the Secretary, but -

Mark Wadsworth: Gilbert has a question.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you, Zach. A verbal recommendation is informative. But if you have written recommendations that we can look at, we can support here. Because if you know what the problem is, you can identify it, then the recommendation is easier for us. [Cross-talking]. I'm not familiar with some of the things you're talking about. But if you would write it and let us know, I think it would be easier for us to swallow [sounds like].

Zach Ducheneaux: I'd do a brief explanation, and then what the recommendation is. Very good.

Sarah Vogel: I think, in looking at the agenda, we have a couple more reports and then we adjourn at 6:00. So if you want us to adopt seven to eight recommendations, you better go ask.

Zach Ducheneaux: I see this as process, not as a today. I mean I understand that the Council's time is limited. We bring those to you as a way of seeing if there's any interest in going forward with that. If there is, then we help flesh it out.

Sarah Vogel: Oh, I wasn't in too much of a rush.

Zach Ducheneaux: No, I'm not trying to say do this now.

Leslie Wheelock: Mr. Chairman?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes.

Leslie Wheelock: I have a recommendation for this process, and that might be even if you can't make it, we put the binders together and try to ship them out a couple of weeks or we try to have them ready to go a couple of weeks ahead of time. If you want to slide that material into the binders, if you could get it over to us, we'd be happy to include it. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Yeah. Because FedEx would cost too.

Zach Ducheneaux: Very Good. That's what I've got. If there are any questions, I'd be glad to try to answer them.

Dana Richey: Excuse me, Zach. Dana Richey. I want to let you know that we do have a colleague from Rural Development in the audience. The woman in the white shirt.

Zach Ducheneaux: Hi. How are you?

Dana Richey: So it might be appropriate maybe during break for you to have a conversation.

Zach Ducheneaux: Sure. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Gilbert?

Gilbert Harrison: Mark, besides those two asking them for a written documentation. On Navajo we're lacking your program. We have one representative in New Mexico on the Navajo side, and one in Arizona. We're lucky to get at least one outreach workshop per year, and that's not sufficient. Some of the issues we talked about particularly in the area of developing conservation plans now that the Bureau is requiring it, USDA requires it, many of our people need training. It would be nice if we could have a one day workshop that your people could walk us through some of the ingredients.

They don't have to do it for us, but right now we have a heck of a time trying to get that kind of training, on-hand training. We're the people that are supposed to be basically developing these conservation plans, and so we're stuck between a rock and a hard place. The BIA, the USDA, we're stuck right in the middle because they both require conservation plans and many of our older people have no idea what a conservation plan is. They've been practicing it for generations. But in putting it down on paper, some of the technicalities can be very intimidating. So I would ask. Maybe that's a kind of a field assistance that we would like to see out on Navajo in terms of not only the planning but education and extension activities.

Zach Ducheneaux: Absolutely. I will make sure that our regional representative on Navajo gets in touch with you. What we encounter in Navajo and in other regions that are so vast is the Navajo Nation is so big that oftentimes this part of it might not know what that part of it is doing. It's hard to find the one segment of the Navajo Nation government that we should be working with, so we try to reach out to the chapter houses and that type of stuff as well. But I'll have Danielle Notah get in touch with you so you can help bring her to the event specifically that you're thinking need to happen so that we can coordinate. Because that's really what we strive to do, is get where we're asked to go and try not to just kick our foot in the door and impose ourselves except for me here.

Gilbert Harrison: Yeah. Let me explain our situation. We have within the San Juan river about a thousand small plots of farms and farmers. Now the BIA and USDA is asking for a conservation plan on anything we want to do on five acres or ten acres. One of the things that we talked about was getting an area conservation plan so these 20 acres over here and 20 plots over here have something that's in common - a conservation plan. Not every individual person has to know. And that's what we need help on, is just to see how we can do that.

Again, like I said, with the BIA conservation plan, the elements are all there. But the methodology on what they want,

their terminology is completely, well, not completely but is different than what USDA wants in their conservation plan. So we've been harping on both agencies to give us one common conservation plan. So we do one, it should be okay for the other. But now they're saying, well, we need this, we need this. And it makes it very difficult. So we thought about maybe the regionalization that's acceptable to both agencies would fit the bill. Anyway, that's an area that I think we would like to see some efforts.

Zach Ducheneaux: It's a great concept. I'll visit with our staff and have them get in touch with you.

Mark Wadsworth: We'll do one more question, then go into the SNAP. Go ahead Angela.

Angela Peter: When you mentioned conservation planning, Alaska Tyonek Tribal Conservation District is contracted with ATCA which is the organization I work with. We are working with NRCS to provide conservation planners. So that's what we're going to get, is the thought is 20 people to get there and be actual planners or something.

Zach Ducheneaux: That's very cool.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you, Zach.

Zach Ducheneaux: Thank you folks for your time. I'll be around for the rest of the day if you have any questions during the break or anything. Thanks.

Mark Wadsworth: Next presentation will be for the SNAP and EBT. Rogelio, I don't want to ruin your - I'll let you introduce yourselves.

Rogelio Carrasco: My name is Rogelio Carrasco. I work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. I think I know everything I want to say, but I brought some notes just in case I wink out.

Like I said, I work for the Food and Nutrition Service. That's the agency that administers all the nutrition assistance programs in the country. Forgive me, I'm going to go very basic here at the beginning because I don't always know what level of knowledge folks know. So our nutrition assistance programs are WIC, school lunch, school breakfast, and the biggest one is SNAP. Everyone familiar with SNAP?

Female Voice: Yes.

Rogelio Carrasco: So Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly food stamps. So I don't need to get into that. My job is I'm the SNAP farmers' market coordinator. So in SNAP, obviously whenever you get these EBT --

Leslie Wheelock: Can I interrupt you for one second?

Rogelio Carrasco: Of course.

Leslie Wheelock: In Indian Country, it's also known as EBT. I've actually had to give this kind of presentation and

had a Chief correct me or help me with my acronyms. They tend to refer to it as EBT in Indian Country.

Rogelio Carrasco: Okay. It's Electronic Benefits Transfer. Yes, ma'am?

Female Voice: I was going to ask --

Rogelio Carrasco: Yes, it's Electronic Benefits Transfer.

Mark Wadsworth: Is this commodity a cheese [sounds like] program?

Rogelio Carrasco: No. That's FDPIR, or Feh[phonetic]DPIR I guess it's also referred to. So again, in case you don't know, food stamps used to be given out in paper form. Now they're given out in a credit/debit card type thing. You have to slide it through a machine to get your benefits processed, and obviously you can buy anything you want with those benefits. Unlike WIC where there's a limited list, with SNAP you can buy anything. We would prefer that people buy healthier food, local food, fresh food. It's a challenge when the only place that they're purchasing that kind of food is at the supermarket.

So what we're trying to do is we're trying to increase the number of farmers' markets and what we call direct marketing farmers participating in SNAP. What do we mean direct marketing farmer? All that really means is a farmer who sells his or her own produce directly to the public. The way we do this is Congress has appropriated us a certain amount of money, \$4

million every year. It's actually a two-step process. First step is to get either farmers' markets and/or direct marketing farmers who participate at farmers' markets to become SNAP authorized, to become the retailers who can actually process SNAP transactions. Then once they're authorized, we can provide them with free equipment which they can use to process those benefits. Most of the equipment, in fact currently all of the equipment that we provide processes the EBT transactions and also processes the credit and debit transactions.

So you have a farmers' market. Either the farmers' market itself is authorized to accept SNAP benefits and/or you could have individual farmers at that market be authorized to accept those benefits. We have different equipment. It's worth approximately \$2,000. It can include an iPhone, an iPad, or the more traditional older brick type - they call them brick - benefits transfer equipment. It also includes the card reader. It includes a printer because SNAP participants are still required to get a paper receipt. It includes a software licensing, the hardware licensing, and we provide that free of charge to any farmers' market or direct marketing farmer that becomes authorized.

The reason I'm here before you today is I was given the opportunity to talk to you. Having worked on FDPIR before, I know that tribal communities are often underserved, don't have

access to as many supermarkets. Also I know there's a commodity program, but a lot of times the access to the fresh and locally grown foods or the culturally appropriate foods is not all there. So what we want to do is we want to reach out to the tribal community and get more farmers' markets and/or direct marketing farmers to, one, become SNAP authorized and, two, receive this equipment.

What we can do is actually something that we did here this week. We conduct sign-up events. If you tell us that you have advertised or talked to enough farmers in your area, that there's interest in your reservation or in your tribal lands or even in the surrounding areas - it doesn't have to be all tribal folks - if you tell us there's enough interest, what we'll do is we'll send a team out to set up basically very much what you have here. We'll have a data entry table. We'll have a processing table. We'll have an equipment table and get people signed up for SNAP that day.

Normally, by regulation we have a 45-day window to get people authorized. If people bring the appropriate documents, and we'll tell you what all those are, folks could show up and on that one day become SNAP-authorized and walk out with all the documentation you need to have that equipment in the mail. You won't walk out with the equipment, but you'll walk out with basically knowing that it's in the mail, that it's on the way.

Dana Rickey: If I can interrupt just for a second, if you want to follow along, tab 17 has some of the documents that Rogelio is describing that you can find on the FNS website. These are also some of the documentations that was given to Mary Thompson a couple of weeks ago to distribute in order to encourage local producers to visit the FNS tables at the extension office yesterday and today.

Rogelio Carrasco: I'm terribly sorry. I should have pointed out that we had sent you that documentation. This is we think a win-win proposition. In fact, it's three wins because really what you're doing is you're helping out the SNAP participants by giving them access to fresh, local, healthier food. In the case of tribal communities, having worked on FDPIR, I know there's also a concern with culturally appropriate food so you could certainly take that approach.

Then it helps the farmers themselves. And if you have a burgeoning market, if you have some kind of community center where you want to gather a mass of people, a farmers' market is a great way to get people out there. You can get families involved. You can do cooking demonstrations. You can build other events around it. So it creates a more dynamic community. Like I said, its equipment, you get authorized. Really there's no downside to it from our perspective. Are there any questions?

Dana Richey: If I may. This is Dana Richey. I wanted to speak up because I helped to organize with Rogelio and his staff the events that was held yesterday and today. I know Leslie Wheelock was hoping what you might do is give a read out of the experience of yesterday and today - how many people signed up, how many people visited, what obstacles that you saw or challenges. For example, did people want to sign up but maybe they didn't have the appropriate documentation to do so. Anything you can help to enlighten us would be great so that if other council members want to have something similar with their reservation, that would help to inform how we could plan this in the future.

Rogelio Carrasco: Certainly. Absolutely. The first thing I would say is that having done this around the country, I would point out that every situation is different. I've done them in California. I've done them in Minneapolis. I've done them all over the place. Everything has its own slightly different cultural flavor so a lot of times we rely on local organizers to help us figure out the best approach. There had been situations where I walk in, I'm sitting at the front of the thing and I have 50 people and I better present. If I say I'm presenting at 9:00, I better present at 9:00.

In California people were trickling in all day. I never really did the presentation. It's just as they came in, I

talked to them one-on-one. I talked to them about the benefits and what they needed to do. So I would say first off one size does not fit all. Secondly, I would say that it's important that before we can really send out a team, what we really want to do is achieve a critical mass. We want to have knowledge from you guys. Let us know, hey, you know we've talked to a dozen or 15 or whatever number of farmers are in your markets so that it makes it more cost-effective for us to go out because it gets a little bit challenging when you don't have the numbers. I get back to the office and they ask me how many people did you sign up.

At this event, we didn't get the numbers that we hoped. We signed up two people. That happens, that's part of the process. We've done events where we sign up three or four people. It's not that great, but then word spreads. What you find out is people find out they're doing this, this is great. Then we get a follow-up request, and sometimes we'll do another sign-up event. Usually, by that second one, we need to have a better idea if there's going to be a good number of people.

I think one of the things that you need to do is you really need to advertise it and you need to think outside the box because, again, we don't know your communities. In some communities, the high school is the hub of activity. In other words, in other places it might be the government center - your

city hall. So it really comes down to the people that we're working with. You tell us where it is that we need to advertise. Obviously, social media plays a part. There's nonprofits. There's advocacy communities that have mailing lists, and that helps.

Also it depends on where in the country you are. I mean some places are in a more urban setting. So if you advertise within a 10 or 15-mile radius, you're going to bring in a lot of people. I heard one of the gentlemen out here is from New Mexico. Was that you, sir? I'm from El Paso. So out there you could advertise 200 or 300 miles and still pull in people because out there, you know, driving three hours is just visiting a friend. Right? Very large distances. So it just depends. But I would say the critical mass is important, and getting the word out.

Not everybody knows SNAP as SNAP. As you said, in some places they know it as EBT. In other places they still refer to it as food stamps. Still other states have their own names. California calls it CalFresh. Texas calls it the Lone Star Card. So you have to speak in the vernacular of wherever it is you're going to be working.

I'm trying to think of other stuff. The documents that people need to bring. People need to bring either a Social Security Card or an official document that's got their Social

Security number on it. Tax season is here, so a W2 is perfect. And a copy of a government-issued ID. One of the questions that we got before this event was will this tribal ID count. Absolutely, it's government issued ID. Certainly something else I would point out is it's perfectly acceptable for a government entity to own a farmers' market, and here maybe I should step back.

Our definition of a direct marketing farmer is one farmer/producer selling his or her own produce directly to the public. Our farmers' market definition is merely an expansion of that. It's two or more direct marketing farmers selling their produce directly to the public at a fixed location over a regular period of time. It doesn't have to be every week. It doesn't have to be every day. It could be once every two weeks during the summer. Perfectly acceptable. Yes, ma'am?

Mary Ann Thompson: Does the individual farmer have to declare that upfront as to whether they're the direct market farmer or the farmers' market?

Rogelio Carrasco: Yes. Yes, if you are either applying as a farmer or as a farmers' market. If you're doing a farmers' market - and this is what I was getting to - if there's two or more, what you often have to do is you have to set up a token system. A script system, they refer to it. As an example, let's say I'm the market manager and you guys are all the

farmers. I'll have the central piece of equipment and what will happen is somebody comes up, swipes their card, and says I want to spend \$20 at the farmers' market today. I give him \$20 worth of tokens. He then could spend \$10 with you, \$5 with you. At the end of the day I'm left with \$5. Come back to me and get a refund. So you have to set up a little intermarket economy.

Personally, if I'm doing this, if I'm a market manager and I'm about to set it up and you all are going to be my farmers, I would say you all should sign up and become SNAP-authorized yourself because here's the great thing if you're an individual farmer: To be a direct marketing farmer that's SNAP-authorized and gets the equipment from us, you have to tell us that you participate at one market. Let's say that's on Saturday. You take that equipment because you're a direct marketing farmer. Unlike a farmers' market, a direct marketing farmer is mobile. On Saturday you could sell out of your barn. On Monday you could sell out on different farmers' market. On Tuesday you can set up a street stand on the side of the road. Once you're a direct marketing farmer, you're mobile and you can go anywhere and you're not reliant on that farmers' market.

Jim Radintz: If I may, I can kind of speak from a little bit of personal experience. Our local farmers' market - they're outside of Fredericksburg, Virginia where I live - has done it on a market basis. The market manager actually has the machine

and does that. That really allows a lot of smaller producers that I've talked to that would say it's just not worth my while. I don't want to deal with the paperwork. I don't want to deal with the government, whatever it is. But they have no problem at all accepting those tokens and working through the market manager to get reimbursement for those, and that worked very well.

I know there are a lot of local folks that get a lot more healthy food than they otherwise will because of that whole system. I think, again, a lot of the smaller vendors that may only sell a thousand dollars a week or something, they're just not really interested in that side of it. I can see that maybe potentially around here too, folks weren't interested in going through that whole process. But the fact that the market manager does it and opens that whole avenue up to the SNAP recipients really makes a huge difference, at least it really has where I live.

Rogelio Carrasco: Yes ma'am?

Mark Wadsworth: Leslie.

Leslie Wheelock: On the flipside of that, I started at the fourth farmers' market in Washington, D.C. in a public park. Primarily it has always been volunteer-managed. The thing that you do need with a market-managed EBT machine is that you've got to have people there and they've got to have a system that

works. In the markets that I have visited where they have that kind of a staffing, they're vibrant. They're amazingly large. You've got all kinds of people picking up all kinds of things. In our little market in the park, in my neighborhood, we couldn't afford a person or couldn't find a person who would volunteer to sit there every week six hours a day, every week during the summer, during six months in the summer. So the individual farmer version worked for us.

Rogelio Carrasco: Yeah. I'm really glad that both of you guys gave your experiences, because that's exactly what we find. It goes back to what I said. There is no one size fits all solution, and we're flexible with both. You could even have a mixture. You could have a market that has a market terminal and at the same time have farmers at the market who have their own machine. So we're willing. We really think it's important for SNAP participants to have access to fresh and local food. At the same time, we think it's really important to give this opportunity to farmers and the markets. So we think it's a great approach and there's no downside to it.

Mark Wadsworth: Mary Thompson.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you. We tried to advertise this SNAP sign-up event. I put it down at our local Channel 28. I put a flyer in the local paper. I put it in the paper and on the website, emails to the USDA programs, the extension office

and such. And I really don't understand why we didn't have better participation from our farmers here. But as this place is just a little bit different, too, we don't have the land base to have huge gardens where people sell on a retail level. I think Jackson County and Swain County have the farmers' market, and most of the farmers go there and participate. I had hoped for a higher turnout and for this to be even more successful. But I do appreciate you all coming down, and I thank you. Thank you.

Rogelio Carrasco: Thank you so much. I'm really grateful for the opportunity to speak before you today. I'm very grateful to you guys having given us the hospitality. I met -- I still feel funny calling him Jumper. I told him it feels weird calling you Jumper. But I met him, and he was great.

The thing about it is I sense that you feel a little bit bad about the turnout. I hope that's not the case because it happens. Like I said, it's a learning experience. We've had other experiences where not that many folks show up, and then they find out about it and it grows. At the end of the day, even if we only have a couple, that word will spread and you're helping more folks. And then, again it's also very important. Well, for me it's very important. I don't know for you guys. For me, it's very important to get in front of you folks and let

you know that we want to do this and that we're willing to work with you on it.

Mary Ann Thompson: One final question.

Rogelio Carrasco: Yes, ma'am.

Mary Ann Thompson: How long is that registration good for? Do they have to renew annually?

Rogelio Carrasco: Every five years.

Mary Ann Thompson: Every five years.

Rogelio Carrasco: It's reauthorization every five years.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you.

Rogelio Carrasco: Okay. Thank you for your time. Oh, I'm sorry.

Tawney Brunsch: Tawney speaking. I appreciate that your program's goal is to increase the access through this program. But I'm wondering if you have any numbers yet to reflect the number of low-income Native American, the tribal members who have utilized it, who have actually purchased locally grown produce with EBT at farmers' markets. Do you have any of that kind of data yet?

Rogelio Carrasco: I have none of that data. It would be hard for me to even generate that data for larger groups. In fact, when I got the opportunity to speak before you guys, I jumped at it. Because just from personal experience, I know

that tribal organizations probably are not as involved as we would like. I imagine there's not that many.

Tawney Brunsch: So Lakota Funds actually -- I think it was in 2010, Arthur, where participants utilized the FMPP. We were going to go out and do farmers' markets. We were going to organize our gardeners and our gatherers, as we called them, and help them to see that there's a definite benefit to them; that there's some real potential for additional income by selling their tomatoes that they're growing in their garden, for example, or purple potatoes or whatever it is. So it was our goal, and it was one summer long. It took us two staff members. It was Lakota Funds staff who had to go out and gather again because of the remoteness and the long distances that we have to travel to get the food to the market.

We did that piece. We got it to the market, and we had several markets. We tried to make sure that we offered to market in each of the nine districts. Do you know we didn't have any tribal members come? Yeah. We went through the grief, and it was grief at that point, to get our EBT machine. And we didn't have any tribal members come. They didn't care. So I think we've got to back it up a little bit and maybe really push the education piece again. Why is it beneficial? Why would someone want to use their EBT on locally grown produce? And you've got to sell it both ways, right? It's good for your

nutritionally, but it's also supporting your local economy. And we do get that piece. You know what I mean? So you've got to sell it that way.

We didn't have any luck at farmers' markets off the reservation and we placed ourselves strategically next to Badlands National Park where actually the tourists didn't care what we were selling. If we advertised it as grown by local tribal members, they were buying. But there of course we didn't get to utilize the EBT so we still have the machine. Never used it.

Rogelio Carrasco: Well, how long ago was that, if you don't mind my asking?

Tawney Brunsch: 2010.

Rogelio Carrasco: 2010? So, you know, the technology has advanced dramatically.

Tawney Brunsch: Oh, we've got the iPad. We've got the technology.

Rogelio Carrasco: Okay, you've got the technology.

Tawney Brunsch: We just don't have the users.

Rogelio Carrasco: I wanted to make sure that you all knew we have good technology. I didn't want to steal your thunder.

Male Voice: [Off-mic]

Rogelio Carrasco: I mean I'm not as knowledgeable on it. I didn't want to steal your thunder.

Leslie Wheelock: The FINI.

Rogelio Carrasco: The FINI program is a program that's been administered by the National Institute of --

Leslie Wheelock: Food and Agriculture.

Rogelio Carrasco: Okay. There you go. It's a new -- well, not a new idea. It's a new idea as far as the federal government goes because it's an idea that's been going on for a while. The federal government finally got involved, what they call as nutrition incentives. You may have heard them referred to as Bonus Bucks, or Bonus Dollars, or SNAP Dollars. What it is is there's actually a SNAP regulation that says you can't treat people on SNAP differently than you treat other folks. Historically, that was the purpose of that was that SNAP people were being treated with less wealth than others, maybe were being stigmatized in some way.

Well, what's happened in the past few years is that's reversed. We actually have folks, particularly farmers' markets, who want to actually treat them better. What they actually say is you come to the market and you spend \$10. If you're a SNAP participant and you spend \$10 on fruits and vegetables, we'll give you \$10 more to spend on fruits and vegetables. It varied because this was administered at the local level and funded at the local level. Some place it was 50

cents on the \$1. Some place it was 50 cents on the first \$10 or whatever.

I guess last year FINI started, and it was a grant program administered by one of our sister agencies, and they've got I believe about \$25 million each year? I think it's \$20 million one year and \$30 million the next in grants to markets and farmers. You can do this, and you can certainly apply. All of you can apply. I think the next RFA for that will probably be in September or thereabouts. That's not my program so I don't want to speak too much for them, but that's something that's there. I also know that AMS currently has some grants that Arthur's going to talk about.

One other thing that you touched on, the last thing before I get off stage here, you guys asked how we can get people interested. I think you hit on it - kids. If you get kids to care about locally grown food, fresh grown food, that is infectious upwards. It gets the parents involved, we've seen that all over the country, and actually senior citizens. Elders. If you go to senior citizen centers and you do cooking demonstrations or you talk that there's going to be a market, that tends to filter downwards into the parents I guess who are spending more money. Any more questions?

Jim Radintz: I would just add about the Bonus Bucks, that's a huge incentive. That helps spread the word, I know.

Again, at our farmers' market, I've heard more than one person say that that was what helped them feed their family through the end of the month. Really, again, word of mouth spreads and you see more and more people come to take advantage of that. But also, again it ends up getting them to eat healthier and buy local food and do all the resulting benefits that we all seek from that. I think our market actually had a private grant from -- I think it was Wholesome Wave. But that's a huge incentive and really gets a program off to a good start, I think.

Leslie Wheelock: Just a quick comment. We've found in other tribal communities - well, I'll just extend this to tribal communities - the sharing that we do among ourselves, and among our people, and among our families often works to the detriment of farmers markets on our lands because we have a tendency to give it away to each other before we sell it to each other. So the idea of moving the stand or moving the farmers market to some place that's on a public access road or someplace where non-tribal members would drive by, and even tribal members, might be more beneficial than some of the places that we think it would be natural for our tribal members to participate in.

Rogelio Carrasco: Yeah. I really don't like buzzwords, but it creates that synergy. If you have a few more tourists stop by, maybe that makes the market more viable. The very last thing I'm going to do is give you my personal phone number, if

it's not already on there. It's 703-305-2673. Or my personal email address is - my first name, r-o-g-e-l-i-o; last name, c-a-r-r-a-s-c-o @fns.usda.gov.

I don't know if I've mentioned it enough or mentioned it strongly enough, I would really like to hear from some of you about doing an event at your reservation or on your tribal lands. We would love to work with you guys. We know there's a need, and we want to serve that need. So by all means give me a call or write me an email and I'll get back to you as soon as possible and try to figure something out. Maybe do a little more pre-gaming to try and make sure we have the numbers there, but we definitely want to do that. And again, ma'am, if you could please pass on the --

Thanks for the hospitality. We really did appreciate everything. To be fair, there was I guess some people doing construction out on that road and there was a water main break. So we lost half a day today.

Mary Ann Thomas: I've just sent that on the email.

[Cross-talking]

Rogelio Carrasco: Right. They closed buildings all up and down that street. Thank you very much for you time.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Arthur?

Arthur Neal: Good afternoon all. How much time do I have? Five minutes?

Mark Wadsworth: As long as you you'd like.

Arthur Neal: I won't take long. I'm going to address you first by sharing some information regarding the newly-announced GroupGap program. My name is Arthur Neal. I'm with the Agricultural Marketing Service. I'm the Deputy Administrator for the Transportation and Marketing Program. Today I'll be sharing with you some other areas of our agency. How many of you are familiar with GAP certification? Good Agricultural Practices certification. No. How many of you got growers in your communities that are trying to sell their products to retail outlets? Okay. How many of you got growers trying to sell their products to wholesale markets or to institutions or schools? Okay.

So most of these types of organizations or buyers are requiring for those products to be produced under a GAP certification in order for them to continue to buy. FDA has released their food safety modernization regulations, and that's going to require farmers to abide by a host of food safety protocols. GAP helps to ensure that farmers are actually producing according to some protocols and minimize food safety risks.

But the costs are fairly expensive if you're trying to get certification individually, as an individual producer or farmer. So what AMS has been doing for the past three years is working to design and develop a GAP certification program that can minimize the cost of certification for producers, and they've finally done that. Yesterday they announced it, and it's called GroupGap. This is where producers can work together as a group under one, I want to call it food safety, one food safety plan. If they all agree to work under that plan. They can get certified as a group versus an individual farmer.

What would have to happen is that there would have to be an organization to take responsibility for this plan to train the producers. To produce according to the plan, the producers would have to agree to the plan. They would have to have an individual responsible for doing internal audits, and then USDA would come out and do sample inspections or audits on certain farms to see whether or not if that plan is actually working. And then once the group gets a certification, they can then share with buyers the products being produced and aggregate it and distribute it through this group that are certified according to GAP protocols.

So that's a program that's just been released yesterday. We're expecting it. I think they've already got their first application because this is a big deal for farmers to, one, gain

access to new markets that they've never had before or for buyers to get access to product that they've not been able to use because it's not been certified. So what AMS's mission is is to facilitate the marketing of U.S. products domestically and abroad. This is one way that we're helping to open doors for our producers to get their product into new places and new markets. Any questions about GAP?

Mary Ann Thompson: Mr. Chairman.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Mary.

Mary Ann Thompson: I like that you're doing the Group GAP thing. We've been addressing the GAP certifications for several council meetings, and one with Secretary Vilsack. I actually got to speak to him about this. But here in Cherokee, we have some FoodCorps folks here and food nutrition from the high school here that are working on that and they've come across several hurdles - one of them being just the location and the distance that we have here. The Group GAP could work, would work. But the other folks are -- I mean there's a lot of distance. If they have any comments, to come up and expound on things. And the other issue is cost in trying to get those at best.

Arthur Neal: When you say distance, distance to get product to market or?

Mary Ann Thompson: Distance to get to the next GAP certified farmer to join efforts, to collaborate.

Arthur Neal: So the challenge to get farmers to work together as a group?

Mary Ann Thompson: Yeah, I think. Now, Katie or Janette, you may want to come up and address that.

Leslie Wheelock: I have a quick question just so I can have a little bit of reference. I've actually been trying to google this and I can't come up with any answers. What is the average cost to get GAP-certified? Like is there a range?

Arthur Neal: No. The reason being every farmer is different. The way USDA does it, because people can get GAP-certified through other organizations, the USDA tries to offer services that give our customers a little bit of an edge or benefit. But there are plenty of private companies out there doing the same thing. So, anyway, USDA charges I think it's about \$92 an hour for audit work depending on how well organized a business is in terms of getting that paperwork together. Presenting that to the auditors will determine how much time they have to spend reviewing the documentation. How large a farm is would also dictate how much time an auditor would have to spend on a particular farm.

So it really depends. There's no average right now. Because this is a new program, we have no baseline costs. But

what we do know is that producers can share the cost of certification. Let's say if you've got 20 producers working in a group and GAP certification may have run for an individual producer anywhere between \$2,500 to \$3,000. For a group, let's say it's \$10,000 amongst 20, that's a big savings.

Mark Wadsworth: State your name.

Katie Rainwater: Katie Rainwater, FoodCorps Service member at Cherokee Central Schools. As I mentioned yesterday, it's something we've been working on with local growers. In order to provide fresh local produce into the school, we need GAP certification. Our closest USDA certified auditor is in Asheville. So the cost of their time to review the document and travel out here - they have to witness you harvesting, that's basically the audit - and then return back, we're looking at a minimum of \$1,500 for one audit. And that has to happen annually. So a GroupGap situation would address that, as well as having an internal auditor. Obviously this is the first I'm hearing of this.

Janette Broda: I have a question about that. Janette Broda, school nutrition director. Are there certain qualifications or requirements to be that local internal auditor?

Arthur Neal: If I'm not mistaken, and I'll get this all confirmed, I think there's a training that one would have to go through in order to become an internal auditor.

Janette Broda: Just to speak to something that Mary brought up, the distance between growers, our growers here in the mountains are generally very small scale. My understanding of GAP is that there are different procedures for different varieties of crops. So for growers who are growing different varieties of crops, is this plan going to address the harvesting needs for all those different crops? This wouldn't be part of the GroupGap situation, but travel is an issue. So being able to safely move the produce from one area to another under the GAP's requirements, I don't know if you could speak to that.

Arthur Neal: Not with authority. However, the plan that's developed for the group needs to fully encompass the production practices that would be implemented by the group, if you understand. So if there are a variety of production practices, then that plan needs to cover all of those production practices. For those farmers that fall under those production practices, they need to adhere to those practices. So it's up to the group that's developing their plan to make sure those things are covered. And there's also a Good Handling Practices certification as well. So that could cover some of the transportation issues.

Janette Broda: This is funny. I love picking your brain in this hilarious roundabout. I guess my next question would be the organization who's taking charge of the Group GAP, are they also going to be responsible for the liability insurance? I'm picturing like maybe cooperative extension would be in charge of it or maybe the Tribe would take it on, I'm not sure. Would they also be in a position to provide transportation like under the safe handling? What is the business end of that?

Arthur Neal: That's an interesting question. I'm not sure about the insurance component, who takes liability. I think that's between the group. What AMS has done, they piloted this concept with some growers they had, a co-op they had or food hubs to use as to see is this even feasible. So the food hub, for instance, was responsible for the plan for the growers. They had their internal auditor to ensure that the growers were doing what they were supposed to do before AMS went out, and there were lessons learned throughout the process. But in the case of liability, the food hub was taking on the product to move into market. They were finding the markets for the producers, and all the producers had to do was produce the product. So it really depends on the type of business structure that the farmers will be operating under.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Leslie.

Leslie Wheelock: Arthur, I have a question. This is Leslie Wheelock. It's kind of two questions. We were seeing you're talking about are all of the schools now to require their local food production to be GAP-certified. What does this do to the Farm to School Program?

Arthur Neal: That one I can't answer. I think that's more of a state and FNS question. A number of other schools that we know, that we've got relationships with like Chicago Public schools and others, they are required that the product to be GAP-certified. I'm not sure about some of the rural schools out in the countryside. I just know about some of the larger schools.

Mark Wadsworth: Leslie, maybe you know. With the buffalo process of selling to schools, did that have to go through a GAP certification also?

Leslie Wheelock: You mean the donations?

Mark Wadsworth: Well, I think that Janie Hipp was saying that -- or no. Who was the previous one?

Leslie Wheelock: There are two things you might be pushing up against here. One of them, there was a buffalo acquisition through AMS that goes through the food distribution commodity program. They followed all the rules, that's why USDA certified. The flipside of that is the donation of traditional food to schools. There are insurance mechanisms within that law

that say that the producer or the donator will not be held liable if there's a problem with whatever is donated to the schools. So donations under the traditional food donations program don't have to be GAP-certified.

Arthur Neal: And GAP refers to mainly produce.

Leslie Wheelock: Yes.

Arthur Neal: Not meats.

Mark Wadsworth: Oh, just produce. Okay. And Pilar.

Pilar Velasquez: I was just going to say I know that there are some schools that have their own community gardens. Are those gardens required to be GAP-certified even if the produce is grown at the school?

Arthur Neal: Those types of gardens are typically not GAP-certified.

Janette Broda: Just to clarify one point. Janette Broda, School Nutrition Director. In the state of North Carolina, all produce that we serve as part of our reimbursable meal for our students has to be GAP-certified. It has to come from a GAP certified grower. We can use produce grown on campus in taste tests, but in order to claim our meals to get reimbursement back from USDA, that produce has to be GAP-certified in North Carolina.

Mary Ann Thompson: Which includes the Farm to School program that you've done.

Janette Broda: So when we purchase Farm to School products from North Carolina Department of Agriculture, those products are from GAP-certified growers, yes.

Mary Ann Thompson: What about the gardens that you grow at the school?

Janette Broda: That produce has been used in taste tests and has been sold to community members and parents and just given away.

Mary Ann Thompson: Why are you not serving it in the lunchroom?

Janette Broda: Because that greenhouse and the gardens are not GAP-certified. And that's our issue, right? Here's where we run into two things. Janie Hipp, working on this food code idea for tribes, would put a different food code layer in place over the reservation that would take the place of the state food code. But it doesn't necessarily take the place of the reimbursable meal requirement. That is a different program. That's a federal program.

Mary Ann Thompson: [Indiscernible] which program.

Mark Wadsworth: Angela.

Angela Peter: I just wanted to chime in a little here. We in Tyonek have the first I could say olive garden, and we have high tunnels now. The food was distributed first to the elders, and we're talking about a pretty good size of food. Then they

were trying to take the potatoes and such to use them in the school. But they said, no, you can't do that; you'll have to send them out. And then they'll send them back. If you're paying 20 cents for one pound, that adds up really quick.

Male Voice: Is that a question?

Angela Peter: It's an issue that needs to be resolved.

Mark Wadsworth: Yeah, especially in price-related communities utilizing greenhouse systems to be able to feed possibly their school system or whatever is utilizing this program. Sarah.

Sarah Vogel: The origin of the GAP certification requirement for the school program, is that congressional or USDA regulations?

Arthur Neal: I can't speak specifically to it. I know it's a part of USDA's procurement requirements. Where it came from or where it originated, it's been in existence for a long time, I'm not sure the origin though. I'm not part of the particular procurement program, but I can find out the answer for you.

Sarah Vogel: It seems as though we've been hearing about this as a concern for the last like two or three years.

Arthur Neal: That's primarily because the Farm to School initiative is just getting that type of attention. But it's

always been part of the procurement requirement for school lunch programs.

Sarah Vogel: It's a pity because it seems as though most of the food safety problems comes from the very big corporate farm kind of operations, not the local gardens. Just my impression.

Angela Peter: Mark.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Angela.

Angela Peter: Exactly what Sarah was alluding to. I mean we have funding going into the communities to grow the food and then we can't even eat, the kids can't even eat the food until it goes around in circles.

Mark Wadsworth: We have the same situation. In our reservation, we have greenhouses that are just sitting there. It was a nice project. It showed the students how to grow stuff. But there's no long-term thinking that possibly different vegetables -- when you get above the Idaho area, you get that outstretch where you can grow the lettuces and the peppers and whatever it may be, green peppers or whatever out of the reach, just off the ground. I was listening to these farmers markets and stuff. They might work in our area during harvest time. But other than that, you wouldn't need a greenhouse system in order to fulfill that annual need.

Arthur Neal: Now, let me clarify something. I think products that are purchased through USDA food dollars, those are the ones that have to be GAP-certified. Now, if the schools are using other dollars to purchase product, I'm not sure about that.

Janette Broda: Janette Broda, School Nutrition Director, Cherokee Central Schools. I've asked that question and what I was told was since we are receiving USDA reimbursement funds, that those funds, along with local funding, goes in the same pot and we have to use those funds and operate the program under the regulations set forth by the USDA and North Carolina law.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Gilbert

Gilbert Harrison: Gilbert Harrison here. Members of the Council here, this is what we've talked about - barriers. Every time there's a program that's established to do something good, it gives life to more requirements. And that's why we wonder why people don't take advantage. You don't have a lot of participation. I know that in Navajo, cash works. I mean you take your stuff out there, park on the street, boom, they take your cash, that's it. Somehow when the government steps in to help, they build more barriers and it just ends up helping just very few people. I'm just thinking sitting here, our challenge is to identify and reduce barriers. How do we do that? It's really something else.

I understand requirements for certification and all of that. But then again, how do we get participants? Like I said, this is a big question, a big circle that not only applies to the food programs but applies to all these other programs that come about. I don't know if the life of the council is going to be extended indefinitely as long as these regulations come out. Thank you very much. That's just a comment. I think to me it's just all these programs are meant to do something, yet at the same time very difficult by this -- somebody help me with the word.

Arthur Neal: If I can add, that's the purpose of the GroupGap program is to try to minimize that burden.

Tawney Brunsch: Mr. Chairman.

Mark Wadsworth: Tawney.

Tawney Brunsch: I'm just wondering if there's an opportunity for this Council then. I'm not familiar enough with the GAP, but is there a way that we could review the language and maybe soften it a little bit where you have schools and other agencies who are receiving these federal dollars, that they be encouraged to purchase the GAP-certified produce but leave the opening for them to purchase not GAP certified produce if they choose to? Do you have to make it mandatory? Could you just change it so that you have that flexibility for that institution or organization, whatever, to make that choice on

their own? How important is it to them? Should it be up to them to decide?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Mary.

Mary Ann Thompson: Tawney, it seems to me that it's the program that's reimbursing the schools for the food that have this requirement. And so maybe, Arthur, if AMS can get with the other program -- which program is it, the USDA program that reimburses schools to purchase the food?

Arthur Neal: The Child Nutrition Program. I mean the National School Lunch Program.

Male Voice: The school lunch program they reorganized. But I think it might be the Child Nutrition Program --

Arthur Neal: And what AMS does, it's the procurement arm. It purchases the food.

Mary Ann Thompson: Okay. But since we're going around in circles here between AMS and the School Nutrition Program --

Arthur Neal: It's a partnership between AMS and the Food Nutrition Service.

Mary Ann Thompson: With that partnership there, then could you all sit down and look at the issue that was just brought up?

Arthur Neal: I will take that back, and I'm almost certain that they probably have. Because I'm just not a part of that team, I will get you the response. They have piloted the Farm to School program in certain states now to see what they can do

to reduce barriers. They're trying to figure this thing out. But the certification piece is still a part of that, so I'm sure they've had these discussions. I've just not been a part of that.

Mary Ann Thompson: Well, if they've had these discussions, it couldn't have been very recently. Or maybe it's just recently that they're becoming aware of these issues. If these issues can be resolved through a policy change, then that would be good. But I guess, as Gilbert would say, sometimes the process to change a policy, just policy - not statute, just policy - takes five years to plan, five years to implement, and five years to -- it's the bureaucracy of it. I guess the time.

Arthur Neal: I'm sure this one would definitely or probably be involved. Because this program has a lot of congressional attention, if there were a change like this, it wouldn't be done without considerable weight.

Mary Ann Thompson: Well, once you find what changes need to be made, could you forward that back through the Office of Tribal Relations so that we can get this information as I'm sure that this may not be the issue just in Cherokee, that it may be the issue all over Indian Country.

Arthur Neal: No problem.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: And also, Arthur, it just seems like this would have an impact nationwide. If we could open that door to having kids through greenhouses or whatever it may be within their school systems to raise their own food that they eat during lunch hour. If we are the barrier that's preventing that transaction between the student and what they're eating right there in their community by that GAP scenario, if we can hurdle that. I realize there might be a situation with the land grant colleges that are doing experimentation on the best potato. They don't know whether that is good for the human yet, so I don't know what happens to that food once it's grown. But if it's grown for the sole purpose of education, to show students where your food comes from and how it's consumed in the end, I think that that system didn't work.

Arthur Neal: Well, I think the number one concern is food safety for the children. To not know the products that's going to be served to the children have not gone through a process, have been produced under a process that's not been overseen, I think that's the number one concern. But I will find out the information you need and I'll get that back to Leslie.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Leslie.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you. And just for the Council's information, I've been sitting here emailing people too. This is not new, but it is something that within the past few months,

has come up over and over again from our school garden teams. I'm thinking that we've got people in the Farm to School program, Know Your Farmer, and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers today and yesterday. That has to have pulled this circle together.

Arthur Neal: I'm sure.

Leslie Wheelock: I'm not completely sure.

Arthur Neal: No. I'm sure that this has been hashed at some point, but I will find out. If not, we'll find out.

Leslie Wheelock: But we need to get an answer out to folks. Because it's not just these folks, it's happening around the country. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Especially like communities that are secluded, like Alaska.

Arthur Neal: So any other Group GAP questions? Then I'm going to give you like a two-minute overview. Earlier, I guess this was last month, we announced the availability of our Farmers' market and Local Food Promotion Program. So those grant programs are out on the street - \$13 million East Farmers' market Promotion, \$13 million available for Local Food Promotion.

Farmers' market Promotion basically deals with direct farm to consumer marketing activities. There are two tiers now in that program, one is capacity building. Grants can be awarded

anywhere between \$50,000 to \$250,000. Then we have technical assistance training and development. Those grants are ranging between \$250,000 and \$500,000. Then for Local Food Promotion Program, there's planning grants that can be awarded up to \$100,000. Those grants deal with the aggregation distribution process and the storage of local foods that are going to be marketed to local businesses or local markets.

So for planning grant, to figure out what it is you have to do to organize yourselves and see whether or not it's feasible for you to have a local food initiative in your area, those grants could go up to \$100,000. For implementation grant, that means you've got a business that's already moving product and you're trying to strengthen capacity and infrastructure or things of that nature, those grants can go up to \$500,000. Construction is not permitted in either one of those programs. For the Local Food Promotion, there's a 25 percent match to participate.

Female Voice: Do you have handouts on these, Arthur?

Mary Ann Thompson: Or website maybe?

Arthur Neal: On the back table.

Female Voice: At the back table, thank you.

Arthur Neal: And the website is [www.ams.usda.gov](http://www.ams.usda.gov). When you go to the website, there's a link that says AMS Grant Opportunities. All of our programs are there. That's going to

be the one that's most immediate, that I would encourage you to participate in.

Female Voice: Thank you.

Arthur Neal: All right, thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you, Arthur.

Female Voice: Thank you very much.

Mark Wadsworth: I never cease to be amazed thinking that you understand everything that comes through USDA.

[Indiscernible] until we find out something new. With AMS, I have always been very curious about and I'm glad that you guys came.

Leslie Wheelock: This is Leslie. Arthur did say this is FDA, Food Safety.

Mark Wadsworth: Food Safety. Alrighty. Should we have a short break here being 4:15?

...

Mark Wadsworth: All right. It looks like we are getting ready to go. Gilbert, we'll finish up with our last kind of open discussion. We got a few decisions to make, and we might as well just jump into the one for the next meeting. I would gather a resolution from our Tribal Council to sponsor a CNAFR meeting at our reservation. I was thinking a good time would be the latter part of July and maybe the first week in August. We do have our annual festival in the second week in August but

everybody is just all booked up by then, and I don't think we'll get the participation. But we could probably go into that first week in August before the festival time.

I was thinking kind of in our schedule, we have a lot of our cattle up on the summer ranges. Our spring range would be mainly clear for us to take a tour, you know, to look at some of the land either -- and I would be more than happy to have a tour of the range and a tour of the agricultural production. I realized that 300,000 acres is about 520 square miles. But we could get a good cross section of both probably in one day. So if we did do one day for a tour, and it would give you guys an idea of what we've been utilizing through USDA on our EQIP projects, on our CRP programs that we worked with, to also some of the CSP, and also some of our other conservation efforts that we work on. Our land is from the river bottoms from the Snake River to the upper or higher reaches of 85 or 8,700 feet up to our mountains. We could not see that all but we could see a good proportion of it.

As part of that, we could firm up those dates if we give you, let's say, from the second week in July to the first week in August, in between that timeframe. So I get a firm schedule from my Tribe which dates with three days' work for the Council for I guess coming in one day for travel, one day for tour, two days for meetings, the next day you could head on home. I was

also thinking that we could possibly -- we do have fishing permits, or maybe we could offer to some of the members if they wanted a little fishing during the evening or what may be. We do have a casino hotel. One of the best hotels in the area because it's brand new. A convention area. We have buffalo herds. Inspect the green farms, circulars, rain [indiscernible], just a pretty good aspect. Yes, Gilbert.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you, Mark. I very much appreciate, you know, your tribe willing to sponsor. I really feel that moving these meetings around outside the two, one in Washington and one in Vegas, that moving the other alternative, I really think it's beneficial because we see and we hear from different groups of people about what they're doing, and it gives people a chance to firsthand make comments and observe some of the things that we do. So I for one feel that it is beneficial with these programs around. And when you say the second week of July through the first week of August, I said, boy, why would you do this?

Mark Wadsworth: Well, one of those time [cross-talking].

Gilbert Harrison: So I think, to me, as a member of this council, I think that will be appropriate. I don't know how others feel about it.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Angela.

Angela Peter: I have a good feeling about things. The July is my subsistence, so if it could be in August until after.

Mark Wadsworth: Would the latter part of July work for you or is that still pushing for it?

Angela Peter: Well, the last week would be best, I guess.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay.

Gilbert Harrison: I think we got so many [indiscernible].

Mark Wadsworth: So we got those two weeks?

Angela Peter: Yeah. The end of July that's good.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay. It gives me a little leeway to make sure that we're scheduled. Yes.

Sarah Vogel: I love the idea of going out there. I'm just wondering if you could think a little bit about condensing. Because what you've just described as one day of travel, one day of tour, two days of meeting, and one day of travel, that's a five-day commitment. And I think when with -- it's a lot. I don't know that I could swing that, and to me the meeting would probably be the critical part.

Mark Wadsworth: And with that, we could make the tour day optional.

Sarah Vogel: Yeah. That's what I -- and only if I could swing it, that will be the probably the most fun. But then when we land, I mean in terms of where we would fly to, and when we go to where you are, is it possible to incorporate some of the

tour in the trip to the reservation. I've been on tours where there's a bus and everybody is on the bus, and sometimes even the meeting can occur on the bus with somebody with the microphone and people on the bus, and then you pile out, you look at a project, and you pile back in. So that, to me, I mean it could be a one day meeting, a one day tour, and the meeting on a bus. I mean just to get some of those things done.

Then I've also been a participant in meetings where the travel part of the meeting or the tour part of the meeting could be at a different timing than the meeting proper. The meeting proper is on the telephone, say, I mean these are shorter meetings, two hour meetings but, bam, you know, they're moving along, and then that could occur by telephone in advance. Because I would say this is a slow moving meeting in terms of the agenda that we cover and how quickly it would go. So I'm a little bulky about the -- even the four-day commitment is hard because of the travel. And I'm not Angela. Maybe travel is just not to be avoided, but I think anybody whose people who don't come because the longer the meeting, the more likely it is that people have conflicts. And all that said, I'm delighted to come and I'm looking forward to it.

Female Voice: Mark, when you put the -- I mean like how we get with this part of the agenda, I like dealing with the stuff that we asked to be moved. I mean you put the -- I don't know

if this is even the tour at the end. Because at the end is where we always lose our quorum. But it's just a thought.

Mark Wadsworth: My feeling on the tour at the beginning, if you will set the stage for exactly what we're doing here. You can actually see it in a few minutes to give you reference of the tour topics or the agenda topics that we're developing throughout that timeframe. That was just my thought rather than having a meeting and then a tour. But they would both, the tour again will be optional. As for bus, we do have freeways to go through our areas. We do have paved roads. But if you really want to get out there and see the lake, we can get you guys on

Female Voice: Horseback?

Female Voice: My god, I think you're [indiscernible].

Mark Wadsworth: Just to see what it's about. During that timeframe, generally it doesn't rain. But if it does rain, well, it weren't so bad in the rain. Be dusty, so bring your dusty clothes. You know it's just the aspect --

It's good if it's open. I don't care if you guys want to have the tour at the end or at the beginning. That's flexible. Yes.

Female Voice: Question. What airport would we use?

Mark Wadsworth: We have three options, basically. The people that -- you know, if money is a real concern, you have the ability to fly in into Salt Lake City. They have the Salt

Lake Express. Basically, a van that would drive you and drop you off at Fort Hall area. Or we would pick you up and take you to the hotel. I think they maybe even have a schedule of dropping people off at the hotel area, or I could work with them to see if they would because it's right off the I-15. That is going from Salt Lake City into either Pocatello or Idaho Falls. That's where the cost kind of increase anywhere from \$200 to \$300, \$400 just for that little 35, 40-minute flight. It's the real cost that brings you in there.

The Pocatello Airport is on the reservation. But it's a point of contention with our reservation with that airport is that as a part of World War II, we granted an area for the U.S Army at that time in the mainland before the airport was born to utilize our area of reservation to help with the war effort. Well, when we as a Tribe let them use that land or gave them that land to use for that effort, and then they turned around and sold it to the Pocatello City for a dollar, and then the Pocatello Airport has been our contention because they don't even really recognize a tribe with the tribal people and stuff. So we've been using Idaho Falls Airport. But seeing as we are a federal agency, we cannot really deny people to go into Pocatello. But I just want to give you a background of some of the issues that we face out there.

We have super fun sights that are just right off the interstates there. We used to have the fourth largest open pit mine in the nation at one time through J.R. Simplot through the phosphate area that is considered as part of the Superfund last reclamation we have. Some of it had worked quite well. Others would feel it's quite an eyesore. In Fort Hall, in our area, I consider us the largest producer of potatoes in the whole country. If you are to look at our reservation, we are renowned in that area, and I've heard that we actually produce close to 15 to 20 percent of all the French fry market in the United States.

Male Voice: We should taste some of that French fries.

Mark Wadsworth: So if you go to McDonald's or you go to Burger King, you get a 20 percent chance of eating some [inaudible]. So if you want, as for the two-day meetings in condensed-wise where we could still work on the agenda. But I think that two days has worked for me, and so --

Gilbert Harrison: Mark. I was going to suggest maybe a two-day meeting, and the people that want to tour, you can have maybe a third day just where they can tour. That would sort of separate the business at hand versus a tour of what your reservation looks like so we have a better idea when you talk about issues that surround your particular reservation so that it can either come ahead or after the meeting.

Mark Wadsworth: And I do not want to say that I hope that we will have regional tribes from across that area if we get this out effectively enough and have people coming from the Montana. We're part of the Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council which includes a lot of the tribes in Montana and Wyoming.

Angela Peter: This is Angela. How long does it take for the tour?

Mark Wadsworth: It would be one day.

Angela Peter: Oh, one whole day?

Mark Wadsworth: Yeah.

Angela Peter: Well, there goes my idea. I was thinking if it was some work, tour, and then do more work.

Gilbert Harrison: With that, I would like to acknowledge -

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Leslie Wheelock: Before you do that, may I give you a little bit more information?

Gilbert Harrison: Yes.

Leslie Wheelock: This meeting, so the travel expenses for the regional trips tend to be higher than the travel expenses possibly not for Vegas depending on what our room costs are. But for the airfare missing, when we don't have three of our Council members coming, was a little bit over \$8,000, and the hotel expenses were a little bit over \$9,000. One of the

reasons that we tried not to use the cars is because those drive up the expenses a lot, and this Council isn't funded. We go around hat and hand to collect money.

So I want to just keep that in mind especially when we start trying to help -- when my office starts trying to help you all pick airports and flights and things, because we do try to accommodate and we have but it tends to make a difference in things, and I think that's all I really wanted to say. I also have to ask, as you know, we've had trouble in Vegas with people who wanted to stay extra days in terms of covering this hotel cost, and I think we might have difficulty with one extra night.

Mark Wadsworth: We planned, well, already through resolution, have somebody that were going to sponsor the meals, and since the hotel costs ourselves will bear those though our tribe, and basically, you're going to just have to worry about the \$79 room rate for individual which I'm pretty sure is the cash rate for individuals coming through when we have sponsored meetings.

Dana Richey: When we are ready to set this up which might be next week. Can you find us as a single point of contact to help us out with this? Because we've got federal contracting requirements and guidelines that we have to follow. So some of what you just said, we're likely to be able to accept under certain provisions, and some of it we may not be able to.

Mark Wadsworth: And the point of contact already in the resolution. It was already on [indiscernible] who is our -- that's her position is to be the point of contact.

Leslie Wheelock: Okay. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes. Gilbert.

Gilbert Harrison: Mark, before we adjourn, if we're through with that next meeting part, I have two questions I like to have support from the Council on. One is that we've had this ongoing discussion on base property, and I did draw a map on the little flip chart up there for Pilar explaining what the base property issue is, and again we talked about it several times. And to me, the way it's written, the laws are written, the policies are written, it's right on the borderline of discrimination because it does not allow Native Americans to participate in the lease of U.S. forestry lands because the base property statute are language in there.

We've asked the Forestry Service a couple of times, maybe even more, how can we resolve this? We've got two answers. One is they're working on updating their policies but we have not have any luck. We have not had any feedback to say this is what the proposed regulations are going to be, and they have said that they would consult with tribal governments. I have not heard anything. I have not seen anything.

Then the other thing is that just to try to get a handle of how this policy affects Native American farmers and particularly ranchers, I did ask at our last meeting in Las Vegas when I think Estelle Bowman was there if she could get from the Forestry Service data to show how many leases are there in existence today that the United States Forestry Service administers across maybe the west or the rest of the nation. Total number. I don't need to know the number, names, or anything. But how many leases? And I did ask of the total leases, how many minority people hold leases? What's the number of minority leases that people have? And out of that minority, how many Native Americans have grazing permits on those?

Then lastly, I think there's supposed to be a law that says every so many years, those leases are supposed to be renewed or if they're not in compliance, they're supposed to be canceled. I did ask the four questions within the last five years. How many leases have actually been terminated? I have not gotten any feedback, and so I would like to ask the Council's support to ask governor's office to come up with some legal reading on this. It's getting to where we're not doing anything or we're not moving forward, and I think, I guess, in certain cases, I really think it borderlines discrimination, and I think we need to give it some serious thought, and how do we correct this barrier and you know [indiscernible].

So those are the two issues. One is to get a legal reading on this. I don't know what it will take. The other is to get that data from the forest reserves. Thank you very much.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Dana?

Dana Richey: This is Dana Richey. So one of the documents that is in your binder is tab number 18, and the first document is the tracker that tracks the status of recommendations. The second document at the very back is action items, and I want to mention that particularly since this is my last couple of hours as Designated Federal Officer for the Council. But one of the things I started doing beginning in the September and December meetings and I think will be carried on for this meeting is I went through the transcript very carefully to make a recording, Gilbert, of every request for information or request for a speaker that a council member voiced.

And so what I have been doing for the September and December meetings is to record that information in this action items' tracker. These are not recommendations. Of course, it writes to the Secretary. This is just information where a speaker that a Council member requested. Some of this action items have been addressed. So, for example, the SNAP EBT presentation that we had today was requested in the past meeting. Information that rural development or AMS had presented at the December meeting or in this meeting as other

speakers have, that rose out of this action items' document.

Okay?

So you will see in that tracker, for example, a list of questions that have been posed to NRCS or posed to Forest Service or other agencies. So those requests for information are recorded in the action item, and one of those is the information that you requested both of Ralph Giffen of Forest Service and also Estelle Bowman. I contacted Ralph Giffen, Estelle Bowman, and others periodically along with NRCS to follow up on the status of these answers, and so I reached out to Forest Service approximately two to three weeks ago to ask for a status letting them know that we had a meeting yesterday and today, and could we please get feedback on answers to these questions prior to the meeting.

So Josiah, Amanda, and I received an email about two hours ago from the Forest Service. They don't have answers to all the questions, but they do have an answer to one of the questions. And I'll read that for the record so that you have it and I'll also give it to you in writing. But before I do that, let me say that they answered not only the question on grazing data but they answered several other questions as well. But we haven't had a chance to review it yet, and just at a glance, it looks like some formatting needs to happen so that you can follow it, and it answers the questions specifically. But we'll go back

and review that carefully with Forest Service to make sure that the questions did get answered, and we'll circulate that out to the council members.

But if I may, this is the email answer that we got concerning Forest Service Grazing Data. Right, so you asked about the total number of grazing leases within Forest Service lands. The answer is that there are 5,902 active grazing permits as of March 30th, 2016. You asked, of this number, how many leases are held by minorities? The answer, "The Forest Service does not yet have a system for collecting and tracking this demographic data of its grazing permit holders. The agency has been trying to determine how to develop an electronic data collection system while protecting personal identification information." The third question you asked, of these minority leases, how many are held by Native American farmers or ranchers? The answer to that is the same as the second. They do not have this information tracked electronically while also protecting personal, identifiable information. The fourth question you asked, within the last five years, how many leases has the Forest Service actually canceled? The data shows that 288 permits have been cancelled since the year 2010.

Gilbert Harrison: Sarah?

Sarah Vogel: Yeah.

Gilbert Harrison: What do you think of this? It's like we need to have some answers. How do you feel in them? You've gone through some of these struggles before.

Sarah Vogel: How do I feel about it? Yeah. We are in this Council, and this is meant for the record for Leslie. This Council is here to suggest to the Secretary of Agriculture how to remove barriers to Native American participation. I think this challenge with the base acre of the grazing access to the Forest Service is a huge barrier, and that locking up all these grazing units with long-standing familial inherited virtually rights to have grazing. I mean Bundy. Is that with Forest Service, wasn't it? Or was it the BLM? Well, anyway, but it certainly gotten a lot of visibility.

I think the Secretary would well pay attention to this issue because it is, in my mind, and I thought this -- I think we filed Keepseagle 16 years ago, and 16 years ago, I had also the option of trying to do a lawsuit against USDA for having -- it would be basically de facto discrimination. The grazing associations at least that I know of in North and South Dakota are almost invariably all white, and they've been that way for a hundred years. They didn't let Indians in in the 1890s or the 1900s and 1910s, and it's more or less been inherited ever since then. I think it's a real problem.

And Pilar, one of your predecessors, Reid Strong was doing a ton of research because he thought it was a pretty hot Civil Rights thing. But I don't think we ever got much of response on the results of his research. But I think it's something that USDA should look at very searchingly, and I do not accept at all the excuse that they cannot collect data on these 5,002 leases without jeopardizing --

Gilbert Harrison: Personal --

Sarah Vogel: -- personal privacy. Jim, you might want to just wander over there and give them a lesson on how to keep statistics and yet protect confidential information. By the way, I think a loan is vastly more confidential than access to public lands and occupied public lands for basically [unknown] and -- actually the lawsuit I wanted to file was the incredible disparity between the formulas used by the BIA for what it charges Native American farmers or ranchers for access to the identical land as the Forest Service charges to the white farmers. Because the white farmers pay a fraction of what the Indian farmers are paying in, and they could be side by side across the fence line. But this is the lawsuit I didn't bring, but to me, it was stinky.

Gilbert Harrison: Excuse us again.

Sarah Vogel: That's a refined legal term.

Gilbert Harrison: Okay. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Can I [indiscernible]?

Gilbert Harrison: Go ahead.

Mark Wadsworth: Mark Wadsworth. Our tribe is one of the few tribes that is recognized by treaty to exercise the right of having BLM Forest Service allotments through CWIS, which virtually says that if any tribal member or the tribe itself wishes to put in for a BLM allotment or Forest Service allotment, we can kick the producer off of there, and we will get a reentry through treaty, but it has to be within the ceded lands back to 1900s Forest Service establishment and stuff.

I agree totally, too. I don't disagree that PII in this case is even close to being violated with asking generalities of how many minorities have permits. We are not and no way identifying an individual that somebody can look at, look out in the vast area that we're talking about just by giving a number.

Male Voice: And I think that's --

Mark Wadsworth: We've been over that road over and over. So I think that I disagree with their comment back, and maybe we need to say that.

Gilbert Harrison: Again, my basic question and the reason I asked is I want to show numerically the disparities, okay? If he just talked generally, you can't show anything. But we have, again, to me, the 5,000, we're not asking for names. We're not asking for Social Security. None of that. We just want

basically a number here, and so somehow, to me, that should be something that an agency, a multibillion dollar agency should have some information on that.

So that's one, and then the reason I asked Pilar and Reid for legal opinion or legal reading on this is because we need to know. Are we barking up the wrong tree? What steps would we have to take up to actually sort of clean this issue up? That's the only reason, okay? And because I remember two or three people appearing before the Council pointing up this issue, and so I think we do -- it is a big issue and I think this needs to be clarified. That's all we're asking for.

Pilar, let me ask you a question. From what we gather here and from the previous information that you can get, what kind of a written response can we expect from your office related to this?

Pilar Velasquez: Sure. Thank you. So as some of you may know Reid is no longer with the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. He recently got a new position, I believe, with --

Male Voice: Fish and Wildlife or something?

Pilar Velasquez: Yes, within USDA. So he was taken off, obviously, a lot of the duties that he had within our office, and some of them have been transferred to me. This was not one of them. However, I would be happy to look into this issue for

the council and employ some of our resources in our office and speak with Dr. Leonard about this. I am sure that if it is a priority for this council, that he would be interested in providing some sort of written response to these questions and getting in together the right folks so we can figure out a resolution, or if not some sort of resolution, at least some sort of responses and answers to your questions. So I am actually in touch with Reid quite frequently, and so I will give him a call and I will start working on this for the group and get a response together for you folks.

Male Voice: Kind of as a point of clarification, too, it was mentioned that the bureau may be sued for charging a different rate than the Forest Service?

Sarah Vogel: No. No. I wanted to.

Male Voice: Did you [indiscernible]?

Sarah Vogel: No. It wouldn't have been. It's a lawsuit I never brought and there were lots of problems with bringing such a lawsuit. But the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management together have a system of setting the grazing rates, and they have a team. This data might be old but I think it would still be in effect. They have a team of economists, land management experts, grazing experts, and government employees, and so on. They get together and they collectively decide what the value that should be charged, and it is for multiple use.

I mean, it's grazing but then somebody might still be in their gathering or something or somebody might be hunting and fishing and so on. But they come up with a value, and the value back then, the value that the Forest Service, BLM came up with was such and such in dollars per animal unit month. And then at the same time, I was working with, in my private practice, a lot of Native American farmers and ranchers who are also in grazing associations, and they were having to deal with the BIA in various reservations.

Sometimes the BIA's charges were ten times, ten times what the white farmers were being charged across the fence, and it was just offensive. It was just a really harsh burden on the Native American farmers and ranchers. How did they make it? And of course, you have two different Federal agencies, the BIA set their rate with a pretty squirrely system which we had to challenge through the BIA processes and generally we're successful. But I really like the way that the Forest Service had their formula. I mean they had the economist and so on, and I just couldn't understand why two or three Federal agencies, BLM -- and actually, BLM and BIA are part of the same interior department but they had two totally different systems of addressing land. Now, of course, the BIA is addressing trust land and there's certainly an interest in generating income for the trustee. But the problem is that the BLM formula allowed

for many more improvements to the lands so that the Forest Service BLM considered the fact that water development including fences had to be put in.

So it's the same process but it was such dissimilar approaches that I thought it was -- anyway, but I never brought a lawsuit. Nobody has ever brought a lawsuit that I know of. But I do think that it is a barrier that Native Americans are de facto prevented for the most part from participating in Forest Service leases because their trust property is not recognized as base property. And then of course the base property that is used for the Forest Service leases might be just a little farmstead in the middle of the Forest Service or BLM land. But the ranch, that little farmstead maybe sells for multimillions of dollars because they assume that the lease goes with that base property, and it just isn't an open system, and maybe there's nothing that can be done about it. But I think when we did have somebody from the Forest Service here to talk, they were very uncomfortable.

Mark Wadsworth: I just don't want to -- because this is all on the record too, and I deal with this. I deal with it, you know, this is what I had to consider when we're looking at BLM forest land and tribal land.

Sarah Vogel: Yeah, yeah.

Mark Wadsworth: Is that you have to realize though that that BIA is representing that land. They are representing the tribe. That money is not going to the BIA. That money is going to that tribe for that tribal people, and those people have the trust responsibility to get the best rate that they possibly can. But in that same setting, the tribe itself has the decision of do we want to charge less to our individual tribal members? Who do we want to? They virtually have the ability through the allocation proportion that is given to the tribe that if they want to own 100 percent of that tribal trust to take it away from the base system or out of the system, and then lease it at whatever value they choose, and tribes choose across the board to give their tribal members a break. If it's not Indian, they can bid on the same land within the reservation. It's generally the rule. Now, there's other tribes that I can't say it's totally across the board like that.

Then also, if you look at the Forest Service BLM, yes, they do have a range improvement fee which is very miniscule. I think that the AUM rate for Forest Service land is like 75 cents in an acre. It's one heck of a deal, you know, for these non-Indians to get a part of it. Now, I think that's the barrier we had to break open to have that ability.

Sarah Vogel: Right. This is just true.

Mark: But our tribe has chosen, when we do our outside allotments in our ceded land, our tribe is the assignee. They hold the Forest Service lot. They hold the BLM lot. Now, the tribal member goes to the tribe and says, "Okay. I will use that portion." And then they work it out.

Sarah Vogel: You seem to have quite a different system than would be the case in the region like North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana, Idaho are different. I know there's a lot of variations between districts, and Zach had probably commented on all of this, but it is the case that there's sharply different formula, and different purposes and different ownership. Yet, I'm troubled because the statutes in both cases as I dimly recall basically say it's supposed to be the market value.

Gilbert Harrison: Mark, one last comment on this.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes.

Gilbert Harrison: I'd like to ask, do we need to have this request to your office in that resolution form? If so, I'd like to make a motion that we request the Office of Civil Rights, right, to take a look at this issue not only from the legal aspect but to answer the question: is holding that a valid grazing lease on BIA trust land, is that equivalent to a base property? If we can establish that, I think that will resolve a lot of issues.

So I would like to make a motion that we ask Pilar's office to take a look at that, and then also, I like to in that same motion, again, request for free service to provide the data. I'm sure somehow "we don't have it" is not sufficient. We got to have something. Thank you very much. That's my motion.

Mark Wadsworth: Second?

Female Voice: I'll second.

Mark Wadsworth: Any further discussion? All of those in favor, please raise your right hand. All those opposed?

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Anyone abstained?

Gilbert Harrison: One more item, Mark.

Mark Wadsworth: Go ahead.

Gilbert Harrison: I would like to ask Joanne. She gave a verbal report up here. For the next report, I like to ask Joanne if she can put that in writing, you know, what you found out about the disparities, and take a deeper look at what some of this information reveals. That would be my request of Joanne. So far, she has reported two or three times for us but it was all just verbal report. We need something to show that this is what's going on with her office and looking into somebody's disparities. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Pilar.

Pilar Velasquez: I just wanted to say really quickly, I have to leave soon to catch a flight but I wanted to thank everybody for allowing me to participate and having the opportunity to get to know some of you better, and hopefully I will see you again soon, and I will bring the issue that we discussed to the attention of Dr. Leonard and have discussion with him and his special council job, and hopefully we'll have something to get back with you shortly on. But thank you. Thank you again.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you, Pilar.

Female Voice: Thank you.

Gilbert Harrison: We look forward from hearing from you.

Mark Wadsworth: So Gilbert, do you want to make a formal motion on that?

Gilbert Harrison: Yes, I do.

Mark Wadsworth: There is a motion on the table.

Female Voice: Clarify them now, about having the Ombudsperson to do written reports?

Gilbert Harrison: Yes. I'd like to ask in a formal motion to have Joanne provide us a written report on her findings in relationship to the data that she has reviewed because, otherwise, we are not receiving nothing substantial.

Mary Thompson: And that would be prior to the next meeting or whenever it becomes available?

Gilbert Harrison: The next time she appears before the meeting, yes.

Mary Thompson: Well, if she gets it beforehand, could she send it out beforehand?

Gilbert Harrison: Okay. Thank you. That's my motion. Thank you.

Female Voice: Second.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay. Moved and seconded.

Female Voice: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: No discussion. All those in favor, raise your right hand. Any opposed? Any abstained?

Sarah Vogel: Well, I didn't abstain. I was laughing at --

Mark Wadsworth: I wasn't looking at you.

Sarah Vogel: Oh, sorry. Yeah.

Mark Wadsworth: Motion passed.

Sarah Vogel: Gilbert used his left hand.

Female Voice: His other right.

Female Voice: I saw three of them.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you, Pilar. Have a safe trip.

Mary Thompson: Does she have her own car? Does she have a car?

Female Voice: Yeah, [indiscernible].

Mary Thompson: Good.

Mark Wadsworth: Did we have any unfinished business from the previous suggestions before?

Dana Richey: This is Dana Richey. No. We had votes on the three recommendations yesterday. So as far as status of those, there is no unfinished business.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay.

Leslie Wheelock: Mr. Chairman.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Leslie.

Leslie Wheelock: There were some recommendations. Zach is not in the room. But there were some recommendations that he was asking the Council to consider. Do you want to talk about any of those now or would you like to get those for the next meeting?

Mark Wadsworth: We can discuss it now.

Leslie Wheelock: Mr. Ducheneaux, would you like to come up and talk through some of the resolutions that you recommended, some of the recommendations that you made earlier?

Gilbert Harrison: I believe we read the resolutions for the --

Mary Thompson: And do we need to do them today or at the next meeting?

Zach Ducheneaux: It would be fine at the next meeting.

Leslie Wheelock: Okay.

Zach Ducheneaux: I just wanted to kind of get feedback from the Council. Zach Ducheneaux, Intertribal Head Council. I wanted to get feedback from the council if it's something that you thought you wanted to pursue because you're the ones making the recommendations. Not us. We're at the table. So I will flesh them out and get them to Dana to share with all of you.

Gilbert Harrison: That would be awesome.

Zach Ducheneaux: If that's fine.

Leslie Wheelock: Yeah. Thank you.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you.

Leslie Wheelock: One of the items that Zach discussed today involved the FRTEP program. And we had this past week one of the FRTEP agents did a really nice presentation on that program as it is operated in the state of Arizona that we would like the council to see, and so we would highly recommend it. It's a short program. It was about -- Josiah? Trent Teegerstrom's program was what, about half-an-hour?

Josiah Griffin: Yes.

Leslie Wheelock: So it's about half-an-hour and well worth it. We have some concerns about the program as is Zach, and I think that they are all probably best raised before this council. Thank you.

Mary Thompson: Question. He's going to show that now?

Leslie Wheelock: No. No. It's a FRTEP agent.

[Indiscernible].

Mark Wadsworth: Hey, Zach. Just before you take off, too we're going to conduct the next council meeting at Fort Hall.

Zach Ducheneaux: I heard that. I look forward to come visit.

Mark Wadsworth: You know the Northwest Indian Agriculture Council, we'd like to get that out to them, maybe work in coordination with you to advertise this through the IAC.

Zach Ducheneaux: Yeah.

Mark Wadsworth: If you would like to do a northwest IAC during that timeframe, too, we can work it out and do whatever you want to do.

Zach Ducheneaux: Yeah. As soon as you get the dates finalized, give them to me and we'll share them through our network.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay. Thank you.

Zach Ducheneaux: Appreciate it.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Sarah.

Sarah Vogel: The only suggestion I had, Zach, is if you could separate out anything that requires congressional changes. Because I don't know that we have a good system for getting -- I mean I think we've sort of -- I think the Secretary's reaction is that if it requires a change in the law then we should be

raising those issues through other means. Am I correct or clarify that?

Leslie Wheelock: It is typical that that is how we as the department approach things that we can't change because they're statutory. However, it does not prevent the council from recognizing statutory concerns because this can be picked up by another organization and move forward.

Sarah Vogel: All right. Good. Then have at it.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you.

Mary Thompson: Mr. Chairman?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Mary.

Mary Thompson: I have a question for Zach, and I'm not really sure if this is the right form to address it but I'll put it out there. If it's not, then I'll find another way to address it.

Zach Ducheneaux: If it's not, I'll run out the back door.

Mary Thompson: As it pertains to putting staff members in place in the NRCS tribal liaison position or as a FRTEP extension agent or as a 4-H agent. When the colleges holding the funding for those positions or the departments holding the funding for those issues as they're not moving along in those positions set vacant for an extended period of time, do you see that as a problem or issue in Indian Country in general?

Zach Ducheneaux: I wouldn't say it's a general problem. What I would offer, if you do have circumstances like that, is a tribal initiative to coordinate with OTR to go to the head of that particular agency and start asking questions. With the tribal liaison, I'd go to Chief Weller and I'd say, we've got a position. We've got a guy. He's been in the NRCS. Why isn't this position open? He's going to have to move on to something.

I mean, timely opening of these positions is critical when you're trying to get our own people into our own communities because they have to eat and they have to make a living for themselves. So I'd say you elevate that discussion as a tribe to that level and see if you can get some things moving.

Mary Thompson: Thank you.

Male Voice: Yes. And on the same subject and I hope this too -- I would hate to see that this money is being spent on other purposes within that land grant and not being held over and retained for the purpose that it is. I don't know if that's a question for the college or for the national FRTEP agent to address what happens when these vacancies to the funding that they received for the tribe. Is it being held over or is it being spent for other issues?

Zach Ducheneaux: That would be a good question to ask of your land grant university that's handling the funds.

Mary Thompson: Oh, yeah. That was going to be one of the questions.

Leslie Wheelock: These positions are so few and so precious that we want all of them filled to the maximum we possibly can. In fact, one of the things that our office asked for is the result of the president asking for additional tribal youth programs. What they were looking for were educational support programs, but they also cited an after-school. So we hope that we bundled another full time employee for FRTEP location into the funding for the FRTEP program this year mostly to support 4-H, but because they have to figure out how to read that mission. That's what a lot of them do today, but we also have agents out there who said they just didn't have enough arms and legs to get a 4-H program going so that's where our focus was. Thank you.

Female Voice: Thank you.

Male Voice: Thank you.

Gilbert Harrison: One last action item.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Gilbert.

Gilbert Harrison: I think we need to thank a couple of people for supporting our meeting here. One, of course, is Mary Thompson and the Cherokee Nation for your hospitality and all the initiative and everything you had to do to put this together and make it very successful. So I think we need to say thank

you very much. The other one is Dana. You've stepped in and you picked up the pieces for a while. You've done a good job. Thank you very much. I don't know where you're going back after this but we do appreciate you, both of you. Have a good day.

Mary Thompson: Thank you, Gilbert.

Dana Richey: Thank you, Gilbert.

Mary Thompson: I will forward that onto the chief of the tribe, and I don't know if I went over and maybe get or send a thank you note down to the -- I appreciate that, Gilbert, and I'm happy to do it. I hope you had a good time.

Mark Wadsworth: And on behalf of the Council, I could write out a brief thank you to Dana for her efforts. To Chris, thanks for sending such quality individuals.

Dana Richey: That would be very nice. Thank you.

Gilbert Harrison: I needed to say this so I can earn my money. You got to do [indiscernible].

[Cross-talking]

Female Voice: Dana, did you pay him for that?

Dana Richey: I don't know. [Indiscernible]. Me and Josiah.

Mark Wadsworth: Has everybody signed Jerry's card?

Male Voice: I think we have lost the quorum or do we still have the quorum?

Mark Wadsworth: Have you guys -- Josiah signed them.

Female Voice: [Indiscernible]

Male Voice: Looks good.

Female Voice: I didn't sign it.

Female Voice: Well, get up here.

Mary Thompson: Mr. Chairman, I have one last thing. The chief has graciously authorized the use of a vehicle for the road trip, and I think it's one of their new luxury Mercedes Benz touring vehicle. So if anybody wants to take a road trip, and I have a seat for about eight or 10 of us.

Female Voice: Oh, that sounds like fun.

Mary Thompson: Well, I guess this is still part of council business. But if you want to do a road trip, we can go up on the park for a little bit, a couple of pull offs, maybe swing by the school or the hospital, a couple of points of interest. Maybe an hour and a half, a little tour or something. Nothing too drastic and getting back before dark just for the scenic and picturesque view of the mountains. If you would decide on the time, we can meet downstairs. Thank you. That's all I have.

Male Voice: I'm already committed.

Female Voice: Why not tomorrow?

Mark Wadsworth: Well, I think we'll just adjourn here.

Male Voice: I make a motion to adjourn.

Mark Wadsworth: Motion made.

Male Voice: Seconded.

Mark Wadsworth: No discussion. All in favor say aye.

All: Aye.

Mark Wadsworth: Any opposed? Any abstained?

Female Voice: No.