



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Council for Native American Farming and Ranching  
1001

Wednesday, December 9, 2015

Mark Wadsworth: Good morning.

Male Voice: Good morning.

Angela Peter: Good morning.

Mark Wadsworth: So again, it's Wednesday, December 9th, approximately 8:30. We'll do a call to order. And then Jerry, would you like to do the blessing this morning? Yeah, we'll do it right after this roll call. Mark Wadsworth, here. Porter Holder?

Porter Holder: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Tawney Brunsch? Tawney Brunsch, not here. Val Dolcini?

Val Dolcini: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Gilbert Harrison?

Gilbert Harrison: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Derrick Lente?

Derrick Lente: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Dr. Joe Leonard? Dr. Joe Leonard, not here. Jerry McPeak?

Jerry McPeak: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Angela Peter?

Angela Peter: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Jim Radintz?

Jim Radintz: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Edward Soza? Edward Soza, not here. Mary Ann Thompson?

Mary Ann Thompson: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Sarah Volgel? Sarah Volgel, not here. Leslie Wheelock?

Leslie Wheelock: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: I guess we'll go into the blessing. Everybody take off your hat. Please stand.

Jerry McPeak: Stand for those who are able. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the beautiful day you've given us again, for each day that you give us. Thank you for giving us the ability just to feel for the good or bad, to feel. Help us as we go over our proceedings that we may feel, we need to feel for the people we're representing. Bless us as we go through each day. Please help us to each be individually stronger then make us stronger as a unit. Help us to be aware of and care for those around us and those who are different.

Lord, help us not to be concerned with those things that don't concern us. Help us to be aware of the difference between stuff that is put out there and the real stuff. Thank you for all you do for us each day. Please forgive us of things that we

don't live up to for you. All this we ask you for our sake, in thy name, amen.

All: Amen.

Mark Wadsworth: We're going to the agenda. It will be Dana Richey next.

Dana Richey: I wanted to just take a minute following the discussion that we had yesterday on administrative issues. And I wanted to let you know that I understand some of the frustration that council members voiced concerning delays in documents moving forward. We were discussing at the time the recommendations to the secretary from the council and also reauthorization of the council. I wanted to acknowledge that and let you know that there are bottlenecks, and I'm going to do everything that I possibly can to address those bottlenecks. Thank you, Mark.

Mark Wadsworth: Josiah, did you want to go over the travel?

Josiah Griffin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is Josiah Griffin. For those of you who are recently joining our council, for those of you who have been here for a while, USDA works as quickly and in an expedited manner to make sure that you're reimbursed. Now, with that in mind, we do need your help. In your binder, there is a travel reimbursement form. For those hotel or cab fees, we will still need receipts. But if you

wouldn't mind submitting that form with those receipts to both Dana and myself as soon as you get the opportunity, whether by email or fax, we would certainly appreciate it. Thank you.

Val Dolcini: Josiah, is the process any different for USDA employees other than by standard reimbursement practice?

Josiah Griffin: No, sir.

Gilbert Harrison: Josiah, this is Gilbert. What are allowable GSA rates here, reimbursable rates?

Josiah Griffin: Gilbert, I am happy to look that up for you.

Gilbert Harrison: I would appreciate that. Thank you.

Josiah Griffin: Most certainly.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay. Just for the record, too, my tribe has travel procedures, that if I do not reimburse them back within a set period of time, they could garnish my wages. So I just appreciate it. I do send to you guys as quick as possible more stuff [sounds like]. But just to let you know that that's kind of one of the things I have to deal with also.

Jerry McPeak: And in my case, you are much more expeditious than I am.

Mark Wadsworth: We'll go into the next agenda item.

Gilbert Harrison: Mark?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Gilbert?

Gilbert Harrison: This is Gilbert. I wanted to go ahead now and thank OTR. You know, once we do our part, I've noticed that you do process the payments in a timely manner. We do appreciate that. And so, keep up the good work. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay. Moving to the STEM. There is a change in the --

Dana Richey: There is no change to the calendar. We are ready for STEM. We're about 20 minutes ahead of schedule.

Val Dolcini: Dana, I'd be happy to do my presentation in advance. The [indiscernible] is waiting in the East Coast for the top of the hour.

Dana Richey: If that's okay, if no one has any objections. Thank you, Val.

Val Dolcini: Good morning, council members. My name is Val Dolcini. I'm the administrator of the Farm Service Agency in Washington, D.C. I'm also a member of the council. I wanted to provide a general update for council members and the public on the implementation of the 2014 Farm Bill and spend a few moments talking about disaster assistance in particular and wildfire related assistance specifically. And then I'm going to defer to my colleague, Jim Radintz. Jim is the deputy administrator for Farm Loan programs, and he'll do a deeper dive on the highly fractionated loan program that has just been

approved in the department along with a couple of other things. So let me begin.

It's been an historic year. I think an historic year is probably an understatement to some degree in terms of what the Farm Service Agency and USDA generally have done with the implementation of the 2014 Farm Bill. It was a big bill. It's about a trillion-dollar piece of legislation. It's about 900 pages long. And USDA, for those that don't work in the department, is a huge multifaceted, diverse cabinet department, 17 different agencies, a variety of different missions ranging from nutrition assistance to farmer assistance that FSA provides, to management of 190 million or so acres of forest lands around the country.

Ag research is a big part of what we do. Water and air quality issues are important to the conservation service. We focus on foreign trade issues at FAS and crop insurance at risk management. So we do a variety of different things. Many of the programs that we engage in on a daily basis are a part of the regular Farm Bill process. And so, the 2014 Farm Bill brought a lot of changes to the programs and policies that we're charged with implementing.

As most of you know, our top priority when we got the Farm Bill finally after a three-year wait was to restart the disaster programs, and we had three years of disasters to do in about six

months. It took a little bit longer than that. But we ended up making about 700,000 unique payments, mostly through the Livestock Forage Program, which assist ranchers who've been impacted by natural disasters, mostly drought. In the Southwest, it was drought. In the plains, it was blizzards. California obviously had its share of drought, and wildfire in Washington State. And other states in the Northwest suffered from natural disasters as well. We did \$5.6 billion in relief nationwide to help livestock and ranching operations.

Dana Richey: Val, if I could interrupt just for a second. Information on disaster relief is on tab 6, if you'd like to refer to those documents.

Val Dolcini: Great. Thank you, Dana. In addition to the disaster resistance, our flagship program were the commodity programs known as ARC and PLC, Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage. Those replaced the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Payment Programs, which paid farmers in good times and bad. ARC covers revenue losses for an individual's farm. And the Price Loss Coverage Program covers reductions or declines in reference prices contained in the Farm Bill for 21 separate commodities.

Those are big programs for farmers in the I states - Iowa, Illinois, Indiana - and commodity operations really all across the country. And so, we enrolled almost two million farmers in

the ARC and PLC programs. And just in late October began the payment process for the first two years of that and pushed out about \$4 billion in assistance under the ARC and PLC programs.

The program reflected a \$20 billion drop in revenues during 2015. And obviously, we didn't make \$20 billion in payments. Our programs are not designed to make farmers and ranchers whole. They're designed to provide a safety net to make up for revenue or price declines. And when you couple crop insurance with that as well as whatever revenues your farm is generating, you know, we felt pretty good about the way our programs were implemented around the country.

We also had a dairy protection program to reflect the volatility in America's dairy operations. As many of you know, it's been a pretty up and down ride since about 2008 in American dairy prices. Well, things have stabilized to some degree. The Margin Protection Program for dairy which covers the fluctuations between the national cost of feed and the national price of milk, we enrolled about 75 percent of the nation's milk production in that program and allowed producers to buy up if they wanted to get more coverage there. It's an insurance tool. It's, again, not like previous USDA programs which just spits out a check. This really pays only when prices decline or when that margin is triggered.

We've had some outreach challenges. I think we reached a lot of dairy folks and continuing the education process to explain the differences between this kind of a program and this sort of approach and prior approaches. It's a good point really to just reemphasize that the philosophy of this Farm Bill was much more geared towards risk management than simply paying a producer for losses whether prices were good or whether they were bad.

We did all of these things in the Farm Bill, really through an unprecedented national outreach effort. We engaged in almost 75 different cooperative agreements with land-grant universities all across the country. We made presentations to over 3,000 different organizations. We developed, in conjunction with Texas A&M and the University of Illinois, some web-based decision aids to help producers better understand particularly around the ARC and PLC programs, what the impacts of those decisions would be. And then individually, the 2,124 county offices that I supervise around the country conducted nearly 5,000 different educational events with tribes and with many others around that and to better explain these programs and to answer questions that folks may have about what these programs meant for their operations.

The credit side was equally noteworthy. Jim will go into greater detail. But I'll just say that we made about \$5.5

billion in loans in the last fiscal year alone, which broke the previous year's record. And I'm sure Jim will indicate where, probably to have another big robust year of credit activity around the nation.

We have done a lot to open the doors of our offices to traditionally underserved farmers and spent some time. And I'd really encourage all of you to take a good look at the new beginning farmer website that USDA has put together. That's [newfarmers.usda.gov](http://newfarmers.usda.gov). It's really a great tool in answering some of the basic kind of top-level questions that people have about our programs and the programs of a number of other USDA agencies. And you can really tailor your search. So if Angela wanted to focus on Alaska issues, she could plug in, you know, her information in Alaska and it would come up with different -- yes?

Angela Peter: What was that address? I'm sorry.

Val Dolcini: Sure, [newfarmers.usda.gov](http://newfarmers.usda.gov). I think I got that right. Or is it [usda.gov/newfarmers](http://usda.gov/newfarmers)? Check that first one, Angela --

Angela Peter: I'll figure it out --

Val Dolcini: -- and I think you'll get there. Yeah.

Angela Peter: -- in general. Thank you.

Val Dolcini: But it's a good web tool for folks to learn a little bit more about our programs. And frankly, for those who

don't have any familiarity with the agency, you can find your local offices there, too, and begin the relationship that way.

We have good Farm Storage Facility Loan Programs and just expanded those so that now dairy and flowers and meats and other commodities and grains are eligible for these farm storage facility loans. These are on farm facilities that USDA will help you fund. And I think it plays an important role in the development of food hubs around the country, particularly now that, you know, we're able to do cold storage for some of these commodities that will really make an impact in leveraging the grants that AMS was talking about here yesterday at the meeting.

We improved our Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program. That's low cost crop insurance that FSA will provide to cover things that commercial crop insurance won't, like many fruits and vegetables and mushrooms and nursery operations and aquaculture and honey. Even some energy crops if you're growing, for example, hybrid poplar or switchgrass or other things that can be used for biofuels, NAP will cover that as well. For Native American borrowers, they're eligible for fee waivers for NAP, which makes this low cost crop insurance even a more attractive opportunity.

I spent a lot of time on the road. As Derrick can attest, I was visiting Derrick and his operation in New Mexico, Sandia Pueblo last week. Then I went off to visit a county office in

Estancia, New Mexico. I've been now to 33 states since I was appointed administrator in September of 2014. I spent some time recently with Mary Ann in North Carolina and visited last night with a young borrower from Cherokee County, who really has some great ideas about expanding a family dairy operation down there. So it's good to meet with him.

It really helps keep me grounded to the things that we're doing in the field and the successes and some setbacks, candidly, that we have from time to time. And I think it gives me a better sense of what we're doing and how we're connected to our producers and our borrowers and first-time customers, and longtime customers. So it's good to be able to get out.

As I mentioned, we have about 2,200 offices, about 13,000 employees, about 7,000 farmer-elected county committee men and women around the country. I'd certainly encourage all of you to think about serving on a county committee. Some probably have. It's something that you run for in your area and it really allows you to have kind of an inside view of the things that FSA does in your counties. And also it gives you a voice at the county level in terms of the programs that we administer and appeals that we're hearing. It's a great way, I think, to get more involved in the work that FSA does around the country.

I want to speak for a moment about some outreach that we're doing that I think there's a lot of promise. It's a program

called Bridges to Opportunity that we began with five pilot states in 2015, and early in the new year we're going to expand to another 15 states. So we'll have Bridges to Opportunity operations in 20 states around the nation. This really allows FSA to be a matchmaker of sorts for folks that may not have a lot of experience or knowledge or deeper understanding of the things that we do. We can make connections for new customers and old with local cooperative extension, with commodity organizations, with other outreach group, with farm organizations, local land-grant universities. It's really something I think that will allow us to better leverage the 2,100 locations that we have around the country by doing a little bit more than just making commodity payments or extending credit.

This is going to be a better use for our footprint around the nation, and I think it will really be good for all of our customers but particularly those who were on the new and beginning side of the spectrum to learn a little bit more and take greater advantage of the many resources that local USDA service centers can offer them.

Finally, we have great working relationships with our sister agencies around the nation. Most of our service centers, most of those 2,200 locations that I mentioned also house NRCS and sometimes Rural Development offices. So we're able to

provide more soup to nuts kind of experience for customers who may want to get a microloan through FSA and then they may go down the hall to talk about getting a hoop house grant under EQIP with NRCS. And they may even then want to visit with Rural Development about a value-added business grant depending on what they're producing or growing.

So we really try and break down the stovepipes that exist within USDA to present a one USDA kind of approach to the work that we do in the field. And you know, I think that we've been pretty successful around the nation. It's still a work in progress as it probably always will be. It's changing the culture of our agency and the other agencies to a certain degree and that's going to be a long-term undertaking but I think that we're well on the way.

And then there are a variety of things that happened at the departmental level, some of which we heard about yesterday with AMS' various grants opportunities. Rural Development has a variety. The Farm to School Grants are very popular and many of the Specialty Crop Block Grants that we discussed yesterday with the states are also things that are very important, I think, for a variety of producers around the nation.

I just want to say a word, finally, about an experience that I had last night. I went out in the afternoon to do some meetings with the indoor farmers who are developing a unique

concept in Las Vegas that they hope will be something that's more broadly applicable around the country where you essentially can, you know, grow fruits and vegetables and leafy greens in container facilities almost anywhere in the world.

But that really wasn't the issue that I wanted to share with you. It was the IAC's youth loan workshop that we did last night just around the corner in the Virginia Rooms. And I would highly recommend that if you've not spent any time with the kids who are here at the Intertribal Ag Council, you really ought to do it because it will renew your hope to the degree that you need that renewed in American agriculture and frankly, tribal agriculture.

All of those children in that room, they were high school kids - they weren't really children - have an assignment, and that's to submit a youth loan application to the IAC folk, Zach Ducheneaux, by the end of their time here in Las Vegas. And then that will be something that they work on with local FSA offices around the West, for the most part, although as I mentioned, Mary Ann, there was a young boy from North Carolina there.

Just to hear them speak so eloquently and articulately about their own American dreams, their own desire to build a small cattle operation or expand a family dairy operation, or to build a roadside stand in Maine and sell cut flowers, or a young

woman that I spoke with in San Diego County in California who wants to go to the University of California but in the meantime wants to expand the community gardens that she's working on there, or many young boys and girls, Derrick, in New Mexico that are interested in doing what you and your daughter did really gave me hope.

And I'm certainly an optimist. I'm always a glass half full sort of person, so I didn't need a whole lot of bucking up, but it was just great to see these kids who are so motivated and so interested and so passionate about developing agriculture on their tribal lands and in the communities where they come from.

So please, if you've got a moment or two over the course of the next day or so, interact with some of the kids who are in the Virginia Rooms, just right around the corner, working on youth loans and a variety of other things. It was really a great experience to see them so charged up about American agriculture.

So with that, I will be happy to take any questions that you have. I know that Ann is probably going to be ready to dial in at some point, and then we can go to Jim if we want to do Ann in between. But there's a lot going on at the FSA, and I want you to know that we're working hard to make some good positive changes. Mary Ann?

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you, Val. I appreciate that.

Val Dolcini: Yeah.

Mary Ann Thompson: And I am motivated and encouraged about the youth, and especially because they better understand risk management, whereas the grandparents don't understand, and the terminology or the resources that are available are in these programs. So with these youth then, hopefully the numbers with the Native American farmers and ranchers will start to increase, as we go through and look at the utilization of all the programs.

Val Dolcini: On that note, you know I had an interesting conversation with a young woman from Oklahoma, I think, Porter, who was kind of going back and forth about what her loan was going to be for. Her dad was giving her a bit of a hard time. She ultimately said that she wanted to buy some heifers. And I said okay, that's great. This is what I want you to think about when you're putting together your loan application because I'm your banker and I want you to take it seriously and know that you have to develop a business plan, and that my expectation is that you're going to repay this \$5,000 or \$3,500 or whatever the sum is going to be. She kind of perked up in her seat a little bit. I think she understood, you know, the business ramifications including the risk management piece a little bit more.

I said, because as your banker, I'm going to want to make sure that you know how to take care of these cattle, that you've got them properly corralled. And actually, she wanted to borrow some money to build a better corral as well. So there were a lot of risk management pieces and just general business information that she, as a 16-year old or however year old she was, probably hasn't given a lot of thought to. And so it was just, I think, a little bit of an eye-opener for her, but a good conversation. I mean, she felt kind of charged up about the fact that, okay, I've got to get serious if I want to be talking to government bankers here.

Mary Ann Thompson: For real?

Val Dolcini: Yeah.

Mary Ann Thompson: The question I had though, Val, is the dollar amounts that you were talking about - the payments that went out nationwide and now, were those numbers to everyone nationwide?

Val Dolcini: Those are aggregate numbers, yes.

Mary Ann Thompson: Okay.

Dana Richey: But Mary, if you --

Mary Ann Thompson: It gives you a number for Native American farmers, right?

Dana Richey: Mary, if you look at tabs 15 and 16 --

Mary Ann Thompson: Those were there?

Dana Richey: Yes.

Val Dolcini: Yeah, that's right. It's broken down there.

Mary Ann Thompson: [Cross talk]

Dana Richey: Yes. We've got state-by-state and then also Native American.

Mary Ann Thompson: Okay. I've seen those charts and everything, but I was just wondering - that number that you do have is pretty specific to Native Americans. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: A quick question, Val, on LIP and LFP. They seem quite similar, you know, in what they pay. And I noticed that inside of there, you also compensate for buffalo and for deer, elk. Are those domesticated herds? Or is it -- how do you treat the elk and deer?

Val Dolcini: Yeah. They've got to be classified as livestock. So if you're raising deer or elk for meat or venison, they would potentially be covered under the Livestock Indemnity Program. The difference between these two acronyms - LIP is the Livestock Indemnity Program. That covers livestock deaths. LFP is the Livestock Forage Program, which covers losses to grazing areas, so feed losses essentially, forage losses.

Mark Wadsworth: And you still pay per head, though?

Val Dolcini: Yup.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay. Angela?

Val Dolcini: Did I give you the right website, Angela?

Angela Peter: Oh, I don't know. I didn't try it. My head's all foggy. I've got a cold or something. I can't figure it out, but I just don't have a question for you. I just wanted to mention Alaska and how we are really pushing for internship with the kids, the youth. It would be good to have them come in here and visit with us. Some of these youth that are winners in the essays can just come in and see how things run. I mean that's what we have. We have them come into our council meetings and you know, actually participate.

Val Dolcini: Well, I think that's a fantastic idea. I will defer to the chairman then, what the agenda holds for us today but I think that it would be great to have the IAC come in with some of their superstars and talk a little bit about the programs that they're working on. And maybe winning essays, somebody could read those or at least supply them to council members.

What we're trying to do also at FSA on internships, I'll just add, is open the doors a little wider through the WINS program and through a variety of other programs, to make sure that people know about the opportunity for careers at the department and at my agency in particular. Like working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture or FSA is a great career in most parts of rural America. I want to make sure that we're

preparing our tribal kids and others, frankly, everyone for the opportunity to seek such a career.

Angela Peter: Yeah. What I'm actually talking about is sitting at the table. These are the issues that are really real, that some of these up and coming youth that are interested in agriculture are going to face. I mean it's not going to go away.

Mark Wadsworth: Gilbert?

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you, Val, for your report. Good morning, members and [indiscernible]. I have a question, Val. You know it always comes back to this issue of loans on trust lands. Off reservation, there's a lot of opportunities. But when it comes to making loans on trust lands or activities in ag, I hear a lot of complaints about you know, some inability to borrow money. And I think I'd like to know, are you aware of any policy changes or whatever you have in your requirements that would make it easier for people on trust lands to acquire loans? Has there been any change that's been made to your knowledge that would facilitate loans to Native American farmers living on trust land? Thank you.

Val Dolcini: Thank you. Excellent question, Gilbert. Jim is going to cover that in great detail during his presentation in the next 15 or 20 minutes or so. If we can defer the answer until Jim makes the presentation. I also think Joanne Dea, the

ombudsperson, has some interesting statistics to share with the council as well that indicate that the trends are moving in the right direction. We still have plenty of work to do, plenty of work around the nation with a variety of different classes of borrowers, Gilbert. But I think we're moving in the right direction.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you, Val.

Mark Wadsworth: Val, Derrick Lente.

Val Dolcini: Yeah.

Derrick Lente: Good morning. Derrick Lente here from Sandia Pueblo. I just wanted to go on record and publicly thank Val for coming out to the farm last week. It was certainly a pleasure and an honor to have you there with my daughter, who I consider my partner in the farming venture. It's something that I have thought of about five years ago, and this is the direction we wanted to go in. And certainly, we're moving in that right direction. I can tell you that the help that USDA NRCS and the youth loan stuff has certainly offered us and allowed us to do. It's just been truly beneficial to the direction and to the goal that we're trying to achieve.

It's always something different when I'm here in a room talking about the farm as opposed to when you're actually there and you can walk around and see the improvements that we've been able to make on the land and with the cattle itself. It means a

whole lot to us. A side note of that is I've got to skip out of here mid-morning today because I'm going to head back home because our farm is a partner with the Notah Begay Foundation. Notah Begay is a professional golfer. He has this foundation that helps educate the prevention of diabetes and trying to eat natural and healthy in native communities. And our farm is partnered and we're going to provide all of the grass-fed beef for a celebration that he's having tonight, which is their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. And so it's really cool to be able to be a partner with my daughter and to get more exposure this way because I think it goes to a lot of different channels that we're here to promote each other's native people.

We understand that eating healthy and eating organic - whatever that might be and however it is defined whether it be grass-fed, organic, or whatever it is - is important to us as native people. And then to be able to be a partner with an organization like that is especially impactful to our future as farmers and ranchers, and especially for her because she's a 13-year old girl. To be able to have that exposure with me, and then also with my father who is 72 years old, as to how do you raise and how do you farm and how do you ranch responsibly, and how do you farm and ranch with the ways of our culture and tradition, and how do we pass those on to her and so on and so forth. But I can tell you what is that with -- I would imagine

that without the USDA's assistance, it wouldn't have been impossible but it would have been a little bit more difficult.

I just wanted to again thank you for all the support and thank you for coming out again. And if ever this council wants to have a meeting in New Mexico, please do consider Sandia Pueblo as a spot because I can take you out and I can show you not just my place, but a lot of the other pueblos there in the community. Thank you.

Val Dolcini: Well, the honor was mine. It was my great privilege to meet your dad and to walk the fields with you and with Jade as well. And you know frankly, at the meeting last night when I was going from table to table to talk to the young kids about youth loans, I really cited your daughter's experience as an example of what it means to put a successful package together and to begin that process of kind of becoming an adult and taking on significant professional responsibilities. I look forward to coming out and having a barbecue at some point in the future and enjoying a little bit of that grass-fed beef. Thanks.

Mark Wadsworth: Go ahead. Dana Richey.

Dana Richey: Josiah, do you have Dr. Bartuska on the phone?

Josiah Griffin: I've been working on it. When I logged in initially, I had about four other people on the line with me,

but we're in a spotty signal area. As the host, my call dropped, which kicked everyone off, so I'm trying to get them back on.

Dana Richey: Why don't we wait a minute to see if we can get that connection?

Val Dolcini: I also want to take the opportunity to introduce Judy Olson, who is the state director for FSA in Washington. Judy is back there. Linda Cronin is sitting right next to her. Linda does a lot of tribal outreach for the Farm Service Agency in D.C. as well. Allen is in the very back row. Allen is a farm loan manager in New Mexico. Mike Hinton is one of my colleagues from the Washington, D.C. Office on Farm Loan Issues. And Connie Holman, who I think many of you know, is also from Washington. She has been working on farm loan issues as well and has really led the effort to work with the youth that I was mentioning last night. Listen, you FSA folks. Jerry?

Mark Wadsworth: Go ahead, Jerry.

Jerry McPeak: So Gilbert -- you're in Mexico, right, Derrick?

Derrick Lente: New Mexico, not Mexico.

Jerry McPeak: New Mexico. I talk very, very fast for an Okie. Gilbert, you're from --?

Gilbert Harrison: New Mexico.

Jerry McPeak: You're from --?

Gilbert Harrison: New Mexico.

Jerry McPeak: Okay. So --

Gilbert Harrison: I know Derrick.

Jerry McPeak: So what they're saying here, are you -- may I ask him that? No? What's your experience as far as being with Indians? And understand that politically correct answers are very rarely correct, rarely correct, you don't know my background, but anyhow, not important. I deal with correct answers. So what's your experience, and tell me how, in dealing with us, tell us what we're not doing to solve our own problems or is there a problem? Maybe there isn't a problem. We hear the thing about all the problems. Is there a problem? Is there not a problem from where you sit? And the guys that have to work - guys and gals that work with you - what do they say when they're having a meeting by themselves, behind the door?

Val Dolcini: Allen, you may want to come up to the mic and answer.

Jerry McPeak: Only correct answers.

Allen Mackrain: Okay. Is this on? Going out and dealing with the -- I mean, you know, getting applications for the Native Americans and everything, I think that a lot of the Native Americans, they have an excellent opportunity. They have very low leases on their grazing allotments. They don't have to

pay very much for their farming allotments. And at times of drought, they have the first rights to the irrigation water than the people downstream. They still get the regular allotments and so they got a great opportunity to be able to produce the crops and produce the cattle and everything. And I don't know. I think things are going good. I mean like Derrick, we've been to your place and I mean, he's as good a farmer as there is there.

Jerry McPeak: That's one. There's 30,000 of them out there, so that's one.

Allen Mackrain: In our loan area --

Jerry McPeak: So what's it like dealing with the other 29,999?

Allen Mackrain: In our loan area, probably I'd say 50 percent to 60 percent of our applications are Native American. Probably 30 percent or 35 percent is Hispanic and the other is non-SDA, you know. And it's --

Mark Wadsworth: Have those numbers been increasing in your district in New Mexico over the last several years --?

Allen Mackrain: We have the Native Americans especially, and the Hispanic because they're smaller areas. Derrick gets the loan-free cattle and then he tells his -- you know, somebody over here in the allotment and it just keeps growing and growing. There's one gentleman at Santo Domingo. I go to his

place. And he doesn't even tell me. He goes, oh yeah, I invited this neighbor and that neighbor. He has like three other guys there that -- so I know whenever I go there, I bring like four or five youth loan applications. I'll sit there for about three hours and help them all fill them out and then go on.

Jerry McPeak: Follow-up? All right. That's great. That's good. Keep doing what we're doing to make it work. What are the things that we, the Indians, aren't doing to help make your job, where you can help us better? What are we not doing? These people aren't getting the help. We have a disconnect somewhere. The disconnect could be our fault. It's very difficult for us to see our own faults, perhaps. From your standpoint, or if there are other colleagues you have in other areas, what are they saying in the meetings? What?

Allen Mackrain: Well, some of the tough things they have is like on some of the different trust lands, they don't have their grazing allotments fenced, so it's all just community grazing. One gentleman, who is on the Navaho Nation, he wanted to see a loan to buy the cattle. But he had to go out there, drive 30 miles out there everyday to go bring them back so they had to stay close to where their water was, where he could find them. Otherwise, they just -- I mean they go off and they don't see them again.

And the same with the water, the couple that -- like Santo Domingo, every region I go to, they talk about the windmills are all down. So if they don't have water for them to drink, they can't put the cattle out there. The ones that's there has to all stay by the one windmill that's working and so that's tough too. And they all blame, pointing at the tribe, expecting them to form the fences and to fix the windmills.

Jerry McPeak: Okay. They're willing to blame the tribe. May I continue? They're willing to blame the tribe. And from our standpoint - Gilbert, maybe you can get in here - who should be --? I want to know what's right. Who should be fixing the windmill and who should be fixing the fence, because those of us who aren't from reservations don't grasp that so well. Do we, Porter?

Porter Holder: No, we don't.

Dana Richey: We have our next presenter on the phone, so if we can delay this conversation until Dr. Bartuska --

Jerry McPeak: We don't want to be lectured. We don't answer his questions. I'm tired of being lectured.

Dana Richey: I beg your pardon. Sorry.

Jerry McPeak: That's okay. We'll wait. Keep that thought. Gilbert?

Gilbert Harrison: I shall wait.

Dana Richey: Thank you.

Gilbert Harrison: Please. People from USDA, I have a very interesting presentation here, I think, at 11:30. You know, we all think everything's going hunky-dory, but there are issues at the ground level. I'll point those out. Thank you very much.

Dana Richey: I promise we'll pick this conversation up again. We just want to go to the next speaker who's on hold - Dr. Ann Bartuska. The two handouts that I gave you a short while ago are her presentation to us.

Leslie Wheelock: Our next speaker is Dr. Ann Bartuska.  
Dr. Bartuska -

[Transcriber's Note: Ann Bartuska is off mic until the 56<sup>th</sup> minute, hence the numerous indiscernible notations before then.]

Ann Bartuska: [Indiscernible]

Mark Wadsworth: She just announced herself.

Leslie Wheelock: Oh, sorry. This is Leslie Wheelock. I just wanted to introduce the council to Dr. Ann Bartuska. Dr. Bartuska is the deputy undersecretary of the Research, Economics and Education group at USDA. I'm sorry. I'm bending over a table and holding on to a heavy microphone. Dr. Bartuska was hoping to join us today but had a change in travel schedules, and so we asked her to call in, but we have put this conversation on pause and we'll restart that conversation when Dr. Bartuska's presentation concludes.

We've provided two handouts for our members, our council members here. One is the NIFA single-sheet and there's also a PowerPoint deck, and Dr. Bartuska -- I'm not sure she's going to use the whole PowerPoint deck because she can't be here to talk through it, but we are going to ask her to begin now. Thank you. Dr. Bartuska.

Ann Bartuska: [Inaudible] And I just want to make sure, is the PowerPoint deck in front of people or is it on a screen?

Leslie Wheelock: The PowerPoint's in front of people.

Ann Bartuska: Okay, great. I wouldn't belabor the PowerPoint too much, but I thought it would be helpful to set a little context. It's just that what I'm about to talk about is a larger issue on STEM scholarship with some specifics with regard to Indian country and our relationship. And I'm sorry, but you understand I'm very sorry I was not able to get there [cross-talking] a relationship that I really have valued. I enjoyed my trips to several of the 1994's within the last several months, including our wonderful trip around New Mexico. New Mexico is doing a lot of [indiscernible] from New Mexico, but it was a tremendous opportunity with regard to the community [cross-talking].

So what I'm going to do is I'm looking at the slides too and maybe I should [indiscernible] I could have seen as opposed to STEM technology enabling agriculture because that is where we

were really trying to promote the [indiscernible]. What I'd like to -- by the way when I indicated the context for some of the ag facilities that we are willing to strategically within the REE, Research, Education, Economics portfolio. You'll see on slide 2 the number of graduates coming out of the [indiscernible] ag and natural resources programs around the country and it identifies 35,000 of those graduates in different categories.

First, are the graduates in [indiscernible] portfolio, and the reason is because, if you go to slide 3, it shows the employment opportunities that they're currently approximately a conservative estimate - 50,000 jobs available in the food and agricultural sector. And this is all placement [sounds like] jobs. And so in fact, the CEO who I talked to talked about applying suggested [sounds like] that these are underestimated by half. So we're talking about a huge difference between the number of graduates and the number of employment opportunities.

The [indiscernible] what we want to do to be able to close that gap, where all of our programs have gone through created connections with the private sector in promoting new job opportunities. And central to that, and it's not producing graduate students that [indiscernible] to a research job. It's producing students who are scaled out of the community college to really go get to a job that they could train for that

deliberately targets the curricula of many of our community colleges as well as four year to the job market out there. And so this is really I think where we can be going and pushing more emphasis. I'm going to pause, and it might have been Dr. Ted [indiscernible] who's on the line.

Male Voice: Hello, yes? Greetings.

Ann Bartuska: And I took the liberty of inviting Ted because [indiscernible] different programs. He's the guy to answer that. So just going through that, that's the best part of what I wanted to convey to you. It's the different [indiscernible] the number of graduates, the job opportunities. But now we can be working across the entire pipeline to get to the [indiscernible]. There's a very nice graphic on your left hand [indiscernible] on page 4. There really is a [indiscernible] to produce the total students of [indiscernible] at the other end, we can't see it [cross-talking].\*\*

On slide 6, [indiscernible] we are taking this on, the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology has raised the issue of [indiscernible] of development across all the STEM fields not one for any kind directly with the president. As a part of that, we have been trying to develop a response to the White House. We needed more STEM jobs. The alignment with the Native American and minority communities, how we aggressively use those institutions that are now still in

their communities. It's something that we are again focusing very strongly on and to large degree through the NIFA project but not solely with NIFA.

So we have the data up there. We have the calls from the White House and that's what we want to try to keep on using as an engine to produce more trained individuals to have the skills that they need. If you go back to page 8, which is [indiscernible] a couple of slides, and this is the one that actually shows the --

Leslie Wheelock: It's the map on the third page.

Ann Bartuska: -- network of 1994 tribal land-grants and courses [sounds like] [indiscernible]. I thought I would take this as an opportunity to talk to schools, to show the specific for our investment in those areas that have a clear cause to support the research program, classes, development of the curriculum, building the community and building the infrastructure of campuses.

I will [indiscernible] of you to know an observation that I have made and that's what is different around so many of the 1994's compared to almost any institution I've ever been to it's that a significant part of the investment in that institution was made in bringing the community into the land-grant. And [indiscernible] a great example where I walked into a classroom where we had people [indiscernible] working on sewing and

building their sewing skills. So two factors - the basic skills, the life skills - is geared to take something after school to do, but it also brings the families together.

And so to me, there was an important stage that we had developed through the 1994 land-grant, it was to build a community and some of them I think were very special and need to be acknowledged as they continue to make [sounds like] our investment.

But we also have a role that we play in building [sounds like] the classrooms and using our equity [sounds like] grant funds on curriculum, teacher's training, or hands-on learning and continue to improve the technology that are available and the new knowledge that comes from within the classroom. But again we need [indiscernible] specific, unique aspects of the 1994 land-grant, which focuses technology in culturally appropriate ways for those curriculums are being developed. So there is a big step and again, we're trying to assure we're invested [sounds like] in through our initial programs.

I've mentioned already in the community with regards to the community centers but this is also where our investment in extension and FRTEP grant programs program allows us to really have that continual learning to reach out to farmers and ranchers really [indiscernible] we're gaining from our science to improve and develop new technologies, new skills, new

practices that allows us to respond to the changing markets hopefully. It's okay to change [indiscernible]. That is through the extension programs where we really do have the delivery of new knowledge in ways that are very practical and important. That really is again a hallmark of that [indiscernible] assessment.

And then finally, we do invest in the land grants in research activities. And I think this is where it helps ensure that our faculty continues to improve in their own scientific thinking and the ideas that they are coming up with. A lot of it is teaching but a lot of it is also gaining knowledge. It provides them the opportunity on the research side. To begin with that is the full portfolio for 2015 and a total awarded 157 grants that covers all of those areas, as well as they've educated about 15,000 native students. It's really ensuring that those students are connected to our education.

The last slide I'm going to refer to which is the one that says that this is engagement at all levels. This is [indiscernible] in a way to demonstrate the way to [indiscernible] knowledge continuum which everybody in all our different programs to build the pathways. Starting with the case of the 20, I could hardly argue with the case of 80 because of the extension with the continual community engagement conforming with early [indiscernible] in the early stages of

their learning. Poor ratio in particular is a tremendous case [indiscernible] capacity.

But also the active pool programs where the children are being connected to new skills, to traditional skills, and to life skills. That is where for the total [indiscernible] foray or to informal programs to [indiscernible] critical steps in their learning and becoming citizens who understand what their role is and what their opportunities are. Clearly, we have the next generation of scientists, practitioners, and professionals growing our workforce. I've mentioned the opportunities to do that in all the scales and to be able to build this professional capacity.

Lastly, the capacity building which is 20 [sounds like] and beyond aspect to continue to provide new technology and information to those who can use it as they get on with their own livelihood. And so that really is the full spectrum of the way where we're approaching it. A lot of this is driven by the NIFA investment in our school, because when it comes to providing an internship for example, whether it be a two years or four years, whether it's a high school student that's interested or a 4-H kid.

Internship at our Agricultural Research Service labs, Forest Service labs, [indiscernible], NRCS, all of those are opportunities. Why that's so valuable is many of those labs and

offices are out in Indian country as well. So they don't have to go to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to get an internship. You could stay local, you can stay close and you could be doing work that actually contributes to your community, as well as some of the larger issues that I've [indiscernible]. We do continue to promote the use of our homes to [indiscernible] NRCS and Forest Service [indiscernible] and then leading. Kudos to those who provide them with opportunities.

I do want to say a couple of more things about program delivery and successes [sounds like]. An important example we've started to show is how powerful land grant outreach has been is that our FRTEP program. They took the creation of a beef cooperative called Navajo Beef [phonetic] in cooperation with Navajo ranchers that [indiscernible]. The value of this is that by bringing this knowledge into the extension system, ranchers are able to meet [indiscernible] through good management practices. It allowed them to increase their income from \$400 to up to \$1,500. So that level of knowledge that actually translates to an economic growth is the true thing that we really want to build upon. They're trying to [indiscernible] that but there's also the extension community in reaching the people who can use these kinds of skill.

Included in my last point and then I will shut up and let you guys ask me questions. I do want to [indiscernible]

beginning farmer and rancher development programs because that is an organized way we think. Many of the resources of the USDA are to really help build capability for those who do want to venture into farming and ranching to help them build the skills they need, make the connection, get the business plan in place, what is the possibility or areas and some ways to provide access to mobile applications that give more information about markets and where the potential are for a particular product. Again, I think it's a tremendous opportunity and [indiscernible] in being so active in the financial side of it and actually build off of the beginning rancher and farmers programs, as well as many others who have been involved in that.

With that, I'm going to stop. I've tried to convey the overall context in which we're operating and to demonstrate that there are lots of opportunities to plug into that. Our challenge is that how do we use our 1994 programs and the extension programs to contribute to that type [sounds like], that continuum, and then what else is needed to take it further as we look to the future. Thank you very much. I hope that was clear. If there are any questions or comments, I will allow whoever is moderating this session to facilitate that. If I can't hear you, I may have to ask for somebody to speak closer into the phone. Anyway, thank you very much for giving me a chance to talk to you.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you, Dr. Bartuska. This is Leslie.  
Can you hear us?

Ann Bartuska: Leslie, I can hear you quite well. Thank  
you.

Leslie Wheelock: Okay. I'm going to ask the council  
members as you ask your questions, please introduce yourselves  
and speak directly into your microphone. It makes it easier for  
this conversation. Thank you.

Male Voice: The closer you speak to the microphone, the  
better she's going to hear you.

Porter Holder: Porter Holder. Choctaw Nation, Oklahoma,  
vice-chairman. Mary Ann Thompson, you have a question?

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you, Vice-chairman. This is Mary  
Ann Welch Thompson from Cherokee, North Carolina. Hi, Tim  
Grosser.

Tim Grosser: Hi, Mary.

Mary Ann Thompson: I very much appreciate your  
presentation. I really like the opportunities that are  
available for internships and scholarships through this STEM  
program. In your percentages on your slide, you addressed the  
35,000-plus graduates and the job opportunities available there.  
I'm wondering of those 35,000, how many of those or what  
percentage of those might be from the South and East United  
States? Because as I look at your slide on number 8, the land

grant colleges and universities and the FRTEP agents primarily are located in the, I guess, northwestern section of the United States. I am from, like I said, North Carolina. And as I look at those opportunities that are available for Indian young adults and children, I guess east of the Mississippi there's not much there.

I would and could appreciate if some of our kids were familiar with these programs enough to take advantage of these programs and the resources available. I hope that we can get this information to those folks. There are a lot of Indians east to the Mississippi. I guess because of the Trail of Tears, and the relocation, and everything that happened in our history, a lot of folks did move. But there are some of them that's left over there. I guess I could appreciate more outreach into our neck of the woods. Thank you.

Ann Bartuska: I appreciate your comment very much. But a couple of thoughts to that, one is, the Purdue data, I believe are broken out regionally in the original report. I don't actually have that so that might be very useful to you. I know that NIFA is supporting a natural resource council, the National Academies studying that will further strengthen this knowledge base. I think what's interesting and what I don't know how best to use is obviously the map was designed to show the distribution of the 1994 land grants, as well as FRTEP

locations. What that doesn't capture is rural community colleges that may have programs that are relevant. It doesn't capture other community colleges in four years that have programs that are relevant that tribal youth can access. So I think that's an interesting opportunity to bring closer together that one might consider non-traditional programs that are still relevant. At that point, North Dakota State for example that has a very strong program associated with supporting Indian youth, even though they don't show up on this map because they are 1862 and not a 1994.

The other thing, just by way of example and I know this is an old number but it's still valid. I was at the Valencia College, which is a community college in Orlando, several years ago, maybe five years ago now. I asked them, why do they have horticulture program at this community college? It's because in Florida alone, there were about 4,500 jobs a year at horticulture, and nationwide there were 740 graduates in horticulture. So right, there you could see the value of having that specialty program. I think your point is a good one. How do we connect the dots so that we know what's available and that we're positioning the youth to get the training they need as well as our [indiscernible] to get the training they need to make a plugin to those job opportunities? That is I think something we need to continue to work on with especially the

community college association because they have so much network into the business community.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you.

Porter Holder: Jerry McPeak.

Gerry McPeak: Dr. Bartuska, this is Jerry McPeak from Oklahoma. I taught in a community college with a strong agriculture emphasis for 27 years. By the way, not knowing me, but this will come as a "I think you get it." That's a big statement coming from me. Unfortunately, I think, Washington D.C. 12 [sounds like] has been inoculated from just getting it.

One of your slides has something about work-ready. I'm also a state representative in Oklahoma. But they talk about college and career-ready. People want to test kids to be college-ready, not career-ready. Where I'm going to head with this, I know that we don't need scientists out in the field who are working with our Native Americans or are even working with our people in Oklahoma. We need people who can relate to people.

What we have, I think, and ma'am, this is the part that is real. I just asked Jim a while ago, we need to keep things real. Our junior college in our area where we are, we probably do what you guys are talking about doing from pre-kindergarten up. We help young people who are engrossed and enveloped in agriculture. Through the FFA programs that we have that are

very strong and they come on to our junior college program, which is under the same umbrella as Oklahoma State University. We have a special horticulture program and we adapted those things.

The cold hard truth is -- and my daughter is going to be a prime example. My daughter is going to graduate this year. But our attempt to get a job in agriculture has been not good. She may wind up being a teacher, but she wants to be in agriculture. She's not opposed to moving anywhere in the United States actually, but to get a job in agriculture, we don't seem to find a way to get a hold of that. There's not a beginning point or help as you, okay, we're sending this resume; we're sending this form. And then it's like we sent it in to the wild blue yonder and it just disappears. What I've experienced as being the dean of students also at that college, is we start trying to help our students, not just the ones that have associates degree but those who get out. They come back to us for help. It's that we can't seem to find the methodology to get that job.

Understand I'm also a veteran, and I understand the advantage that veterans have. I get that, although I don't think you owe me anything. I recognize that that seem to be the concept of the world. But our students who come up to the system, come up and do it right, we aren't finding ways to get

them these jobs that people say are available. For us, it might as well not be available because we can't get them.

Ann Bartuska: I guess the question I would have further is, is it because the skills are lacking, or we're not making the right connections, or we're not putting the right package together, or maybe it's all of the above?

Jerry McPeak: That's the question I have. You see, from where we are, we're on the ground level here. We go ask whoever we're going to ask about how to do it, and we get started in that process. It seems like they fill out the form. They're prepared for an interview, but it seems like it just goes into an abyss somewhere that is like Oklahoma pumping that well or that oil and gas wastewater down the ground. It just goes away. They think it's just going away and it just goes away. Again, those are personal. Not just my daughter's own experience but for years the experience I've had with our own students.

By the way, we've had some superb students. I've had kids that have gone to Stanford or Harvard, not to mention Oklahoma State and Texas A&M and where else they go to. We had some really good students. Obviously, those kids also don't wind up in agriculture. Having been in agriculture, I think it's probably okay, maybe a really good idea. But we have students who want to be in agriculture who are qualified to be in agriculture, who have the true learning, the true education of

their feet on the ground from the time they were three years old. They understand it not just from an education standpoint, not the academia, but they get it. They're they people we need out talking to the people who understand the people, but we can't seem to get into the lineup.

Ann Bartuska: I think this is a topic for a larger discussion and especially getting the business community in to ask them that question. What is missing? And then is it a training opportunity where we can help build those skills. I will point to two things that struck me as you were speaking. One is an organization that I was recently introduced to, recently in the last two years only, the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native American in Science, SACNAS. What has impressed me about SACNAS right from the beginning is their student training is not just about science. They have modules on communication skills, building a business plan, building a resume, being able to write a grant. It is true that they tend to support a lot of students going into four years and graduate school. But those life trainings are true. In fact, what has happened is these students are just so incredibly capable because of these additional skills. That's one effect. That's something that we need to be thinking more about in our school system to get into this job pipeline.

Then I also recall a comment made by a [indiscernible] VP about an FFA in a general sense about FFA individuals. That he would hire them on the spot because he knew that when they came out of FFA, they had on the ground experience, enough science to understand what they're doing. They were critical thinkers. They have good communication skills. And they knew how to do a business plan or to write a business, all those things that they would want in a company. I'm wondering if maybe that's some discussion that we could take in the future about how do we build that into our other curricula so that we're really training students to come out job-ready and career-ready, not just college-ready.

Jerry McPeak: A follow up, ma'am. Again, I want to emphasize, Dr. Bartuska, I think you get it. That's cool.

Ann Bartuska: Thank you.

Jerry McPeak: My students that I've had have had the 28 of 34 ACTs. And those who wound up having their masters and their doctorates, those are not the ones that we have the concern with. The students I have are the real students who I believe get it and can do the work and are really, really good at doing the work with the people and can do the work and their [indiscernible]. They get it. Those are the ones. And you are robbed. The FSA gets robbed in our area all the time. That hand is a really good hand, and if some bank comes along and

pays them twice as much and takes them. That's just the way it is. We accept that in our area. We know that. That happens, doesn't it Jim?

Jim Radintz: Absolutely, it does.

Jerry McPeak: It's a big deal in our area. It's a minor league team for them. We get robbed all the time. But our students, those average students who are those outstanding individuals who can do that work for those people, those are the ones that we lose in the process. I've said it in this forum before to these people. I'm not worried about the outstanding students. I'm not worried about the superb students. They're going to make it whether you give them any help or not. My concern is that B, C student that makes a D or F once in a while that's just real. That by golly can come back. You give them a chance and they can actually do the job, those students aren't getting the jobs. They aren't getting the second step and the third step that are there to go get the job. This is just not happening, again, just an observation, ma'am. I'm an educator as well. I totally get this is a larger conversation. But I have for years tried to make people aware and Washington, D.C. aware that this is for not the outstanding one, but those who are average on their grades but who make superb hands when you put them in the pipeline. We can't get in the pipeline. We're not getting in the pipeline. Thank you, ma'am.

Ann Bartuska: Thank you.

Gilbert Harrison: Good morning. This is Gilbert Harrison from Navajo. I don't know whether it's a suggestion, recommendation, or concern. But I know that we like to get a lot of younger and more motivated students in to colleges and have them get four-year degrees and be researchers and all of that. But there's a big need also at the home level. We need people with basically an associate degree or something to be at home, because a lot of people - a lot of our students - don't want to leave home. They want to stay there and they want to be of help to their community.

A lot of them basically just will do with an associate degree that have a lot of practical experience and that it can help. I think somewhere along the way, we should encourage our tribal colleges, our community colleges to start providing, maybe think about offering associate degrees in areas of crop management, animal management. Simple things but that they need help with, because I think that's lacking - veterinary technicians, Ag technicians, economists.

Not somebody that has a degree that wants to live in a big city that wants to do research. That's fine. But we have a need out in the field. Somewhere we need to also start addressing that area because like I said many of these people are tied to their land. They don't want to leave. They want to

stay home. They want to farm. They want to ranch. At the same time, they would like to have a job to help their communities. I think that's an area that's lacking, and I'd like to see that addressed somewhere along the way. Thank you very much.

Ann Bartuska: You're welcome. Actually, I 200 percent agree with you. I think that part of what we've been learning, the more I get out, the more Tim gets out, and others, what is needed by the system. It's not necessarily producing students for students for graduate school. I think you're bang on, although we don't want to lose that either. I just need to say one point. That is, this administration has really made a very strong commitment to community colleges. I think the message that has been coming out is that these are valuable and valued places of learning, not second tier or even third tier in some case. It's not where you send someone because they can't go and get a Ph.D. But that's actually an essential part of the education system. With the investment in the Rural Community College Association, we've signed two MOUs with them, one with REE and one with rural development. The changing of the language in many of the NIFA competitive grants, now allow community colleges to compete for those competitive grants in research education or extensions, and some combination of that. I think we've been recognizing that the value of associate's degree is incredibly high. We're not quite there yet, but it's

helpful to hear your message about what is needed and what would be most useful for those students who do want to stay close to the land, close to the community.

Could I ask Tim to intervene on this one just because I know he's had quite bit of thinking on this and what may be happening in the actual programs to address what you've mentioned? Tim, are you still there? Could you take this?

Tim Grosser: Absolutely. Thanks, Ann. Gilbert is absolutely correct. Those practical certificates, two-year degrees, are critical for a lot of the local tribes and communities. I think the 1994 institutions really specialize on that. As they get a little older, a little more mature, they're really starting to hone in on the need of tribal communities and building curricula that address those. We've got a number of schools that are really working in the vocational area and certificate programs so that tribe can hire their graduates and with a new skill.

I think that's happening, maybe not as fast as needed for that. As the institutions grow and they start to get more investments, later we're going to see more and more of that. So that's a good thing. Like Jerry was saying, those that are outstanding that can rise a little higher, there is also the opportunity to do that to go on to four-year institutions and graduate institutions. That's a nice trend. I think the '94s

are really positioning themselves to be of service to Indian country. Of course, we need a better job and we're trying, but it is happening.

The only other thing is it's difficult to talk about American Indian students in higher education. As far as we can tell, the '94s have about 10 percent of the enrollment of American Indian students in this country in higher education. So the '94s are only addressing a small slice, about 10 percent. We're trying to get a better bead on that. Most American Indian students in higher education go to other institutions for various reasons. You just have to keep in mind almost all of the '94s are on reservations and serve a unique audience and so there's that little dynamic going on as well.

Sarah Vogel: Hello. I don't have a complete sense of types of degrees that tribal colleges offer across the country. But I know in the Upper Great Plains, it seems as though they are offering a number of two-year degrees with certificates that can move people into employment. But I haven't seen very much focus by local tribal colleges for agriculture-related programs. They seem to be more like nursing, education, other needs that are real in and around those schools. Another thing that I see, I think this is universal. I think the '94 colleges; they operate on such small resources compared to the other colleges. If there were greater resources oriented toward training people

in natural resources and so on, I think there would be in sciences and agriculture-related stuff. I think the tribal colleges would jump on them in a heartbeat. But right now it's resources issue. Do you have any comment on that?

Tim Grosser: To the extent that I understood your question, ma'am, good question, most of what we call the ag degrees at the 1994s are indeed in or around natural resource issues. That's primarily what their interest area is or their students are really interested in dealing with water conservation, invasive species, dealing with the land issues, or adaptation to climate change. So if you're talking about ag degrees, there is one area where 1994's our strongest, and a little weaker in the more traditional ag programs. That is true and maybe for different reasons. They tend and try to be responsive to what the tribal communities indicate that they want and need.

So historically, traditional ag degrees, horticulture, agronomy and so on have not been as strong. But they were growing, especially now with this emphasis on getting entrepreneurs in food and agriculture-related industries. The 1994's beginning to try to kind of realize the new direction where there is need. I think we're starting to see a little bit more renewed attention to that. But yes, historically that's been the case, and they can always use more resources. There is

a shortage of resources for the 1994. There's no question about that.

Porter Holder: Are there any more questions? Thank you Ms. Bartuska and Mr. Grosman. I believe the council's has run out of questions for you.

Ann Bartuska: Thanks, Josiah. Well, first, thanks again for giving us the chance to visit with you in this very awkward and remote way. I guess the one thing I would like to reflect on is the burgeoning presence of community gardens that are popping up in all the institutions I've been visiting and really using them as teaching tools, as job training. And getting back to where these careers are, the IAIA, the fact that they've now moved beyond having a community garden to a culinary track where they're building off of what they're growing. And they're producing those products into a cafeteria environment that, actually, then contributes, of course, to healthy nutrition. That kind of vertical - I don't know if it's considered vertical or horizontal - anyway, keeping the community garden that is really central to the presence of a place, and then moving it into a job training and a curriculum development is, I think, really speaks to the opportunities out there. I hope that is something we can continue to promote because I think it really is a powerful statement about the importance of food and gathering that has been taking place, and it's happening in so

many locations now and in an institutional way. I hope that someday we at USDA can continue to promote, I know there's been some RD investments to some of these things as well as NRCS and REE. So I encourage all of my fellow agency representatives to be thinking about that as part of our portfolio. That's all I have to say. I look forward to doing a few more site visits in the spring. I know Leslie wants to get me to Alaska which I'd like to do. I haven't been out to the Northwest tribes for a while and so that's another thing I hope to be able to do in the spring of next year. That's all for me. I certainly would ask Tim if he has anything to say.

Tim Grosser: No, well said and a very good job [sounds like] and just happy to try to be of greater service in the future.

Mark Wadsworth: Ann, this is Mark Wadsworth, Chairman of the Council for Native American Farming and Ranching, I'm at the Idaho Area. We have the Rocky Mountain region tribal leaders' conferences that happen within the Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho area. I'll pass your name to them if you'd like to address their conference at one of these times.

Ann Bartuska: That sounds great. What time of the year is it usually?

Mark Wadsworth: They usually have at least two meetings annually.

Ann Bartuska: Well, yes, please pass my name forward. I'd be happy to be part of the agenda if that works and makes sense for folks.

Mark Wadsworth: Ann, thank you.

Ann Bartuska: Bye. Enjoy the rest of your meeting everyone.

Mark Wadsworth: You know, we wanted to get together and try to get a group picture, but not everybody's here right now. Angela wanted it mainly, didn't she?

Leslie Wheelock: Tell her we did it when she was out.

Mark Wadsworth: I know that if you're going to have to take off a little early here, let's try to get a group picture some time.

Sarah Vogel: Do it a little before 11:00.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay, okay, all right. So when Angela comes back, nobody leave. All right, we'll go on to the next one.

Leslie Wheelock: You were in a middle of a conversation that we started earlier that you want to continue.

Dana Richey: We have the, I think we have the option of continuing that conversation or maybe returning to it at the working session. Does anyone have any preference about continuing that conversation, Jerry perhaps, or moving on to the next speaker?

Jerry McPeak: We're going to have a working session here some place this morning?

Dana Richey: Yeah, it's this afternoon actually.

Jerry McPeak: No, no, I don't want to do it then. I want the question and answer.

Dana Richey: Okay, all right. I was actually out of the room, I think, for part of that time. So if the speaker, who I believe is with Farm Loan Programs, would come back up to the microphone. Mary?

Jerry McPeak: Someone less scared to do that job could come.

Male Voice: Okay. Thank you, sir. Well, you gave me a little more time too. We just need to understand more like the native customs and what they're thinking whenever they're going out there. They need to understand more of what we need whenever they're applying for a loan. We need records on what they spent and what they made for the previous year, what they spent for feed and fuel and stuff. Most Native Americans don't have records because they don't have to file income taxes or income that's made on the tribal trust lands, and our OGC, our government lawyer says that's right, that's legal, and that's how it is. In our area, three years ago we had 89 borrowers in the northwest four [sounds like] states. Now we have 135, and it's all because of that micro-loan program. Before then,

anytime we made a loan for cattle or equipment, we had to take a lien on all livestock and all equipment that the people had. And the agency, they saw that and they changed where it's that micro-loan, \$50,000 or less.

Now the only thing we have to take a lien on is that equipment or livestock that we're loaning for. I think that was a barrier for the native people because in our area, a lot of them are smaller farmers and ranchers. They may only farm three to ten acres and 50 horsepower tractor and small bailer or cutter. A lot of them still use some of those sickle bar mowers to cut their hay with. It's all just, kind of like, not the cheapest but they don't make that lot of money off of it so they have to keep their expenses down and what they buy. So that's one way our agency has changed. That micro-loan program has really helped them a lot. The majority of our loans are seven-year loans, so we have one payoff each month, just about. In three years we've gone up 45 and plus 36 months, I mean, we made a lot from those micro-loans and in that area.

Mark Wadsworth: Jerry.

Jerry McPeak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is for Gilbert and for you as well, Alan. Throughout my mind, we've got the small operations. Of those people that you're with, that you're farming with or trying to help, what percent of their livelihood, I'm not talking about, I don't care about how

many dollars they make, I mean, because we have folks that don't live on many dollars. You know, they get by with what they have. What percent of their livelihood comes from that farm? Are they like, Ann [phonetic] talks about, subsistence living? Are they kind of doing that? What percent of their livelihood comes from that farm operation?

Mark Wadsworth: Go ahead, Gilbert.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you very much. Gilbert Harrison from Navajo. Talk about making money. One time we were talking and somebody said on these small farms, you know how to make it to million dollars on a farm. You start out with two million, and you get out when you're down to a million. But it's true. I believe that the majority of the small farmers, I'm talking about mom and pop on the reservation, I would say it's just basically subsistence. Because a lot of the people basically either are on other programs, you know, social security and other income like that so this is just supplemental, and it's subsistence.

Jerry McPeak: You're saying the farming's supplemental?

Gilbert Harrison: Yes.

Jerry McPeak: To their other income, whatever it is whether it's through government checks or --?

Gilbert Harrison: Whatever income, so it's not a major operation. You're correct. Many of the small farmers, they

have secondhand equipment. They've got older equipment, because that's all they can afford. We just consider it a hobby. If we make a dollar, that's not even enough to buy a hamburger. But I think it's an attachment to the land and the love of working the land. I think that's what keeps us going. It's not a major primary source of income. Again, like I said, there's nobody on these trust lands on the reservation that has 2,000 or 3,000 acres of farmland. All the farmlands are basically subdivided into 5, 10, maybe 20 acres, so with that you can't make a living. You basically have to do whatever you can. Thank you.

Male Voice: And there are a lot of poor people out there. They heat with wood. One lady I know, she hauls her water for her and her sheep. I was out there this summer. Her kids wanted to watch a movie, so they backed the car next to the window and somehow they watched it through the power point of the vehicle inside the house. It's just a different way of living. And their kids go to school. Monday morning, the bus picks them up and they bring them back from the boarding school Friday afternoon.

Mark Wadsworth: Derrick?

Derrick Lente: Yeah. Thank you very much. This is Derrick Lente from Sandia Pablo. I think that there's a large discrepancy when we talk about Native America and how it relates to the USDA and the FSA and loans in particular. I say

discrepancy because sometimes when we talk about Native America, we kind of just pool us all together. I find myself always trying to separate myself from a tribal enterprise as opposed to me, Derrick Lente, the farmer and rancher, who's trying to make it on his own to make a name for myself. I think that when we talk about a lot of these programs and how they help tribes out, yeah, you're helping the tribe, generally speaking in numbers. But I don't necessarily think that that's fair to the small farmer, so to speak, like Gilbert or myself or a lot of the folks on this table because I think, for all intents and purposes, we're the folks that are in the trenches. We're the folks that are in the fields, watching the cows, farming the land with the blood, sweat, and tears to show for it. So when we talk about that, that's a discrepancy that I see because a lot of the times, when a tribe will look for federal assistance, they'll do it and help a larger proportion of their community. And when I ask for assistance it's because I want to improve what I have going on.

That's a difference that I can see off the top off my head. And in fact, that in Native America, speaking on behalf of the Pueblos of New Mexico, we're very small. Let me take a step back. This past summer we had a guest from some USDA department. They had asked me to go and join in a roundtable about my experiences as a minority farmer. Around the table was

myself and I think, maybe a couple of other Native Americans and some Hispanic farmers. This guy comes into the room and I think there was a huge disconnect from Washington D.C. to the dirt roads of New Mexico. Because they, I think, wanted to associate us to the large thousand-acre farms in the Midwest where they can farm soybeans and all these other large crops. They're assuming that all of the farmers around that table in the New Mexico had 200 horsepower tractors plus, and we ran these large equipment.

When the fact of the matter is that, really, the Pueblo farmers in New Mexico are in fact doing it not because they feel they can get rich or that they will ever get rich but the fact that they're just trying to protect the identity that they have as a Pueblo people, as a Native American in New Mexico. When I say that, I think that's more of the reason why people in New Mexico are farmers is because they want to retain that identity as a rancher or farmer because it's in our blood. It's who we are.

Val was at my place last week. When one of the questions arose, I told him that the land that we were standing on right then and there was the last piece of large ag land in the city proper. At the end of the day, there are no younger farmers that want to farm anymore because it's too hard work. Why would they want to do that? Not only just that but when they are

given a piece of property, and they can sell it, as opposed to farming it and becoming an instant millionaire, why not? So I told Val last week, the way I see it, where I'm from is that the farmers that are going to be there 10 years, 20 years, 50 years from today are going to be the Native American farmers only because they can't sell their trust lands. They can't do that and for a lot of purposes, that's probably a good thing. And I think that tribes are becoming very savvy to the fact that we're going to be the only ones left with ag lands. That we're going to have to feed the people in our communities. That they're becoming very supportive of a lot of the individual farming initiatives by way of helping us in regards to like legislative matters, better policies and so on and so forth. The work that Alan does in New Mexico, I appreciate it. I appreciate him. I think that he's spread thin. That was my comment last week. His office is about 80 miles from where I live.

And again, I've been harping on this the first day I joined the council is that farming is evolving. There's new generation coming in to play here. The moms and pops, they're always going to be there. That's who we learn from and that's who we respect and that's who will carry with us, because that's how we learn. But in terms of how it's evolving, I see a lot of what I do now is on my phone, on my iPad, how I track my crops, how you apply for loans, how you track inventory, invoices, and all kinds of

stuff. I think that that is the direction that we need to take in terms of how we're going to guide the way for Native agriculture as the template says here. That's our motto. We've got to keep with the times and so if we can do that, I'm not saying that we need to push out the older generation. Again, we have to respect that and learn from them and what they taught us.

But as we move forward, we got to keep in mind that if we want to be competitive, if you want to have a for-profit farm or ranch, or if you just want to retain that identity as, "Hey, I'm a Native American. This is what my people do. We farm and ranch." Then more power to you. I think we need to do everything that we can to try to retain that and try to help out our people. And when I say "our people", I mean that those folks with the shovels slung over their back that are in their fields farming because that's why I'm here. I think that the USDA can help with that and I think that they're showing it. We just need to keep moving forward. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Sarah Vogel.

Sarah Vogel: This is just a quick question to the gentlemen from New Mexico and others. Is there any participation in lending on the Pueblos by lenders other than USDA, or are you guys pretty much the only game in town?

Male Voice: There's a little bit of other lending. Like John Deere, some of them can buy a tractor with 0 percent credit. Oh, not 0 percent credit, 0 percent interest. But for the most part, I think we're the main ones. I mean, there's a few but the people that can get those, they have their VA check. They have a disability check or retirement check or social security. They have at least two other checks that's coming in to be able to do that.

Sarah Vogel: Okay.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you. Was that the last? Can we break for a quick picture?

Female Voice: Thank you, Alex.

Male Voice: Thank you.

Dana Richey: I just want to say before you leave the table do be mindful that we need to have a quorum before the meeting can continue. And a quorum, according to the bylaws, is eight people and one of those eight people must be USDA.

Jim Radintz: All righty. Well, thank you very much. I'm again pleased to be here. I'll give you an update on some of the FSA information. I've got both farm loans and a little bit on conservation. Before I get started into the material, I want to put a plug-in for the WINS program. We had a WINS intern in the Farm Loans' headquarters office, a young man by the name of Jerome Hardin [phonetic] from Nebraska. And actually we were

Jerome's second or third choice on his internship. He really wanted to work for the Department of Treasury. But as it turned out, after he got situated with Farm Loans, he kind of really got more interested in what we do and how we do it. He actually came from a farm, but at that point was a business major and didn't really plan on going back to the farm. But when he left our office to go back to school, his big plan and objective was to get back to the family farm and to do some things working with his tribe to take more advantage of the USDA and other programs that are there.

So it was really a win-win. That's just the great a program. So if you have some students back home that are interested in that, by all means encourage them. And Leslie, I want to work with you a little closer and try to take more advantage of that this year.

Leslie Wheelock: If I could add a little bit to that. I think I explained yesterday that we try to keep those kids out of the Social Security Administration and keep them closer to home and helping to learn about our programs so they could take our programs home with them. The intern that you had was the reason that we set up a special session for all the interns to come in. Josiah put together kind of a briefing, one USDA using our StrikeForce teams. The folks who came in and did that presentation did it at a level that really grabbed those

students' attention and it was a terrific session, some of the best speakers that I think we've had in a long time talking to our native youth. So it was really, really helpful. And thanks for the plug.

Jim Radintz: Thank you. Before I really get into what I wanted to address, one thing that I think Gilbert and Jerry raised yesterday, and that was about quantifying the benefits of the council and the impact that it's had, you'll see some quantification here in a little bit with some of the stats that I have I think. But I wanted to put a word in beyond that because I think there are a lot of intangible benefits too not just because of this council but it's certainly a key reason, is that we're a lot more conscious of what we do and how it affects Indian Country than we ever were before, I think, and I've been at headquarters for many years. So even though I can't put a specific quantification of X number on that, it's one of those intangible things that certainly has an impact on what we do and how we do it and how we set up programs, how we develop policies. So there is a lot of impact just beyond the actual numbers part of it. It's all baked into the numbers, but you won't necessarily see that as a separate thing.

Without further ado, let's go ahead and talk about what happened at FSA in Farm Loans. As Val mentioned this morning, we had probably one of the better years we could ever imagine in

the Farm Loan program arena. We made \$3.1 billion in ownership loans, \$1 billion of that was direct ownership loans which are primarily limited to real estate purchases for beginning farmers. So all of that ended up helping beginning farmers get their first real estate purchase.

Dana Richey: Jim, if you don't mind, I just wanted to let the council members know what tab numbers your information would be found on.

Jim Radintz: Okay. No, this is not actually in the book.

Dana Richey: I know.

Jim Radintz: And I'll furnish it to Dana. I'll furnish these slides to Dana so she can distribute them too.

Dana Richey: So Jim's presentation refers to tabs 8 and 9 through 14 in your binders. Thank you.

Jim Radintz: Thank you, Dana. We also did the highest amount of beginning farmer loans ever at \$2.5 billion. We're seeing our loan portfolio continually shift toward beginning farmers. Over half of our direct loan portfolio now is beginning farmers. We also set a record for what we called targeted underserved lending. That's, as the statute refers to, the targeted socially disadvantaged funds. That was \$827 million, which is a really large amount. Allen [phonetic] mentioned the microloan program and what it's allowed us to do.

Last year alone we made over 6,000 microloans, and that was about a 40 percent increase over the previous year.

Now of course your next question is, well, what happened in the area of Native American lending? Well, here's what we did. I had somebody put this little table together for me to show the year over year increase by program, and you can see that there was an increase both in dollars and numbers in every single one of our FSA programs. I'd especially point out again the ownership program because that is the way the statute is written. It really is focused on real estate purchases. So those 385 loans for \$62 million last year, virtually all, if not all of them went to purchase real estate. And you can see that was an increase of about 50 over the previous year. You can see in every category we've been increasing year over year.

Val also mentioned we've been working closely with IAC on youth loans. We also worked closely with them on the microloan program and some other things. And I think, again, some of that is some of those intangibles that you might not see directly but they're in there behind the scenes and they help contribute to this increase that you see here year over year, '14 to '15. Yes, Leslie.

Leslie Wheelock: Actually I have two questions. One is you had mentioned earlier the uptick in microloans, and I'd like to know why that's occurring or why you think that's occurring.

The other one is can you add the youth loans to this? Is there any way to track the youth loans that are working through the program here?

Jim Radintz: I can separate out the youth loans from the operating category. I don't know that we can really track just the ones that were here because we don't necessarily have that capability. As far as the uptick in microloans, I think a big part of it is just the continuation of outreach. I think the story that Allen told this morning about, you know, he works with one person and then he goes out to their place and they told both their neighbors, a lot of it is that kind of thing. I think some of it is just people feeling a little more comfortable based on the way the program is designed. There's more interest just in taking advantage of what it has to offer.

We're now in fiscal '16. The government follows a fiscal year that goes from October 1st to September 30th. If Congress does what we hoped they will do - and that is do something by Friday or we'll all find ourselves sitting back home in Washington, sitting at home on Monday waiting to see what happens I guess - we're expecting funding levels virtually unchanged from 2015 which at least potentially gives us the resources to have another if not record-breaking maybe record-tying year in terms of funding. We've already obligated in all of our programs 800 -- I'm sorry, Jerry, go ahead.

Jerry McPeak: Don't you see that? Isn't unchanged a victory?

Jim Radintz: Yes.

Jerry McPeak: I mean that's a victory.

Jim Radintz: Yes. Thank you for pointing that out. We have been very fortunate, and I think it's because of the way the programs have been operating over the last few years, that in spite of all the resource limitations and some of the rhetoric up on the Hill, we still have strong financial support for our programs for I think a variety of reasons. But again, the fact that we've been able to make some changes and keep moving forward are a part of that. And absolutely, the fact that we're not seeing reductions is absolutely a victory.

As I mentioned, we've already obligated \$847 million dollars just since October 1st. We are expecting an increase in demand this year especially in our operating loan category, especially some of the heavy crop production states. We're hearing more and more from lenders that they are really worried. They have a lot of producers that they are starting to see carryover debts because of, of course the price of corns, soybeans, and wheat has all gone down quite a bit. I'll talk about that a little more in a minute.

But that socially disadvantaged target that I mentioned, that will help assure funding is available. We are able to fund

loans in that category right through to almost the end of September this past year, but we still encourage people to apply early. There's always an uncertainty, so the sooner the folks come in. If it looks like they're going to need a loan, the sooner they get the books closed and kind of get everything set and come on back in, the better for it helps us spread out workload in the field a little bit and it also gives them a little bit of a leg up. So we always encourage folks to the extent they can to come in and apply early, and there's probably some other reasons for that this coming year.

Our loan portfolio has been performing very well, but we do expect some challenges. Right now over 90 percent of our loan dollars are paid on time which, given our mission of being a lender of first opportunity and making loans when other lenders won't, I think that speaks very strongly for the way the programs operate, the great work that folks like Allen out there in the field do. But we do expect some challenges, as I mentioned. Farm income is forecasted to decline 28 percent for 2015. And I think when you add the decline from '14 to '15, it ends up being about close to, I think it's like a 40-some percent reduction from the height of 2013. So there are maybe some clouds on the horizon.

We've actually started. We want to be proactive in dealing with that. We've already started working with our field staff

doing loan servicing and customer relations refresher training. We just spent last week in Albuquerque, New Mexico reminding everybody what our servicing provisions are. You know, the fact that we want to use all the authorities we have to help folks through troubled times. Also, give them some of the human resource tools, human relations tools that they need to deal with people that are going to be facing some stress and making sure that they remember that there's definitely a human dimension to all of this, that our producers, our borrowers, our clients are way more than a number in a file, they are actual people. So we're working on that.

Again, for those of you that talk and deal with folks out there in the countryside, if people are having some financial challenges, it's really in their best interest not to wait but get on into our office and talk to the loan officer, loan manager just as soon as they can. We can start working on loan servicing options before someone actually is forced to miss their payment if they don't have the money. And sometimes it's a little bit easier to work with situations earlier rather than later.

Again, we are committed to using all of our authorities, everything we can do - restructuring payments, deferring payments, even in some cases, maybe writing down part of the loan principal that comes with a lot of potential strings. But

that is on the table. We've been working with IAC. It's not unusual for me or Connie or Mike back there to get an email or a phone call from Zach Ducheneaux. We value that relationship. We encourage our field folks also to work closely with IAC, and we expect to probably use their support this year more than maybe ever.

I wanted to just put this up real quick because I think this really kind of -- this bears out what Allen was saying and I think what others have said. The bottom graph is the number of what we call loan officials. That's folks that are in the job series that actually process and approve loans. Now these numbers were as of the beginning of the fiscal year. So we did in 2015 actually get a modest staffing increase which again, Jerry, is a victory. I think that 1,068 number is probably up now to probably around 1,100 and something.

We do face some challenges though, and I think that was mentioned earlier during Dr. Bartuska's talk because what happens is -- I'll give you an example. I was at a senior staff meeting not too long ago and the HR director comes in and he says, well, I've got some really good news. We've hired over 1,000 people this year. He says but the other side of that is we've had over 800 leave. So we're sort of bailing out a leaky ship there a little bit. Yes, sir.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Jerry.

Jerry McPeak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Pardon to interrupt in the middle. But that's far enough, maybe I'll remember it that long. You're losing some of those, as I am very aware, as you noticed what's happening in our area. But in education, we're having teachers that -- we reached that stage where we have teachers retiring in an inordinate number who have reached that retirement age. Are you also having that in the farm service agencies or --?

Jim Radintz: Absolutely. We are. I think the last number I heard is about 40 percent again of this loan approval official group that could retire in the next five years. So that's one the big challenges. I faced that with the staff at headquarters, and we faced it at every level right on down to the field. Cascading right on down, there are some states where literally almost half of the loan staff in the state could walk out the door in the near future if they so choose.

Jerry McPeak: Follow up, Mr. Chairman.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Jerry.

Jerry McPeak: Dana, I know you're going to want this in the latter part in that working deal. But losing that institutional knowledge when you've gone to so much trouble, and you've done a great job and I hate to say nice things because it's just not like me, but you've done a great job and we are seeing it and sensing it. But when you lose those 40 percent

that you have now sensitized to what we're trying to do, and you lose that 40 percent that are sensitized not from an intellectual standpoint but from a standpoint that you can't teach, we're going to fight the battle over again. I don't know how to say that not being critical, but --

Jim Radintz: Well, I take your point. But I hope that's not the case partly because one of the things we do when we on-board new employees -- and we have a very formal training process. It takes almost two years for us to mint a new loan officer, if you will, which is why it really hurts so bad when they leave because the government has a big investment in those folks. But we try every step of the way to build in just exactly that sensitivity, the idea that we're here for everyone; that we have a certain mission to accomplish. And honestly, Jerry, I think at least the younger earlier career folks that I talked to, I think, are maybe a little more receptive and --

Jerry McPeak: Pliable.

Jim Radintz: Yeah. Exactly. Pliable to that than maybe some of us, I think. Last week one of our staff coined the term vintage employees. Some of us is vintage. So anyway, but that's a concern. I guess the other point I'd make is when you see these numbers go down at the same time - this is our portfolio - in between direct and guaranteed lending, it's increased by almost a third. So we've had that kind of

increase. At the same time, we've had a reduction in the bodies to actually take care of that. So that's one of my ongoing challenges.

We have a lot of different kinds of things going on. Some of this you've probably at least heard about. We should have finalized the update to our plain language guide to FSA loans that was part of the same settlement that established this council. For whatever reason, it's taking much longer than I would have liked, but it should be finished with all of the Farm Bill and other changes that would have occurred since it was originally published.

We're also in the final stages, and I think this would be really critical given the economic challenges that we're moving into as a plain language borrower guide that, at least, endeavors to explain in plain English what FSA can do for our borrowers and what is expected of them. It explains things like why if you can pay on time or even pay early is to your benefit, because it stops interest accrual, and we give some examples. We go through a whole long list of things not to replace contacts with our field offices but maybe to supplement. So if someone has a question, they can just pick up that guide or look online, whatever it is, and maybe get their question answered. That may save a few precious minutes of some staff time. When

you roll all of those minutes together, it adds up. So that's our mission.

I was really glad to hear what Derrick said this morning about looking at things online. I realized there's a lot of places in Indian Country where online is, you know, it might as well be Mars. But we are working on what we call an online application portal. This is really designed -- what it ain't is a form that comes up on the screen and you fill out the blanks. That's what it's not. What this is being designed to do, and we've had a couple of demos of it, is it's really like an electronic interview that says, well, how much money do you want to borrow. It asks questions that would help you determine what kind of loan you might qualify for. And then it routes to the -- let's say you need to borrow \$40,000. Well, the system's going to know, okay, that's going to be a microloan. So it's going to route over there and ask questions about it. Basically, if you've ever used TurboTax or seen TurboTax, that's sort of our concept to do basically in an online interview sort of thing.

Now is that going to be for everyone or help everyone? No. But again, it helps us move some work away from that very limited and somewhat overworked field office staff that we have. So we're working on that. Our goal is to have that rolled out by the end of next year.

I wanted to shift gears a little bit and talk about the highly-fractioned land loan program that just came out. We actually had consultation here. It was published. It's effective, but there's a -- Connie, is it a 60-day or 90-day comment period?

Connie Holman: It's 90. The comment period is at February 28th.

Jim Radintz: Okay. We had talked about different lengths of time and I had gotten myself confused. But anyway, we did have consultation here on Monday. I understand that went very well. We're actually going to be processing these loans from headquarters, but let me take a step back and talk about the consultation.

This program was sort of the textbook case for how consultation can work well and make a difference. This program was initially authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill. As it was designed, it was really tied back to some pre-existing processes and procedures through the BIA and trust lands in a very complicated process to reunite fractioned interests.

When we went through the consultation, and we did 12 around the country, what we heard in every case was that as the program - as we had actually developed it based on the statute that directed us - wouldn't work, that it just was not going to be effective or workable. The suggestion was made that what really

needed to happen was that we needed to be able to provide funding to organizations that were out closer to the ground, closer to the real world that knew what the special circumstances were in their specific areas.

So at that point we stopped. We reached out to folks that had the right kind of contacts. The new Farm Bill, the 2014 Farm Bill, actually changed the statute in a way that allowed us to develop a program that we're pretty optimistic will work and accomplish what was intended to be accomplished here. So of course the purpose of the program is to reduce fractured interests through purchase assistance. It does operate as a relending program.

So let's say there was some kind of tribal organization or some other kind of nonprofit that was already involved in working on fractioned interests and lending to address that, this program can help serve as an additional capital source. It's basically a long-term loan that they can turn around and relend the funds to finance the reunification of these fractioned interests.

We expect to have \$10 million available in 2016, and the lenders were looking for do you need to have experience with lending in Indian Country. And we're looking for tribal nonprofits, maybe tribal governments or finance authorities, other Indian land organizations so we will be continuing to work

this and get the program implemented and get underway with doing and accomplishing this important task. Let me stop here. Are there any questions so far?

I was asked to just do a quick update on the consultations that occurred here again on Monday. As I mentioned before, we did a dual consultation on the highly fractionated Indian Land Loan Program. We also have three other new programs that we're going to be rolling out, one hopefully before the end of the year and two shortly thereafter: direct ownership microloans, guaranteed microloans, and guaranteed micro-lender. So given the huge success of the first, the operating microloan program, it just seemed to us that this was the next logical step, again, to help leverage and make better use of the programs that we have.

Mark Wadsworth: Jim.

Jim Radintz: Yes.

Mark Wadsworth: Before we step away from that fractionated loan program --

Jim Radintz: Yes, sir?

Mark Wadsworth: Who is your appraiser or who are you going to accept as the appraiser for tribal land?

Jim Radintz: We're actually not going to do the appraisals. We're going to be relying on the organization or institution that's actually going to make the loans. So we're

just going to be lending to those organizations, and then they're going to turn around and make the actual loans to the folks out on the ground unifying the fractioned interests. So it would be up to them to find an appraiser based on the local situation and conditions.

Mark Wadsworth: That's a huge issue out in Indian Country, especially with the new OST Buy-Back Program. The appraisal of the land is basically being in blocks. Rangeland will have a certain value within your area. Farmland will just have a certain value in your area as a part of a base offer to purchase fractionated ownership [sounds like] from tribal members that will revert back to the tribe. But the thing that we always run into with BIA is their appraisal requirements when you're purchasing from trusted allotted lands. It might be an issue that -- have you really discussed that at all with the bureau?

Jim Radintz: Just very preliminarily. I think some of our thinking has been that, again, we're relying on these organizations that are out there on the ground close to the situation. But it sounds like we may still need to do some more work.

Leslie Wheelock: If I may, Mr. Chairman. This is Leslie. We did have two discussions, one of them quite lengthy with the bureau. We actually don't have a lot of overlap with their program because of the way that this one's operated, but this

issue I think is something that did not come up during that conversation and so we have not talked about the block assessment methodology that's being used. But we also -- I think, Jim made the point that it's up to the intermediary to determine how to assess that value. We have some assessments that are out there that are on tribal lands that we have already done at USDA. That information I hope will be available. You have the OST assessments. That should already be available.

And even though OST has told us that those evaluations and appraisals will expire after a certain period of time -- we're not talking about bank requirements here. We're talking about the lender, the intermediary lender who isn't under any banking or may not be under any banking regulations whatsoever but may just be willing to help the tribe and the folks who are on that parcel of land get it into a form that can actually come to USDA and get money or come to a different organization and get money because it's no longer as fractionated. So it's up to them to determine the appraisal, and that could be subject to any number of negotiations at the local level which is why the intermediary re-lender we hope will be a valuable resource for us.

Mark Wadsworth: Our tribe purchases land all the time from our tribal people. The biggest backlog, and probably Ladd could talk about this too, is that it's just the black backlog of the appraisals coming through the bureau that will be accepted as a

part of their requirements. So I just want to say that is great for this program and stuff, but we better watch out and see if we can work with the appraisal process that are beginning to be required.

Jim Radintz: Okay. Connie Holman in the back, her group back in Washington is actually responsible for implementing and administering the program. Connie, I don't know if you stood up by it, I don't know if you have something you wanted to add.

Connie Holman: Yeah. I just want to add one thing. Part of the regulation, as we have written it, is that the intermediaries would be someone who had experience in Indian Country, maybe an Indian or A Native American organization, a tribal organization or something like that. So the hope is that they'll be accustomed to already working with those appraisers and things like that and that it will run much smoother because they will already be involved in that kind of lending. We're really not looking at someone or not expecting a lot of lenders that have no experience in Indian Country. Our hope is that the folks that we'll be looking at as these intermediary lenders will already have experience.

Jim Radintz: Thanks, Connie.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Mary.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you. I think that the hope that they have worked in Indian Country should be a requirement, that

they have had worked in Indian Country and be familiar with the BIA processes for leases. I don't know if the BIA agencies in your area have the authority to do MOAs or accept fair market value on land. But we have that in North Carolina, that the BIA has accepted and the tribe have agreed that they have appraised the land whether it's mountainous or just a little hill but they have a fair market value placed on tribal land. So it makes the process easier for appraisals. Maybe that would work out for it. I don't know. But Jim, what were the three new programs that you mentioned? Micro -- next slide?

Jim Radintz: Yeah.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you.

Connie Holman: Can I just say one last thing? As Jim said, the comment period is open until February the 28th. We do anticipate having another conference call before the end of that comment period. This might be a really good avenue for you to comment on that rule and so we'll know your concerns. If the prices are a big issue, then you might comment on that.

Jim Radintz: And the regulations themselves are in your book under -- I'm not sure which tab, Dana, but they are actually in there, so you can get into the nuts and bolts if you so choose.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Jerry.

Jerry McPeak: Mr. Chairman, getting to where I was going to ask Allen about this a while ago, what has been your experience with any feedback? People when doing your, what do you call it, your hearing time --?

Connie Holman: Tribal consultations?

Jerry McPeak: No. You get time for you getting feedback. You're asking for time, but --

Jim Radintz: Oh, comments?

Connie Holman: Our comment period.

Jim Radintz: Our comment period.

Jerry McPeak: Comment period, there you go. What's been your experience as far as Indians commenting during that time? I don't want a politically correct answer. Again, I want the correct answer.

Jim Radintz: Well, are you talking about the fractionated land program in particular or just anything in general?

Jerry McPeak: In general.

Jim Radintz: Okay. Connie, you want to give that a shot?

Connie Holman: Well, I can. I can certainly speak to when we began this process with tribal consultation in the highly fractionated land loan program. We certainly thought we had all the answers from Washington. We drafted something and we started that consultation process or that conversation process

that we had, in August of 2010. We had a total of 14 face-to-face consultations that we did.

Jerry McPeak: Timeout. Okay, this is what you did. I want to know what those of us out here did.

Connie Holman: Yeah. Well, I'm getting to that.

Jerry McPeak: Pardon me, ma'am.

Connie Holman: No, that's okay. We had 14. We had a huge turnout in all of those tribal consultations we had, and we had a lot of conversation. What I was trying to get to is that that's the reason this program we believe is going to work, it's because of those first 14. Then last year we had an additional tribal consultation here at this same week and we had another turnout. The comments that we got, what we heard in those 15 sessions is what has made this what we believe is workable. In addition, we've also consulted on all kinds of Farm Bill provisions. We've gotten comments that have made those programs work. So we've had lots of comments from Native Americans.

Jerry McPeak: Follow-up. So my question was do you feel like -- and you'd make a great legislator. No problem [sounds like], by the way. It's a yes or no question. Do you feel like you had a lot of participation from the Indians or you haven't had very much participation?

Connie Holman: Absolutely, we've had a lot and it's made a difference in what we've got.

Jerry McPeak: There you go. Thank you.

Jim Radintz: Back to the microloan programs. The farm ownership program -- they're all basically paralleling the existing what we call operating on microloan, like Allen was talking about and probably some others here this week. We had started out with the program at 35,000. The Farm Bill set it at 50. So that's written into the statute. This program, it will have the same reduced application paperwork and documentation that the operating loan program has that's been so successful. So it cuts back by about 50 percent the number of forms and the kind of information that we need now.

Since we're buying real estate, there are some additional requirements. We have to deal with potentially some environmental due diligence. And if there are buildings and they happen to meet the requirements for being historic, then we're going to have to maybe deal with some of that. But our agency-type paperwork will be reduced. Because these are small transactions, we actually will be doing what we call an estimate of value rather than an appraisal. This will keep a little bit of the work out of the appraisal realm and hopefully maybe free up some time for other things on the part of the appraisers. We're also going to be authorizing our guaranteed lenders to make microloans as well in both ownership and operating

programs. Again it would be 50,000, and again much reduced paperwork.

The last program is one I think that will have some -- we hope will have some special impact in Indian Country and some other places we've not maybe reached. We're really interested in doing a better job reaching urban agriculture as well, so we're kind of at the extremes of the spectrum on either end there between urban lending and then out in Indian Country which is anything but urban.

We're coming out with what's called a guaranteed micro-lender. We've focused on community development financial institutions, and there are some native-owned and operated CDFIs. I'll talk about one in particular in a minute, but that's our primary focus. But any lender can participate if they meet the requirements. The big difference here in the way this is sort of a reach-out is they have to have general lending experience, of course, but not necessarily agricultural lending because we realize there are some institutions out there that are doing a good job. They just haven't ventured out into the ag arena.

So what they will be able to do is even though they don't have the experience to go into it in a big way, we're going to let them get involved with microloans up to 50,000. I know some of my folks who have been engaged with a couple of native CDFIs

and are continuing to work on that. We're hoping as we get this program rolled out, we'll see some good participation there.

Now there's also a one in particular. I know Tawney's not here. The CDFI that she's in charge of, the Lakota Fund, we were able, based on their experience to actually qualify them for our regular guaranteed loan program. I was able to sign off on that back I think in August or September. They've approved one loan so far. We're hopeful that as we move into the new farming season that we'll see more activity from them. So we are making headway there.

There are some other program changes. Val mentioned some of these this morning. We expanded the Farm Storage Facility Loan Program, which is really great. It doesn't have near the statutory requirements that the regular farm loan programs have, so there's not what we call a test for credit. There are some other things that will make it a little easier to qualify for. Yes, Leslie.

Leslie Wheelock: I just wanted to add a note of support. Farm Storage Facility Loan Program, I believe that's the program that was used in the State of Minnesota recently to set up a wild rice storage facility, to fund a wild rice storage facility.

Jim Radintz: I believe that's right.

Leslie Wheelock: So there's some very cool things that are happening out there in Indian Country with the use of these programs. Thank you very much.

Jim Radintz: Thank you. Also, cooperative agreements. We published a call for proposals back in September, it was published in the government's grants.gov website, asking for proposals for organizations to enter into cooperative agreements with FSA to do primarily outreach, technical assistance, and education, I believe were the three categories. The plan is to evaluate submissions on a rolling basis.

The first kind of enrollment to our submission period has closed. We're expecting to do another one early in the calendar year 2016. But if you're interested, please go to grants.gov and check that out because there are some good opportunities. That is a grant basically and it will enable you to work directly with FSA at the state and local level either conducting outreach activities or providing technical assistance. We will provide a grant of up to \$99,000 to do that.

Leslie Wheelock: Jim. This is Leslie. I have another question. Does your cooperative agreement authority include veterans?

Jim Radintz: I believe it --

Leslie Wheelock: If it doesn't, come talk to me. I've got it --

Jim Radintz: Okay. I think it does. It was just recently delegated to FSA within about -- well, it was about eight or nine months ago. I believe it does but I'm not sure. I'd have to check.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you. All right.

Jim Radintz: Thanks. The last thing, and this kind of ties back into one of Leslie's earlier comments on leveraging our FSA programs together. For example, last spring we put out a directive basically instructing our staff that if say they're working on a microloan with an applicant and they don't qualify for crop insurance but it looks like they could qualify for NAP, we directed them to, you know, when they finish processing the loan, basically sort of take the person by the hands - maybe not literally, but figuratively at least - to the person in the office that does the NAP sign-up and eligibility and basically get them connected with that person to explore if NAP would be a good idea for them based on the operation. So that's one example.

Another one is we've also put out directives encouraging the combination of any of our loan programs. I'll use the microloan example again with the farm storage facility loan. One of the limitations of farm storage facility loans is they can't be used for processing, only for storage. So there have been a few cases around where there was a farm storage facility

loan made for a cold storage facility. But then if they were going to put in a small packing line or something like that, we could make an operating microloan to cover that part of it. Our only requirement is that at least half of the product that's going through has to be grown on the farm, and of course they would have to meet our other program eligibility requirements. But we have some opportunities to leverage that way and we're encouraging our folks to do more of that.

I wanted to quickly just give you a little bit of an update on some of our conservation programs and talk a little bit about where things are with that. The Conservation Reserve Program which recently celebrated its 30th anniversary of inception just a week or two ago, the sign-up for that program opened on December 1st and it runs through February 26, 2016. So if you know some folks that might be interested in enrolling or reenrolling some cropland in CRP, the door is open for that right now.

FSA also came out with a Grasslands Reserve Program. The first sign-up in ranking opened September 1st and ran through November 20th. Mark, I understand there were some problems and concerns with the timeframes there. Grasslands is on a continuous sign-up and offers can be made at any time. They will be considered at the next ranking period. The plan now is that there would be another grasslands ranking period in 2016.

So, again, if you know someone that might be interested in this, they should go ahead and get their information submitted so that it will be there ready and waiting the next time there's a ranking period and they can get considered.

Just to sum up, I think everything I have presented to you shows we've made progress. We're still working to improve. One of my management philosophies is one I tell my staff all that time, is that success is a journey and not a destination. So we've got to continue to keep working and trying to move ahead and get better. So any other questions? Yes, Porter.

Porter Holder: Porter Holder, Choctaw Nation, Oklahoma. Jim, I've talked to you a little bit about this yesterday off the record. Because I know that as a producer and as a father I've got to shoulder my share of the blame for this. I've got a friend of mine. I explained that to you and I'll explain it to everybody else, whose son is 19 years old. His dad and I, me and his dad had been incubating this kid since he's 15 years old. What I mean by that is his dad gave him a few cows and every year instead of selling the steer calves he's building his herd. He's trading his steer and cows to his dad or he swaps them with me to get a different bloodline in the herd.

So as far as getting a record of financial -- he's not 10 years old. My daughter's 18 years old. As far as a financial record showing, we feed a lot of bulk feed. What I mean by that

is semi-loaned. When you order, it comes in 25 tons. You can't hardly tell the driver, okay, five tons of this, I want my daughter to pay for five tons, I want this. You pay for the whole load. And of course him being under 18, he don't have a checking account. I write the check for it. They know the business end of it but as far as having a record of being in the business when they're under 21 years old, it's hard to do that.

And also in the big scope of things, as Dana and everybody else here knows, I leave my house -- my alarm goes off at 5:30 Monday through Saturday. I'm out of the house at 6:00. When I leave my house, I pretty much lost contact with everybody but who's staying in front me. And I'm not running at breakneck speed, but I'm steadily moving all day. And I talked to Angela at supper last night. She said there's six months a year it doesn't get dark. I said, hell, we wouldn't know when to quit if it didn't.

Jerry McPeak: You mean you quit at dark?

Porter Holder: Sometimes after.

Jerry McPeak: There you go.

Porter Holder: And so, I mean, in the big scope of things -- and like I said, I know I have to shoulder my share of the blame for this because I should make the time. But as I said in the heat of the moment, you think about it. Ten minutes later,

dang, I should have done this and this is, what I've shown her [sounds like].

I guess my comment is your regulations for 20 and under are a little stiff. I know you said there has been some language changed in it, but it's a little stiff because it's hard - I mean as far as financially - for their feed receipts, sales receipts. This is how we do it, we incubate our kids. That's how I was done. That's how I've done mine and I've seen others, and we've had success at it.

But then when you go in to put this on paper to get this kid a loan to set up his own operation, your regulations are a little bit stiff than what we could -- you know, we're not trying to do anything under the table. We're only trying to do how we know to do it, you know? We don't know what to do with it. It's successful.

So to me, that is something that needs to be looked at for your younger people - like I said 20, 21 and below. You might want to loosen your regulations a little bit just because, like I said, we incubate our kids - for lack of a better word - to get them in there. And I know I have to show them my share of the money. I should take the time to do this. I should make sure that there's a paper trail for her, and he should make sure that there's a paper trail for him. But in the big scope of things, because I'm talking about when you're going -- actually

we don't want it right next week, but we're steadily moving forward all day. If you're not, it is after dark before you get in. You know that. I guess my comment is we need to look at that to, for lack of a better word, loosen those regulations and change something because that is how we do it out there as far as our children. Thank you.

Jerry McPeak: Mark, before you respond, may I?

Mark Wadsworth: Jerry.

Jerry McPeak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before you respond to that, what actually happens in our world is -- and I know this actually happens in his world because I know when he's gone his daughters take care of the cattle. He doesn't pay them. They earn. They earn the feed that their cattle eat. My daughter is the same way. In reality, that's what really happens. We don't write a check to our kids. We probably ought to for income tax purposes, but we don't. They earn their way into it. And we realize that for regulation purposes, that's difficult. I don't know how you do that. But in reality, that's what we do. Right?

Porter Holder: I mean that's just real. That's how it is out in boots on the ground. I mean that's -- and I understand that you basically knew about it. I understood that you know what I'm talking about. You know and I know it's bureaucratic stuff, but there's got to be a way to help that little bit.

Jim Radintz: Let me respond. I think I need to clarify a couple of things and respond to some of that. First of all, what we're talking about is there is a three-year experience requirement to get a real estate loan. That's actually written in the statute. Now in the last Farm Bill, as Porter mentioned, Congress did ease up on that a little bit and we were able to expand that to include some other kinds of experience. If you've been in the military or have some other business management-type experience, that can substitute for one year of that.

Again, that's only for real estate loans. That does not apply if someone just wants to, say come in and get a loan and buy some cows and run them on land that maybe they own or we don't have anything to do with, or they're leasing, or whatever. What we're talking about, to Porter's point, is specifically related to our direct real estate loan program.

Now I would also say that the intent is I think a noble one, and that is to make sure that we don't make a loan to someone that doesn't have the experience necessary to be successful. I think that's an intent and a good one. But I would also say that I think there are other ways we can document this than just by having financial records.

I can remember a situation where a young man wanted to buy a poultry operation. He actually was engaged to the daughter of

a gentleman who already had a poultry operation and it turned out he had been managing that for his future father-in-law for several years. And basically the way we documented that is of course we had a statement from his future father-in-law. We also had a statement from the -- I believe it was Tyson's [phonetic] fieldman that said you know, hey, when I go out to the farm I talk to Sam or Joe or whoever it was. Or we had a statement from a couple of other folks that had an interaction with that individual or with the operation. Basically, that was the documentation that provided the support for the fact that this person met that three-year requirement.

I think there are obviously financial records - a Schedule F for whatever; maybe if there is something called best, that may be it. But I think there are some other ways. Now we had issued a directive, I think it's referred to as a credit desert directive sometimes, and it talks about -- specifically, it tells our folks to be aware of some of the unique situations in Indian Country like this where folks oftentimes start through a kind of an incubator or mentorship-type relationship. If we need to clarify some of those requirements a little bit more in our handbooks, we can do that.

My concern is if the person applying has that experience because that's what the law requires, but I think we can -- we need to keep an open mind in how we document and assure that

they do have that experience. Would it be easier if the law wasn't quite so rigid? Yes. But I think we still have some latitude to interpret and accomplish the mission that really is intended within what's there, and I'm glad to work with you some more on dealing with that.

Porter Holder: Thank you, Jim. I appreciate it. In my opinion, I think you're doing a hell of a job.

Jim Radintz: And you waited until my boss left before you told me that. No. I thank you very much. I really do appreciate that, Porter. I really do. Any other questions? Okay. Well, thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity.

Female Voice: I know we are quite a bit behind schedule. We may want to try to make some of that up during lunch instead of taking an hour-and-a-half. But why don't we move to the ombudsperson, Joanne Dea, just because her presentation I know relates to Farm Loan Programs, so we'll have some continuity there. Yes, Chairman?

Mark Wadsworth: I have a question. Zach, I'm not sure where Zach fits on his program for the afternoon.

Male Voice: He's next out.

Mark Wadsworth: Timeout, I understand that, but my point is if we're going to get someone earlier, he may have a conflicting thing this afternoon.

Female Voice: Yeah, I did speak to Zach. He's available until 1:00, so I thought we would take Joanne and then move to Zach, if that's okay?

Joanne Dea: So I'm Joanne Dea. I'm the USDA ombudsperson, so thank you for the opportunity to speak briefly before the council. What I want to do is I want to provide just a verbal update on the type of work that I've been involved with over the past two months. I've been able to make quite a bit of progress with mapping and numbers related work. I'm actively working with USDA's GIS departmental mapping experts to create a series of maps. We are actually trying new techniques, including basically sort of heat density maps, which some of you know from kind of weather is one way that the heat density map is done. But it's a brand new area for the individuals that I'm working with, who are doing this mapping work. So they have some challenges in terms of learning how to use the software and understanding kind of different glitches with creating these maps.

As one example, just to kind of give this a little bit more specifics, I'm working to capture information such as tribal land areas, the density of farm locations as shown through a heat map and other information that I'm able to get and access information to. This could be things like service centers locations. Again, just another example is direct farm loans in

terms of the number of applications received. In creating these maps, my hope is to actually create more internal dialogue and conversation with the program offices.

I'm also actively working with the statistical support to run graphs using census information and looking at various ratios, comparing the NASS census numbers on the number of producers by state and by race. So we are starting to use what information we have available to get a sense of what the information looks like. The data set that I'm looking at right now is 2002-2012 FSA Direct Loan information. I'm using this ten-year period because it actually gives me a time period where I'm able to then compare that information to census information for three specific times, which is 2002, 2007, and 2012 census information.

As an example, the comparisons that we're beginning to run include the number of applications received from FSA direct loans within each state and then by each race separately as a ratio to the number of producers per state and by race. Again, this is all identified through the NASS kind of census information that I'm doing that comparison number with. To better understand these initial numbers, I need to engage more with NASS staffs to just understand how the census numbers are relating because there is actually some significant differences in terms of the number jumps in some of the states. So let's

just say for 2002 to 2007, it might have increased by quite a bit.

Also, one point I wanted to make, I had originally thought that I would issue a report at the end of the past fiscal year. But since the ombudsman's office was established much later in the year, in June 2015, it didn't make sense to actually issue a report at that time. What I'm hoping to do at this point is to issue a report probably around the end of March 2016. So the maps and the graphs that I'm working out on now are important because they potentially may be going into this report that I am creating.

One other area, kind of just turning my attention a little bit differently and shifting gears, is when I came in front of the council the last time I brought some numbers which looked at application rates for Native Americans. As part of that information, the secretary actually requested a follow up meeting with me. So what I wanted to let you all know is that at the secretary's direction, he has asked my assistance to help him to better understand the reasons for loan rejections for Native American producer applications. At this point, I've met several times with FSA leadership to actually develop a path forward in terms of a meeting that specific request from the secretary.

And then last, I want to mention I was recently in South Dakota for three days, which gave me the opportunity to meet with many USDA staff across RD, FSA, and NRCS. It also gave me the ability to meet with a USDA Tribal Advisory sub-committee, some tribal members, Zach Ducheneaux and his IAC staff as well. We had the opportunity to talk. This is helping me to understand more about the barriers that Native Americans do face in trying to access our programs and also helping me to understand how outreach happens on the ground.

Those are my comments. I want to thank you for the opportunity to share this update. And I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Mark Wadsworth: Angela Peter?

Angela Peter: Yes, this is Angela Peter from Alaska. Are you creating the GIS maps in Alaska?

Joanne Dea: That's good question. In terms of I think your numbers in terms of relating to this, I don't think we have much in numbers. I have to go back and check. But it's a really good question.

Angela Peter: Okay, yeah, I was just wondering because you said you're taking them for heat sensitive and all that kind of stuff, right? Not just for loans, right?

Joanne Dea: Actually, it's just a term of how to do mapping. It's a technique. It will show bands of color in

terms of differences. If we take, let's say the loan applications and this would be taking several years together, right? Let's just say some year, 2000-2015. By each state, I would look at the number of applications coming into that state. And then it would be banded in terms of what those bands would show like a range from 0-15 applications or 15-30. There would be different things like that, so that's the connection to the idea of a heat map. It's just a visual way to show it.

Angela Peter: The visual way to show how many applications are or are not submitted?

Joanne Dea: Yes, it's one way. I'm sorry. Actually, that was not the best example. The better example that I should have used is that NASS has created maps previously that show not like a point location for an actual farm. There's a lot of kind of hurdles to jump through. But because of privacy, that dot or whatever they show for the farm doesn't denote where the farm is. That's actually the idea of the heat map. It's to show the bands of kind of generally the number. That was actually the better example I should have used.

Angela Peter: Okay, to follow up on that, you spoke of the applications being rejected and I could respect the secretary's direction on that, but what about the reason why they are not being submitted? That might be a good reason to have the GIS for Alaska.

Joanne Dea: Okay.

Mark Wadsworth: Mary Thompson?

Mary Thompson: Thank you. Joanne, did you do these, tab 15, 16 sorted these application requests by state?

Joanne Dea: No, I did not Mary. I don't have any handouts in your tabs or your binders, but I did want to provide verbal update.

Female Voice: Mary, those documents were generated by FSA Farm Loan programs.

Mary Thompson: Okay, they're great. I liked them.

Female Voice: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Joanne, with these heat bands sensing that you're utilizing with NASS and I guess actually pictures, basically whatever the heat contact role [sounds like] would be in that specific area, were you able to ascertain how much would be range lands in that area, how much would be irrigated farms, or how much would be pasture lands? Is that the type of data you're putting into your heat sensing?

Joanne Dea: I don't have that right now. But I would be looking for input from you all as well in terms of what you think would be useful. I'm trying to pull information at this point that I think might make sense to map in, again, a series of maps. I've tried sort of putting information in one map. I'm finding that's of course not working because it's too much

information, right? I'm going to have to break it apart. But I guess in terms of your question, Chairman, I would like to maybe continue the conversation to understand how that type of information could be helpful to you. Also, I think just keeping in mind that even if we decide some information is helpful, accessing that information from the keepers of the information or just getting it is not always easy.

Mark Wadsworth: So, again, with the heat sensing, you will be able to determine whether there is range land in that area, forest, irrigated pasture, irrigated farm land, is that what you're looking for? Because I think that's very important that we recognize that there is a lot of range land in that area that there should be some cattle loans. There is a lot of farm land in that area. We should equate that with the farm loans for production agriculture from the race that you're working on.

Joanne Dea: Okay, let me explore that more.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Mary?

Mary Thompson: I think that as you plug in the specific information in to be able to get more information out of your mapping system that's separating it by range land, what you say irrigated farm land? For us, it would be small farms, family gardening type of things, so that's different because of location and what's going on. Also, I think that if you submitted specific information, and I know this is going to be

tough, but by county or at least an area in the state, the north, the south, the east and west, the center of the state, that would be helpful. Then, [indiscernible] from North Carolina, if the percentage of your applications were coming from the coast or the Piedmont or the mountains, then I could look at that and say that the Piedmont or the coast is doing a lot of applications but the mountains are doing little applications. So by region, I guess, it would be because I wonder if that makes a difference when it's based on the lay of the land. Out here, Idaho, Montana, South Dakota, the range lands are flat and wide open spaces here. And the larger land allotments that you could identify actually where the Indian tribes are there.

The reason that I say that is because sometimes I wonder if the information you hear may be skewed because it's other underrepresented groups. We have lot of underrepresented groups out there that their information is getting put in to this giving us a little bit of false information whenever we're dealing specifically with Indians. And I realize there are a lot of underrepresented groups out there, a lot of minority groups. It wouldn't matter if you were to divide them by women or youth or veterans or Hispanic or whatever. There's just a lot of underrepresented groups.

We here are looking specifically at Indian tribes. So I think that some of the information you get is maybe skewed because a lot of those groups are lumped into the information. Maybe not, I may be wrong. But I think that if your information, if the state could show where it's coming from, then we'd get a better idea if it's skewed or not.

Joanne Dea: Okay.

Mary Thompson: Thank you.

Joanne Dea: And just to respond quickly, I am trying to break down information at the county level if I'm able to as well.

Mary Thompson: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Leslie?

Leslie Wheelock: Mr. Chairman, this is Leslie Wheelock. I have a question about the NASS data, whether you are using factual data or extrapolated data. Because NASS has a tendency to take the data that they get in the census and extrapolate it out and create the numbers that they report based on those extrapolations and not on the strictly factual data. If you don't know the answer to that, it's worth asking them. I can possibly help you get factual data, but it's not in USDA.

Joanne Dea: Okay, thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: I think we're done and we can go on to the next speaker. Thank you, Joanne.

Joanne Dea: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: I guess we'll see your report in March?  
Okay.

Zach Ducheneaux: Good afternoon. Am I getting in any trouble if I close this lid?

Male Voice: That's fine.

Zach Ducheneaux: All right, thank you. All right. When I visited with Dana a little bit and one of the other members asked if I would submit something in writing. So I'll get you a written summary of this report.

Good afternoon. Thank you again for having me, offering the opportunity for me to report, share stories, and get feedback from you folks on the work that the IAC's Tribal Technical Assistance Network is doing out there in the field. Sometime ago, I met with you in Washington D.C. and I mentioned that I'd get you a copy of all of our reports from inception to-date. Dana Richey did a good job of reminding me of that and making sure that I got them to you. So you guys should have got a stack of paper from us along with a couple of our digital reports that are more a success story format. And if at any point in time you have questions, interrupt me please and ask them because what you guys are wondering about is a lot more important than what I'm getting ready to tell you, even you, my friend.

All right, so it's been five years since the TA Network began. We were recently successful in negotiating an extension to the agreement to provide for another year. We hope to engage in discussions to maintain the TA Network presence out in the field for a longer period of time in the coming months. We have representation in every region except very recently we did lose both of our Alaska representatives. So Angela, we're recruiting again for your region. So if you know of anybody that's interested in doing the type of work that you've heard or seen of us doing, please.

Angela Peter: I can help you recruit that. There'll be no problem.

Zach Ducheneaux: That will be great. I don't have to wear this while I do this, sorry. So we've got representation in every region. We recently moved one of the folks from the Great Lakes Region over to the Eastern Region to provide better individual and individual tribal assistance. We'd add two folks in the Great Lakes Region, and we've had a partnership with USET to provide TA coverage in that region. They were doing a good job on a grand scale, but we felt there was a need to have more boots on the ground, if you will, because it's such a vast region. So we do have a person out there. Mary Ann, if you get a chance, we'll get together. I'll introduce you to the young

lady and she can begin to familiarize yourself with the issues that you bring forward from that region.

The highlight of our year this year was a series of regional meetings that we held in conjunction with natural resources conservation service at the national level. We were asked to solicit input on the Farm Bill changes that occurred in 2014 to the conservation programs. Since we had everybody in the room, we decided to put on some mini summits, sort of an IAC membership meeting writ small. A great turnout for most of these regions.

Every region has expressed an interest in doing that more regularly than what we've been able to do. We found it's a good way to build those networks to get the dialogue going between and amongst region because it isn't just that staff member that's putting on that regional meeting. They're bringing in the expertise that our network shares in the other regions to sort of cross-train, if you will.

Male Voice: That wasn't me, Val.

Female Voice: You didn't have to get mad, you could just leave.

Zach Ducheneaux: There continues to be a big two in our world. We work very heavily with FSA, very heavily with Natural Resources Conservation Service. And we've had real good luck with each. Some of the issues that we originally identified

with each of these entities in our reports still pop up from time to time. We still have a situation in some cases where the FSA loan officer wants to get into the management decision making of the producer. That happens so much more rarely since we've got the leadership that we've got in the FSA now. I mean, very rarely do we ever have to make a call to Jim or Connie on their loan officers needing some guidance from the D.C. level. However, it's still nice to have that relationship there.

NRCS continues to be what we feel is the poster child for USDA activity in Indian reservations. We have a very active office in South Dakota. I'm sure I've told you all this before. But the issue that we face there is, again, identified in one of our previous reports. You've got the socially-disadvantaged money or the Indian money as they call it in the states where there's no other socially-disadvantaged parties. There's a pool of money based on the amount of tribal acreage that is set aside for use on those acres. The Indian producers must choose: Do you want to apply for the general pool where there's a lot more money or the Indian pool where the money in South Dakota, for example, is 20 percent. So the choice that is forced on the producer often eliminates them from program participation because his application might have played better in the general pool.

So what we've offered for a suggested change is to have some uniformity to the way those pools are administered nationwide. Tribal producers first applied to the general pool. Any that are then unsuccessful compete amongst themselves for the Indian pool. That's something that we've recommended every year since our inception. We hope to gain some traction. We think maybe an appropriate vehicle is the Farm Bill that they're going to start discussing anytime now. If that's something that can be addressed secretarially, we'll address it over there.

I'll go through just a few of the regional highlights that we've got in our report. In the Southern Plains, which is the Eastern Oklahoma Region, we've had individual outreach to 300 people this year. That doesn't mean there were 300 people in the room. That means our guy has been out there talking to 300 individual people about real, tangible projects. We have gotten 15 applications based on those conversations for either FSA loans or conservation practices. That has been one of the toughest -- that actually isn't the Eastern Oklahoma I misspoke. The Eastern Oklahoma is Eastern Oklahoma. I get confused at times because the IAC's regions still go by the old BIA regions. But that's been our most difficult area to do outreach in this five-year period. For whatever reason, there is a very strong suspicion surrounding USDA or outright distrust of USDA. So we're slowly overcoming that barrier.

The Rocky Mountain Region, we had three successful EQIP applications for irrigation systems and a high tunnel greenhouse demonstration tour. We hope to do more of that type of agriculture because for one, not everybody can be nor does everybody want to be a rancher. And that's the prevalent agriculture sector up there in the Rocky Mountain Region.

Female Voice: Is that county? That amount of applications?

Zach Ducheneaux: In that region, we've got scores or dozens of them in the Rocky Mountain Region, but three EQIP applications for pivot irrigation systems. The number of loan applications we're turning in Montana and Rocky Mountain and the Great Plains, they're probably on the order of 60 to 70 to 80 a year. That's all the different loan products. The Western Region, we kind of like to share the unique stories. And one of our TA staff rode a horse down to the bottom of that canyon to visit the tribe that's only accessible horseback. The tribal folks were really excited about that. They said, that's the first meaningful outreach they've had in years and years.

Mark Wadsworth: Where is this?

Zach Ducheneaux: I want to say Hualapai tribe, but someone from that region could probably easily correct me.

Mark Wadsworth: It's where?

Zach Ducheneaux: In Arizona.

Mark Wadsworth: Grand Canyon?

Zach Ducheneaux: In the bottom of the Grand Canyon.

Mark Wadsworth: Grand Canyon.

Female Voice: Sarah's on the phone but she can't hear you.

Zach Ducheneaux: Okay. Good afternoon, Sarah.

Sarah Vogel: Havasupai.

Zach Ducheneaux: Havasupai. I'm sorry, yup. So on the Navajo nation, our TA staff helped a lot with the Navajo Nation's government dealing with the Gold King Mines. That was kind of the big event on Navajo for the year. Our staff member did have a small role in helping craft the letter that requested federal government assistance there.

The Eastern Oklahoma Region is really taking off. We've got a very active TA staff there. He gets a better feel for this deal every day. His original field was botany, specifically ethnobotany. So he could tell you all about your tribes' cultural vegetables that they used. You could check him out. Steven Bond is a very valuable resource to all of us. But he's getting a lot more experience and exposure in loan applications. He's doing a lot of EQIP applications. He even drove up to Cheyenne River to put the finishing touches on the Cheyenne River youth projects irrigation system that he designed for them this year.

Female Voice: What was his name?

Zach Ducheneaux: Steven Bond. The Southwest Region, our regional meeting was kind of our highlight. We had 100 producers and 14 tribal leaders attend that meeting where we talked about Farm Bill, risk management, FSA loans. I think Allan was even there, the gentleman from the FSA. So that was kind of the highlight of that region.

The Great Plains Region that I get to call home, we've got a real good staff. They're apart from me. Some might debate whether I add or detract from the staff, but I digress.

We've done over a \$1 million worth of FSA loans there this year. That adds to our total of about -- our program Y total is probably close to \$12 to \$15 million right now in loans that we have facilitated through the FSA or through private lenders or through native CDFIs. And our staff continues to build a broader-based of skills to where we see a loan application that maybe doesn't quite fit with the FSA, we can take them over there and get them with the local CDFI community development financial institution and help them get their financing there. As an aside there, in August the Intertribal Ag Council was awarded a NACOG grant to develop its own CDFI to do lending only in agriculture in Indian country nationwide. We realize that some of the gaps that we see in lending in Indian country are going to be too challenging to fill from the federal agency side. So we decided it's time to put our money where our mouth

is, and we're going to build an organization that can fit into those gaps nationwide.

Our Pacific Region TA specialist has been to every tribe in California in the last year. I don't know. If Edward was here, he'd be able to tell you what a daunting task that is. The gentleman seems to have boundless energy and a great asset to the IAC.

The Great Lakes continues to kind of be our flagship for the value-added food production and the food sovereignty initiatives. Again, another great food sovereignty summit was held there this year. That staff member in that region is actually doing a really great job of getting other resources to put alongside our TA resources to help develop those. He was successful in getting \$100,000 for the Shakopee tribe to assist in tribes' value-added producer grant applications.

Because of my involvement with the IAC and the Tribal Technical Assistance Network, I have the distinguished honor of serving on the advisory committee much like this one. It's the advisory committee on ag statistics. One of the recommendations that we did get to come out of that committee this year was to examine a linkage between census and reporting and fulfillment of those mandatory obligations and participation in farm program payments. One of the challenges that we've always had in Indian country is to get accurate numbers on those census reports. We

feel it's still under-accounted by about a half. We've got a sector of the American agriculture industry that purposely does not report because they don't feel it's anybody's damn business. That'd be you? We're going to try and tie it to your farm program payments.

Jerry McPeak: I don't use any of it.

Zach Ducheneaux: Good. Perfect, then you're not part of the problem, my friend. That's been an interesting endeavor to say the least, kind of eye-opening for what's going on in other regions of the country that don't involve Indian reservations.

Mark Wadsworth: Zach?

Zach Ducheneaux: Yes, sir.

Mark Wadsworth: On the NAS portion, we did a recommendation to the Secretary of Agriculture to look at NAS data to consider subsistence living as a part of a calculus in qualifications for tribal people especially up in Alaska. Has that been mentioned at all?

Zach Ducheneaux: That's not been mentioned in that particular venue but there are some folks from Alaska that do bring up subsistence every time. But it's not been mentioned as a recommendation from this body and reported back to us there.

Mark Wadsworth: That was one of our first recommendations we did. I don't think NAS has ever really responded back to us on that.

Zach Ducheneaux: Thank you. I would be very interested to hear if there are any questions about stories you've heard out there in the world that we may be able to add a little color to based on our experience out there working on the producer side. If there is, I'd be willing to listen. And I did get a notification about a request from the board for more participation from the IAC in these meetings. I'd gladly be at every meeting provided I can get the schedule of it sooner rather than later so that I don't have people I have to cancel on. But I'd love to be here as a resource to you all in case we have something to offer that you might not have been able to get at yourselves in the field.

Jim Radintz: Mr. Chairman?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Jim?

Jim Radintz: Yes, Zach, a couple of things. First, I want to say again that a big part of the increase that I was able to show earlier is because of the work of the IAC. And we really appreciate that. You're able to get out there and do things that we either don't have the cultural savvy or the resources to do.

Zach Ducheneaux: We're very glad to have the opportunity.

Jim Radintz: And let me just assure the council that when I get an email or a phone call from Zach or when one of my staff does, we respond as just quickly as we can. And I know we've

been able to work through some things. Maybe not all of them had the outcome we wanted, but we were able to work through and come to a conclusion. Last thing, Zach, would you maybe share with the council a little bit of the work that IAC's been doing with youth, because I know that's been a real big focus of what you've been working on this last year. We've been able to be involved in that a little bit too.

Zach Ducheneaux: Absolutely. As you know from being here, I think this is the third time you guys have met alongside of our membership meeting. We've always got a lot of kids running around here. For four years now. Four years now, it's very good, better yet.

The IAC in my estimation is probably at the forefront of putting its money where its mouth is when we talk about our youth. Now, I tease President Obama and his Generation Indigenous Initiative every chance I get about selecting all of these tribal youth to come be part of generation indigenous and then say, "Oh, by the way, get your plane ticket paid for and find a way to afford that hotel in D.C." We find a way to bring those kids here at our expense. This year, one of the outcomes of that participation is going to be every kid is going to leave here with a youth loan application ready to submit at their local office to start their ag endeavor, whether it be to get a couple of cows and partner with the parents, to build themselves

a little garden, to sell some fruit and vegetables in the local community. We even had one pair of young men that want to start a welding business to help build panels for ranchers. So we're really anxious to see the far-reaching impacts of that in ten years when all these people are adults and doing this for real, taking care of the graying of the ag sector that we're all seeing so much. We did seek -- was there a question? Yes, sir, Mr. Harrison?

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you, Gilbert from Navajo. One of the areas that I know on Navajo that we are going to be lacking and needing some assistance on has to do with the issue of writing a conservation plan for your farm or ranch. In fact, I mean to say, just recently, the BIA and the USDA have always had these requirements for a written conservation plan if you're going to have some sort of a land use permit issued by the BIA. I'm talking about trust land. Now, there's a requirement that is being pushed, but the fact is many of our people don't have the slightest idea of how to write a conservation plan. I've been asking and I've been preaching that we need training for the people at the local level, people that actually farm. How do you write a conservation plan that has meaning to you? We're saying you have to do this. You've got to have this. But it doesn't do any good just to tell people, you have to do this.

You have to make it and help them develop some of these meaningful.

I think I like to see some sort of an effort maybe through your office or somebody to say, let's provide some training for our local people. I think that's really necessary. I think [indiscernible] will tell you, the USDA has a set of requirements for a conservation plan - step-by-step. The BIA, they have a requirement also for a conservation plan. The Navajo Nation is addressing a need for a consistent conservation plan. But we have yet to come out with a standardized, simplified conservation plan. We need some help to say this is how you can do it. Here's the training. Here's the material. Either your outreach people can come out. We can help them setup meetings or something. But we're reaching out, trying to say we need some help. We're just put out there, trying to swim around with all these requirements. Thank you, Zach.

Zach Ducheneaux: Thank you, Mr. Harrison. We actually have begun the process of seeking a regional conservation partnership program grant that would allow us to help develop model land offices that would be equipped to do those type of things in-house for our reservations that need it. So we'll stay in touch on that. If we get it up and running, we'll definitely be able to provide some assistance. I got you, yeah.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Angela Peter?

Angela Peter: Yes. This is Angela from Alaska. I was just going to say that, Zach, Alaska -actually the Tyonek Tribal Conservation district - received an RSCPP and NRCS is actually going to be training. I'm going to be one of the participants that's going to be trained in conservation planning, so you might talk to NRCS too.

Zach Ducheneaux: Or you might just have Angela come visit you to help you with yours.

Angela Peter: Oh, yeah. Let's all go.

Zach Ducheneaux: One of the components of our application is to setup a boot - to borrow the vernacular of the NRCS - and have a conservation boot camp where all of our staff would come and take that same conservation planning training. But we'd open it up to tribes and their resource professionals to participate as well.

Mark Wadsworth: Mary Ann was next.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you, Zach.

Zach Ducheneaux: Yes, ma'am.

Mary Ann Thompson: I must applaud IAC's work with the youth.

Zach Ducheneaux: We're very proud to do it.

Mary Ann Thompson: I have a couple of questions though, Zach, and the IAC rep for the Eastern United States.

Zach Ducheneaux: Yes, ma'am.

Mary Ann Thompson: How is IAC recruiting for someone to serve the area?

Zach Ducheneaux: We transferred there a young lady who's got family roots over there from the Great Plains Region. So she's serving that area now.

Mary Ann Thompson: Okay, but in the past or previously -- well, okay, at least we're working on that.

Zach Ducheneaux: Yes, absolutely.

Mary Ann Thompson: In the presentation Dr. Bartuska did on research education and economics, she provided a map of the United States. And actually it's the land grant and federal, the FRTEP agents. So if you look on that map, there are only three - let me see, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 states - okay, four in 20 states. So I am very interested in getting representation on the IAC board for those states east of the Mississippi River. And yes, I realize that IAC was established and I'm looking at how many tribes you do represent. It's a great number. It's a great accomplishment. And realizing that most of these folks are ranchers and large numbers there, large land-bases and all, but I just have to speak on behalf of these other states out here that are underrepresented. Actually, I'm late for a meeting right now with Mr. Frank [indiscernible], and a couple of folks from the

southeast. I hope we'll address that issue also and bring it forward to IAC. Thank you so much.

Zach Ducheneaux: Yes, ma'am and if I may, I'll just reply to a couple of things. Mr. Frank has been very good at expressing his desire on behalf of the region to have better representation. I mean, he kept pestering us when are we going to get someone on the ground out there. We had an opportunity to graduate one of our junior TA specialists to a full pledged one based on her work. So she's over there doing that now. At the outset, we have partnered with USET thinking that we could capitalize on their networks. Their networks take them in different ways than agriculture. So there's still some value in the organizational capacity of USET. But for us to get our message out, we needed to have someone over there in person. The one last thing that I would leave you with, respectfully do not let the Secretary of Agriculture stand up here and point you to Keepseagle money when he's talking about FRTEP agents. Tell him. Fund them from your discretionary money.

Mary Ann Thompson: It should be something that the board can take under advisory consideration.

Zach Ducheneaux: Absolutely.

Mary Ann Thompson: But I do have one follow up point in our discussion and that is that the numbers that are reflected in the loan applications and the other services that USDA has,

we are a very small percentage. I would so like to see those numbers increase from those states, in Eastern Mississippi. And getting them educated and doing the outreach and getting those resources to them is key in them participating in these programs. Thank you.

Zach Ducheneaux: And I will have Leah [phonetic] get in touch with you to capitalize on the networking you've been able to do based on your participation here, so we can get the word out. Thank you, Mary.

Mark Wadsworth: Leslie?

Leslie Wheelock: Just a few things. One of the things that the Office of Tribal Relations did with yearend money last year was to setup a pilot tribal youth travel scholarship program to figure out what the program looks like that we can encourage our USDA agencies as well as outside partners to contribute to in order to fund occasional travel to this kind of a program. We did not give it to IAC because we didn't want to setup a conflict of interest and instead the Land Tenure Foundation is managing the account. Right now, we're trying to figure out what are the administrative expenses; what are the amounts that we can actually manage; how do we get the kids to participate and look back and give us information as far as what they're getting out of the programs; what can be improved and everything else. That's being worked through this year.

Hopefully, about April or May, I'm kind of hoping to have a program that I can walk around so that we can get some funding in place for the summer. We had a few scholarships that were given for IAC this year. It's a tiny amount of money that I had in order to contribute. We'll be walking that program around the department and hopefully around some of our partners to see if we can get some more traction to help get these kids. We had kids from Alaska, for goodness sake, come into Arkansas last summer. That is not a cheap trip. That's not a \$500-scholarship trip. So we're working really hard on that.

Zach, you mentioned Keepseagle and FRTEP. And I suspected that there's no Keepseagle money that could fund FRTEP but Keepseagle money, it's been suggested that it'd be used for the tribal colleges and universities. I don't think we can use Keepseagle for FRTEP. I just don't think that works.

Zach Ducheneaux: I'm just mentioning the fact that I've heard the secretary's stand at this microphone twice and say, "If I rule the world, I'd used Keepseagle for more FRTEP agents.

Leslie Wheelock: I think that that's, "If I rule the world." I don't think that's --

Zach Ducheneaux: I understand that.

Leslie Wheelock: I don't think that's a possibility but okay. I had one other point but I have since forgotten it. Oh, conservation plans, we have tribal students who go through our

colleges and universities and who get the conservation planning status but who are missing a component of it. I don't know which component that is but I think that we ought to figure out some way. I know we've got folks on Navajo because I've heard them say this. They get out there and they're missing one component, and they can't pick it up at home. And so we've got to figure out how to put that component in place so that we've got people on the ground who are thoroughly qualified to put those conservation plans together. And we'd like to help you work on that.

Zach Ducheneaux: Absolutely.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Just on that point though, is we've got to realize that with every tribal permit or cattlemen permit, every land lease that you have through the bureau, they require a conservation plan or are supposed to. I think that when we're talking about writing our own, maybe we need to get those guys in the same room at the same time so that everybody understands, this is a binding part of your lease or permit.

Zach Ducheneaux: So we can make it all inclusive and not another one that you have to do and need to do.

Mark Wadsworth: Yeah, that you have to do in addition to the other.

Gilbert Harrison: Gilbert Harrison here. I really appreciate all the efforts made in terms of getting some sort of a training and getting some handle on this conservation issue because right now, like I said, USDA, your conservation plans, and the outline of what's required is different than what the BIA says. But eventually, that can be very confusing because some of it overlaps, some of it underlaps. Then the Navajo Nation, they say this that they have authority over tribal lands, Navajo lands. Okay, so on Navajo there is a group that's trying to streamline that process. But I think it would be nice if we could all keep in touch, so we have the same set of standards. Those standards should be simple so that our native people that actually have the permits can do those conservation plans. That way, it will mean something to them, not just another piece of paperwork to be done. Thank you very much.

Mark Wadsworth: I think we're done right now.

Zach Ducheneaux: Thank you very much.

Mark Wadsworth: Do we want to --

Male Voice: I can run through mine pretty quickly.

Mark Wadsworth: Does everybody want to -- Gilbert?

Dana Richey: I was going to suggest that it's now 12:30. We're already 30 minutes behind schedule for lunch. I was going to suggest we could go to Gilbert Harrison's presentation or we

can come back in one hour and pick up the schedule from there beginning with Gilbert.

Zach Ducheneaux: Mr. Chairman, are you done with me?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, please.

Dana Richey: Yes, thank you.

Zach Ducheneaux: Thank you, folks very much for your time and keep up the good work. Thank you.

Gilbert Harrison: I think you have a number of people here that are looking forward to -- because they have schedules too. But I think they would be interested in the presentation I have because it affects some of the programs that they have.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you very much. For the council members that are here, I passed out some cups here. I want to introduce a very controversial resolution down the road and I don't want to have this cup have any influence on your vote.

Female Voice: Where?

Gilbert Harrison: No, it's fine.

Female Voice: Do you want me to hand out too?

Female Voice: No, he tells us.

Dana Richey: Gilbert, do we give your handouts out?

Gilbert Harrison: Yes, please. I want to thank the staff, the members from USDA that are still here, and also the Navajo Nation. You know I'm glad you're here because I think we have some critical issues that will be coming out of here. I just

want us to have a good conversation. Somewhere along the way on South Haven [sounds like], some of these issues resolved.

Again, thank you very much. I'll try to make this as brief and painless as possible.

First of all, I'm from Gadii'ahi. That is the Navajo name of the community that I represent. I'm also the Gadii'ahi Chapter. I'm a farm board representative from there. So I do have a close working relationship with not only with my local community but also with the farmers in my area. What is this?

[Background conversations 02:09 - 03:15]

Gilbert Harrison: Again, this is the location of Gadii'ahi. There's the four corners right there. Right here, and you'll see it. We're along the San Juan River here at Farmington, and then the irrigation system starts here. We're right here. We're the very tail end of this irrigation system. Our farm within the community, within the San Juan River, starts up here. This is the lower portion. This is at Hogback Chapter. We have a diversion here from the San Juan River and it flows right through here, through the first community, then through the Shiprock Chapter and all the way down here. You'll see here, we have a diversion here that goes across the river. We have the San Juan River here but we have a diversion here. Gadii'ahi is right down here in this area. We do have 665 acres and 49 permitted land users.

A little history about our irrigation system. The Gadii'ahi farmers constructed the Gadii'ahi Canal in 1898, and also an earthen diversion from the San Juan River using horse-drawn buckets and manual labor. People back there were willing to work using what they have. They didn't have to have modern backhoes and all of that, okay. At the same time, the farmers also cleared and prepared farm plots, again, using manual labor in the same time period. The BIA assumed ownership of Gadii'ahi Canal in the early 1900s. After most of all the work's been done, they say, okay, we're here to help. We're with the government. So they took over.

At that time then, they started constructing the Hogback Canal system in two phases. Remember, I showed you that long lake there. It's called the Hogback Chapter Canal. The Hogback Canal construction began in 1916 using again 20 horse mule teams with shovel, buckets, and manual labor. It took four years to complete six miles of the canal. Eventually that first phase was completed - 14 miles. So again, you know of this. And then the remaining 12 miles of the canal completed in 1958 by BIA. Again, like I said, the BIA came in. They were very helpful and that they did put a lot of infrastructure in.

The Hogback Irrigation Project and the Gadii'ahi Canal were transferred by the BIA to the Navajo Nation in 1962. However, no O&M - operations and maintenance fees - were included. They

say, "Here you go. You guys have it." Now, at this time, the canal has been in operation for many years, and so the irrigation system was starting to deteriorate. Now they give it to you; no money to support it. The Gadii'ahi diversion and the canal remain a separate system on its own diversion. The canal was joined to the Hogback Canal in 2000 to help with the recovery of endangered fish. The name was changed to Hogback Canal Gadii'ahi Irrigation Project.

Now, we have a small fish about that long, and that's an endangered fish. You've heard about this gold mine spill. I was hoping that, that spill would wipe out the fish and we wouldn't have to worry about it, but guess what? They were the ones who were first to survive. However, major O&M continued to plague the Gadii'ahi Canal system, hampering farming activities. Something had to be done.

So our chapter - a very small chapter - our leadership and farmers undertook a project to develop a masterplan. The masterplan was developed in 2002. The masterplan has several options addressed in that. And after consideration, it was decided the best option was to go ahead and convert this open channel to an underground pressurized system, so that's what we went with.

The goals of the masterplan - conservation of precious and limited irrigation resources. Water is very scarce here in the

Southwest. So that was one of the main things - how do you conserve that? We conserve water by elimination of water evaporation, the open canal. It gets very hot during the summer. We lose a lot of water to evaporation. Elimination of water loss is due to seepage. It's getting right into the ground. Elimination of water loss due to weeds and other vegetation. We have a tremendous amount of unwanted weeds that come up. You can see annually, there's a ditch right here. These are all the vegetation that grows.

And this is my crew. I love this crew because they just work for dump [sounds like] lunch, my wife here and my two granddaughters. I'm in charge. No, but they do help because we all pitch in.

Our operations and maintenance. What happens when you go to the underground, you eliminate annual diversion cleaning. When we were diverting water, we had to clean that out because over the winter months, you have all kinds of debris that build up. Elimination of annual ditch cleaning - you just saw the previous slide on what kind of an issue we have with cleaning. It greatly decreases O&M by the Navajo Nation Irrigation Department. Now we have a new system where we have this underground -- all you have to do is turn the water on. The maintenance required is very limited. The ease of use at turnouts for the farm irrigation. Now you don't have to fight

all of these other stuff. You just turn on the water; you're ready to go.

Now, remember what I said way back? The BIA installed this. This is one of the areas that we took out the culverts. Look at all the deterioration. Here's the main ditch here. But look at that, and that's what we were fighting. So that's why one of the things we wanted to do was eliminate that. Now, here is the Gadii'ahi system. This is the main Hogback Canal here. It goes on the north side, and here is the river. That's where you have all the little fish here. We used to have our own diversion here. So because of the endangered species, we had the first phase of the canal that came from off this ditch here, went underwater to here. Then we have phase one, phase two, phase three, and phase four, and hopefully phase five.

So that's our irrigation system. As you see the phases, some of them vary in length because that depends on how much money we can get. And here is a little bit of history on the funding sources. In the first phase to go underwater, BIA provided \$1.3 million. Keller-Bliesner, they're our engineers. From the time you got the project approved - NEPA compliance and all of that - it took four years. Phase one - 2006, the State of the New Mexico and Bureau of Reclamation provided \$394,000, and it took two years to implement. The reason that you see the two years here and three years, it takes about one year to get

your compliance done. And then it takes another year or two for the project to be completed.

Phase two - 2008 reclamation. They've provided \$220,000 another two years. So we're now moving down the line. Phase three - 2012. That's when NRCS-EQIP came on board. We had \$300,000, I'm sorry, and we had three years. It took three years. Now phase four here, again, NRCS and Navajo Nation. Now we're up to \$520,000, and it has taken four years so far. Just a little bit here and some of the things that were done. Phase zero just going across here, replace diversion with inverted siphon across the San Juan River. We had to go under the river and then there was 7,300 feet of 20-inch PVC pipe - that's a pretty big sized pipe.

The river was crossed by, achieved by open cut. They had to divert water over here, bury the pipe in one section, then switch the water back so it took out that. The large dewatering was because the water table is very low. Then you kind of start digging, water starts seeping. We had to have a highway crossing. Then we had to cross major farmlands to get the pipe under here.

Phase one - it's installed by San Juan River Dineh Water Users. Now, you'll see the name come up here, also Water Users. Now, the Navajo Nation and the local farm board and the Water Users entered into agreement. We have a tri-party agreement

which says that they are our primary contractor. It was blessed by the Navajo Nation. So you'll see them doing a lot of work.

In phase one again, state capital outlay, farming, and water reclamation funding. That's how long it was - a 24-inch underground pipe. At the end here, when we get across, we have some filters here but with the idea that we're going to clean up the water. But we removed the filters because we're taking the water right out of the ditch. And there's so much debris going down in the river. They were just clogging up the filter systems. So that's this. Right now, we're just waiting for some other work to be done before we can utilize this. We pressurize the pipeline for a minimum pressure of 40 psi. We have a pressure regulator here and so the water here, the pressure is controlled.

Now, again here is phase two here. Here is where we cross the river and there is where the filter is - the filtering station. That was the first phase. The second phase went to here. The third phase went to here. Again, you'll see some of the farms here. This was taken recently. Before that this farm was -- they were just lying idle because we could not get a reliable irrigation system.

The phase three timeline. It is here I wanted to explain some of the issues here that we ran into. It's nobody's fault. Everybody was doing the job according to regulations. But what

happens at our level - the user-end level - is it really causes a lot of heartaches.

In 2007, the Navajo Nation and USDA entered into a CCPI agreement. At that time, they identified one of the projects would be a Gadii'ahi project. Because don't forget, we had the master plan. We had all of this done, so they sit. And this here, the CCPI agreement, was for community projects. It's not individual but more like community. Applications submitted by the Navajo Nation in 2008 and the project approved for \$200,000 at that time. The Gadii'ahi undertakes NEPA requirements, one year for approvals. Remember, under this application, we have not only the project but supposedly we could have the NEPA requirements done. We could have the design done. But when we requested the USDA to do the NEPA, they said that they were short staffed. They didn't have the funds. So the Gadii'ahi Chapter had to look for funds to basically do the NEPA.

Also the Navajo Nation paid for the design. In this year, we already have one year for approvals, one year for USDA to look at and approve our design; remember, two years. Construction in January to April. We can only do construction January to April annually because the rest of the year, the rest of the summer, we have water flowing down the irrigation system so we can't disturb it. The irrigation ditch switched off. The water is back in April annually. So when we looked at what we

were given here in our contract, construction material only cost approximately \$180,000 of the \$200,000. Right there, we're already underfunded. We're already underfunded for here. We're already underfunded for the design.

Between the contract approval, design completion, final construction, the project increased approximately \$80,000. It took the chapter extended six months to find monies for cost over an incurred by delays. The important thing here is that all these delays cost us money, others money, but what the contract was signed for, that was locked in. In other words, there was no adjustment in that cost. So it was up to us to hunt for money. And like every other program, the Navajo Nation, the state, other partners, they get annual funding. So this is not like going over here and saying, I want some money. You have to wait for appropriations.

Phase three, they construct again here. Again here, you'll see some pictures as necessary. We had to bury this thing about four or five - four feet is the minimum here in some areas because the higher ground we had to go five or six feet. These are valves here. And you want a 4,000 feet, 24-inch pipe right here. Now, so we finally got phase three after all of these heartaches. So we're moving forward. Remember what I said in the CCPI? Gadii'ahi, the toll project had been included and so we go for the next phase - the phase five for a timeline.

The initial contract cost here signed under CCPI was for \$300,000. In 2009, an archaeological survey and biological survey - that was completed by the chapter. We paid for it but it was done by people that are licensed to do the archaeological and biological studies. The Navajo Nation, their department approved that biological report. That's very important, to remember that.

I think then right here - here to here - the contract ran out, the initial contract, because you had a time limit of when you're supposed to be able to construct this project because we were looking around for additional funds. In 2011, a new and updated contract signed, but guess what? It's still at \$300,000. In 2012, NRCS approves the Navajo Nation funding design. Again, we had to have it designed and it took eight months just for approval process.

When you do a project, when this part of the project is done - the design and everything is done - you have a new number of how much because of the NRCS requirement. Remember what we talked about over the design? We talked about appropriate design. That starts coming to here. In 2013, there was a fear of severe cost overrun so we had no construction then. We're seeking funding to cover the cost overrun. We reached out and we had to find other partners here. In August 2014, the Navajo Nation finally purchased material as a cost share of \$297,000.

Remember, that's what the contract says. But because of the delays and the design and what the contractors said, this is how much you've been cost, that's the materials. And so it says, it eats up most of that.

Now at that time, we found out that in 2014, there was an issue between the Navajo Nation and the BIA on NEPA compliance. Remember, the money that the Navajo Nation gave us was federal funds also. So the BIA said, okay, now we need to make sure that you have fully complied with NEPA requirements. Before, the USDA accepted the NEPA requirements that was done by the chapter. But now you have a conflict. I want you to understand, there's a memorandum of agreement between the BIA and USDA about the lead role in terms of whose NEPA requirements that they would accept. Under this one, the USDA says they were the lead role and they had already previously approved our NEPA studies. That they would basically say it complies, but the BIA says no. So we had to do some adjustments; again, delay.

A 2014 contract transfer for Gadii'ahi Chapter to Water Users due to NRCS contract requirements. The chapter does not have a DUNS or SAM's number. The CCPI contract cancel was assurance the NRCS project will be funded under the new farm bill. Again here, there's a bureaucratic issue. I keep referring to this as the "dumbs" number. You all know what a "dumbs" number is, a DUNS number. It's a federal ID tag for a

company. It's just like your social security number. A SAM's number is another requirement that says okay as they start drawing down on your contract; it's more or less an accounting tool. So you know it's necessary but our chapter does not have that and the reason being the Navajo Nation central government says that they are the only government entity within the Navajo Nation that can have a SAM's and a DUNS number. Our chapter cannot individually have one.

I don't know. So we had to basically transfer from the chapter initiative to Water Users. Remember, they're our contractors. We have an agreement that's blessed by the Navajo Nation. It says we can use them. And they have a SAM's and a DUNS number so with that, hey groovy, we'll get the project done. June 2015 and then the other thing due is that this money up here was old money and since there was a new farm bill and we hadn't gotten the construction going, we had to cancel that contract. But we are pretty much assured by NRCS that new funding may be available under the new farm bill and using these numbers here. They say, hey, no problem. Dancing in the streets, you know. In 2015, the San Juan River Water Users updated -- remember, we had a little problem over here with the NEPA. The San Juan River Dineh Water Users updated the biological survey.

Now this is the next one here, ROW - right of way. Remember this ditch was dug in 1898. It's been used all these years for the farms. And then the BIA assumed control then they gave it back to the Navajo Nation. But somewhere along the way, all of a sudden it comes up, we don't have a surveyed and a legal right-of-way easement. So now, the Navajo Nation says you've got to have that. Guess what? That's another roadblock somewhere and something, they come up, so that's another delay. We finally got a FONSI. Anybody know who Fonzie is? I think he used to be on that TV show. What's it called?

Mark Wadsworth: *Happy Days*.

Gilbert Harrison: Yeah, *Happy Days*. Now finding of no significant impact. For heaven's sake, we've used that for generations. There should be no FONSI. But there's a legal requirement we have to go through. We got the FONSI. We got a DUNS number. We got a design. The tribe has purchased materials. We're ready to go, right? The NRCS-EQIP contract terminated. The contract cancelled. No construction because again, time delay. Delayed due to delay due to delays in getting biological assessment. In other words, every requirement is now setting us back further and further. So when we fill this one out, everything else is expired. And so we thought we finally got everything done here.

December 2015, the San Juan River Dineh Water Users who have gone through all of this, their application was denied. Again, no construction. Mind you, there's always something that all of a sudden appears that will cause more delays and will cause the project to go up.

To continue the story, the project was transferred to Water Users, a nonprofit organization, to fill NRCS requirement for DUNS and SAM's number. We did that. No problem. But since it was transferred to them, they had to apply in their name for this grant; another delay. Just when we thought everything was done, at the 11th hour, the Water User was informed that they were deemed ineligible. The project is now transferred to the Navajo Nation. I'm glad we have a representative of the Navajo Nation here, Division of Natural Resources - Mr. Leo Watchman. I'd like to introduce him. He's the department director for our Department of Ag.

And so it's here. When and how the project will be implemented, we have no idea. People that have no knowledge of the project are now in charge. I take that very seriously because since 2007, we, our engineers, and others have been involved in this project. Now, it's been taken out of that and given to the Navajo Nation department. I'm hoping that they would basically work with us because we know firsthand what the problems are.

Cost increase. This is the one that's very, very important here. The initial contract for 3,000 of which 90 percent was by NRCS, 10 percent by the chapter. No problem. In 2011, again remember the whole contract expired so a new one was written \$400,000 plus the cost overrun at that time it was \$100,000 - a total of \$500,000. Now the project is creeping up. In 2013, NRCS \$400,000 plus the tribe's initial purchase of equipment here, supplies, I mean. Now you have a new total here, \$700,000. Now remember what I said. That was the Water Users who were working with that. We're fine with that. Now that project is now transferred from the Water Users to the Navajo Nation. Again, there are basically others. The contract that's being talked about the money here. With the materials on hand from 2013, we are now at \$837,000 possible cost. That's what I'm trying to point out is that, yes, everybody's doing their job. Everybody wants to follow the laws, but guess what? We are there; the project has yet to start.

I understand that the Navajo Nation and NRCS is really making an effort to get this project started this spring, but guess what? We only have one month for the nation to do this thing to get the contract awarded because it's going to take four months for the project to be done. Remember what I said, we have a very narrow window of opportunity to do this project. And if we do not do the project this spring, guess what? It

gets delayed another year. I don't know. That's what I'm saying.

The recommendations here. The initial cost estimate should be just that - an estimate here. The final contract should be all-inclusive. In other words, including the NEPA cost, the design cost, right-of-way survey cost. The final constructions are determined. NRCS should award a contract on this final amount. What I'm saying is when everything is done and all the costs are in, that's when the final cost of a project and a contract should be issued. Not based on an estimate that has been agreed to two to three years earlier. Allow ample time for all phases to be completely on the total project. All phases. What I'm talking about is allow time for the NEPA requirements, allow time for all those requirements, allow time for the design, and finally construction. Remember, the constructions can only be for four months. That's all it takes but just the delays are adding up.

Now I think under the new contract, you have up to two years from the time you're given the go ahead. But look at the time element. It just doesn't fit. Allow draw down upon the contract, upon completion of each phase of the project. In other words, if you're given this much money, you should be allowed to draw down when you do your archaeological. Take some money out of that. Pay off the bill. When your design is done,

you pay your engineers. They're done. Then when you get ready for the construction, you can go ahead and draw down the rest. We don't have that right now. The total amount under NRCS requirements is that the project has to be done, inspected, and it works right before you can get their total reimbursement. They have some frontend money but again, it's not really reflective of what we're talking about here.

This one's also important here. Closer attention to the project by NRCS requirements and advise as necessary to avoid having to go back to the drawing board time and again. What I'm talking about here is NRCS and staff know the requirements. Upfront, we should have been told about the DUNS number, upfront some of these issues so that we can deal with those upfront, not when we're way down here. That's what I'm saying. I think closer attention and the advising by NRCS to say, "Okay, do you have all of this? Do you have all of that? Do you have all of that?" Instead of just waiting until we get down here somewhere to go back and forth. I think that's a time waster, and it is really frustrating.

The USDA has had plenty of time to digest and understand that trust land projects require additional and policy changes to account for issues that have surfaced, especially the total project development time and cost. I think I know for a fact, we're trying to make changes. But all this information

basically is available, why these things happen on trust land. Under the new farm bill, there are so much estimates but yet, we still face some of these issues. So I'm just bringing these things up as recommendations. The last one here. I was getting frustrated reading all of this. Get serious about helping Native American farmers and ranchers. When you get through looking at this, you sort of say, God, what's next?

And that's just me after a day on the farm. I took my retirement fund and I got a tractor here. I got air conditioning, stereo. Why not? But I do want to know, I do wanted to point out that everybody is doing what the requirement says. But in that same breath, it does cause other problems. Those things should be really, really looked at and something serious has to be done. Now sometimes, I really wanted those. I'm getting ready to throw in the towel. Getting ready to say, what the heck, what the hell. I mean, excuse the language but that's how I feel sometime because we all know that this is a very important and very critical project. Everybody is, quote, doing what they can. But I wanted to point out here just the delays and the cost increase impacts. That's what I think, somewhere we need to address these issues. Thank you very much.

Mark Wadsworth: We'll have a really good chance with that with Barry Hamilton's presentation coming up right after. He is the NRCS National Tribal Liaison and maybe we can go more into

this at this time. But I know that there's some of the people here that really need to get something in their stomach.

Gilbert Harrison: Okay, thank you. I understand Mary's got a big suitcase here that's full of that \$800,000. Thank you very much.

Mark Wadsworth: Anyway, we got a quorum.

Female Voice: Oh, my God, come on. That's fine.

[Background conversation]

Mark Wadsworth: Are we ready, Leslie?

Leslie Wheelock: I have one [indiscernible].

Mark Wadsworth: Okay.

Female Voice: Okay, I'll cover with you.

[Background conversation]

Mark Wadsworth: All righty. I guess we'll reconvene now, and have Barry Hamilton, national tribal relations liaison officer and the tribal climate change coordinator for NRCS.

Barry Hamilton: Good afternoon everybody.

Gilbert Harrison: Hey, Barry.

Barry Hamilton: Hi, Gilbert.

[Off-topic conversation]

Barry Hamilton: Gilbert gave an awesome presentation. I really liked his presentation. He went from the highs down into the weeds and into the mud. If I was fishing for catfish, I'd go with Gilbert. He'd know how to catch them. Dana, you sent

me some questions that you want me to address. Do you want to say it?

Dana Richey: Yeah. This is Dana Richey. What Barry is referring to is among the action items that were produced in the September 2015 meeting were a number of questions from the council to NRCS. You might recall this was the presentation given by Noller Herbert. And so when we were sending out invitations to speakers, I went through the list of action items and invited NRCS to speak, in particular if they could address one or more of the action items remaining from the September meeting.

Barry Hamilton: Over lunch, after Gilbert gave his wonderful presentation, we're bouncing things back around to see how we will be able best to provide information as far as we can to the council, to have good meaningful discussion, and also maybe have some resolution. I've talked to Ms. Keisha Tatem who is the state conservationist of Arizona. She's going to come up here and she's going to present for us as far as on the questions, as also to address any other comments that were related to Mr. Gilbert's presentation. After she finish, I would just like to have five minutes just to speak to the council about climate change and some other unique things here that we were doing at headquarters, if that's okay?

Mark Wadsworth: You bet, yeah.

Barry Hamilton: Thank you, sir. Ms. Tatum.

Keisha Tatem: Mr. Chairman, should I be here or at the podium?

Mark Wadsworth: Where you like. It's either or.

[Off-topic conversation]

Keisha Tatem: Mr. Chairman, first I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. My name is Keisha Tatem, T-a-t-e-m. I'm the state conservationist for Arizona. I do have the questions that were submitted, and I'm available to also answer those. I'd hold back and address those as well but I would like to talk or speak to the specific project that Mr. Harrison presented before lunch. A couple of things that I want to kind of bring to the council's attention regarding that, and then I'll also take any questions, but I'm sure there's plenty of questions about the project.

To first understand the Gadhii'ahi project and Hogback too because they were two different projects, is that the project itself was part of what we call the CCPI, which is no longer a program - Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative. That was authorized in the previous farm bill. In the most recent farm bill, that program was pretty much eliminated and is now rolled into what you are maybe more familiar with which is RCPP - the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. Let me kind of

set the stage on that particular program. I agree with Mr. Harrison that I think the biggest issue here was communication. Communication from the very beginning as it relates to NRCS communicating with the tribe, with the BIA, with the producer, with the farm board, and with the chapter.

What you have to understand about the Navajo Nation that may be a little bit different from other tribes, because I work with 21 tribes. And so the Navajo Nation is a little bit unique from those others that we don't have as many layers of government in some of those other tribes. As it relates to Navajo Nation, there's several layers within the nation that we as an agency are learning our role as it relates to who makes what decision. That is a continuous learning process, and so we'll get to that. I agree, there definitely were some communication problems because in the very beginning the nature of CCPI, the tribe itself - the tribe's Department of Water Resources was the unit that submitted the partnership proposal for the CCPI. So the Department of Water Resources was the group that came to NRCS.

So this is before Mr. Harrison. I don't know if Mr. Harrison was involved in that, but before he even got involved, the Department of Water Resources prepared a proposal to NRCS for this program because the concept is we would do some work and you do some work. That's the concept of CCPI, just like

RCPP. We put up some money, you put up some money. In that program proposal, the tribe had committed to doing the NEPA, the engineering. All of that was part of the proposal that they've submitted to us as their contribution. And so NRCS did not budget or prepare to make those resources available because that was part of the partnership proposal that the CCPI was submitted to us. I'm not aware of Mr. Harrison -- I don't know if Mr. Harrison was aware of that or if the chapter was aware of that, or if the farm board was aware of that, because this is back to that. We definitely had at that point a communication problem.

I wasn't there but I will take it, because now the buck definitely stops with me. It doesn't matter if I was there or not; it's my responsibility. There definitely was a communication issue. I'm not sure if Mr. Harrison knew that part. The items he brought up about the NEPA process being we haven't communicated with the BIA, definitely we did not because we thought the tribe was handling that. Again, that was part of the proposal. So those issues, again, are communication issues.

Being that it was CCPI, the concept of that program is that it's kind of self-sufficient. There are some specific things that we do and that we expect you to do as it relates to that program proposal from that partner, which in this case was Water Resources that all of us may not have been aware of.

When I arrived, we were trying to put the pieces together. The project work was stalling then. This was 2011, and no work had been done on the project. For two years, nothing happened. From an NRCS perspective, we didn't understand why things weren't moving along. We did not communicate with the right entities to move it along in the way we should have.

Before, when they first started the CCPI project, SAMs and DUNS were not a requirement. It was not a requirement previously. That's something that the government has recently required within the past few years. So when the CCPI was first submitted back in 2007, we didn't have a conversation about SAMs and DUNS because we didn't require SAMs and DUNS. I think the biggest issue was that lock with the SAMs and DUNS. Again, understanding the -- and I don't want to speak for the tribe.

If you have questions about this particular piece, Ronald [phonetic] and Vangie are both here to speak on that. But the Navajo Nation has its own internal rules about how their SAMs and DUNS can be used. In order for them to be counted as a tribe - because an individual producer can always apply and participate in the program - but to get in EQIP, to get the provisions that EQIP allows to the tribe such as the AGI being waived and no payment limitations, you have to be the tribe and classified as the tribe using the tribe's SAMs and DUNS number.

And so the tribe had a requirement because they previously have problems with about 400 SAMs and DUNS numbers out there. I may be exaggerating but there was a lot of them out there across the reservation, the chapters, and probably not even entities of the government were using in the name of the tribe. They passed a rule that said the tribe now has one SAMs and DUNS number and you must come through us. That became a little bit of bureaucratic brouhaha. That's not the technical term. We kind of went back-and-forth with that.

Mr. Harrison did do his due diligence back-and-forth with the tribe to try to get that part worked out. I think the issue became, if we put it in the name of the tribe or the chapter was going to use this tribe's SAMs and DUNS number, it will funnel through the tribe. The real issue that the chapter was concerned about is that the tribe was going to charge a fee for processing that. And so the chapter didn't want to do that. If I may say, this is where we do have an issue as an agency - when we as an agency kind of get caught between the tribal government and the producer.

I know in Arizona -- let me just speak for it. In Arizona, we get caught in that quandary often because the tribe's priorities may not coincide with that of the local producer on the ground. The communication is the most critical piece. When we came on the reservation, we've been on Navajo Nation since

1980. So we have been providing services with offices on their reservation since 1980. We appeared on the reservation. The tribe knew we were there but we really didn't talk to anybody else because we just want to help. That's our culture. We just want to help.

Fast forward, we're learning that might not have been the best way we kind of went about things. We now are in communication with the right people at the table - the tribe, BIA, NRCS - to discuss how we streamline some of our processes together. I think Mr. Harrison talked about different conservation plans. BIA has a definition. We have a definition. They're not the same. We're in the process with the tribe taking the lead of coming up with what's the process for Navajo Nation. NRCS is going to -- I don't want to say tweek or tweak. What was the word that Bob used?

Jerry McPeak: I think it worked pretty good.

Keisha Tatem: I don't want to tweak the policy, but we are going to be flexible in our conservation planning process. The BIA is also looking at theirs so that they can coincide with what the tribe needs. The process did take quite a bit of time. I think there's enough blame to go around. I'll take the blame that belongs to us. The blame that doesn't belong to us, I would not take. Mr. Harrison and I have talked about that extensively.

Moving forward, we are currently with this project as a result of not just this particular issue, several issues similar to this. Since I've been in my position, we've been in communication with the tribe with, okay, these issues are coming up often. What is the problem? What are the barriers? One of the things we found out is that, particularly for Navajo Nation, when we come in and work with one person, we're not being effective. A lot of times we're working on the irrigation system for one person that's on a larger system. That larger infrastructure is not really in place. So we're now working with the tribe to back up off of the individual projects and looking at larger scale infrastructure projects. And so this year is the first year that we actually will fund from two pools - one for individuals and one for large-scale tribal projects - to address those infrastructure issues.

For Mr. Harrison, unfortunately, is frustrated I know with us again, because the change to that process, he got caught in that change, of that process to fix the bigger issues. That's why now his project is going to go to be the tribe's because now this is a large-scale, gigantic irrigation project serving an entire community. It's an infrastructure-type project so the funding pool for the individuals where if they wanted to really apply in that one, only has \$200,000 in it. Mr. Harrison's

project is \$600,000. The larger scale, the tribal projects have \$800,000 so we have to move to that structure.

In my communication with the tribe -- and I don't know if Ms. Thomas wants to speak on behalf of Ms. Becker. Ms. Bidtah Becker, who's our Division on Natural Resources director and I, are both committed to moving this forward. She's currently working actually with the council to figure out how we can come up with a better way to deal with the SAMs and DUNS. There's even been a proposal for there to be a SAMs and DUNS just for NRCS projects. There are council members that are considering that. I don't know where they are in that process and I don't want to speak for the tribe, and I know they have some meetings even scheduled this week on that. But we're both committed to, as Mr. Harrison alluded to, getting this finalized before the end of this calendar year.

On this particular project, if there are any questions, I don't want to go into every little thing that he had on there. I mean, we can if we want to. But if there's any specific questions about the project, I'm more than willing to answer them. I have a backup over here that can help me too in the back, who may be a little bit more familiar with the project.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you. Gilbert Harrison from Navajo. I wanted to vent my frustration but I also want to thank Keisha. I want to thank others for at least getting

together and start talking about the issues. That's much more important than the problem - the issues. How do we get a protocol system in place so that future projects won't suffer the same consequence? Keisha, thank you very much for your leadership in getting the people together to at least start talking. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Just an FYI too. I'm Mark Wadsworth. I'm a member of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. I'm a tribal range manager. We deal with several EQIP projects and have been successful in getting awarded. In completion, the situation with the SAMs and DUNS number, I was even in there when they had to change for that. But right now, it's kind of heartening to hear what you had to say that you were possibly going to change or let the tribe have multiple possible SAMs and DUNS.

Now, they set up that SAMs and DUNS number for an EQIP project, well, every tribal program has to use that same number and all the money that is coming from maybe that program to this program is all just going into one account, which just basically is kind of a confusion factor on ours to tell us, I need to know exactly what our reimbursement was so I can notify our financial accounting people so that we can adjust that within my budget. If you cross that road, I sure would like to see that.

Jerry McPeak: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't think that the person expressed that on the meeting, because I'm not

familiar with what he deals with and I've heard him say it before. I guess that's part of where we're headed, is that actually getting something done about it, you've made progress. Maybe someone's heard it, maybe someone's fixed it. That's good because this is not the first time we've expressed that this is a problem. So whether someone heard it and fixed it or what the situation is but continued to do it because it can come unfixed, right?

Mark Wadsworth: Also just as a side point too. We have this concern also. NEPA has been becoming a more and more important issue from the BIA, USDA, and NRCS within the last five or six years. Now it's really important that we have that documentation in place. I think one of the confusion factors too out there that I guess NRCS and BIA and the tribes need to work out is whose NEPA process is acceptable, and being able to work within those boundaries.

Keisha Tatem: I know that Ms. Vangie Curley-Thomas, she's from the tribe. She is the deputy director for Natural Resources. She can speak to your question about the SAMs and DUNS because that's something the tribe is handling, but I can also respond to your NEPA question.

[Off-topic conversation]

Vangie Curley-Thomas: Thank you. Again, I'm Vangie Curley-Thomas with the Navajo Nation Natural Resources Division.

I'm the deputy director there. The concerns, yes, it is an issue of concern regarding the SAMs and DUNS. Also as a representative from my community, we did experience the concerns that Mr. Harrison brought out regarding the SAMs and DUNS. But just for your information, it's not to say that this is the problem that will be corrected by Navajo Nation. We had to also learn. It was a major learning curve where our Navajo Nation Department of Justice actually had to get involved to help the Navajo Nation as a whole with all the financial responsibilities. Because Navajo Nation has over 300 programs and utilizing the various federal agencies, state agencies, counties, whatever they may be, there's always that need to identify the DUNS number.

What the Navajo Nation is doing, and it's going to take some time, but the Navajo Nation does recognize they want to eventually get to one reporting of the DUNS number for Navajo Nation. As Keisha brought out, we have all of these outside of the Navajo Nation government central operation. We have the communities like Mr. Harrison is representing - the Gadhii'ahi. They have community chapters that go out there and seek these contract grant funding and all. With that the DUNS numbers are also required. So when they submit their proposals, their applications, and all, they have to have that number identified.

Now Navajo is trying to get to a point where whatever project, whatever program is out there that have their own DUNS number assigned for that particular contract, they want to do the closures and all of that. Working with whatever timeline's involved with those particulars to where eventually if that particular entity is wanting to seek new funding, different funding, then they have to utilize the Navajo Nation so that Navajo will have only one.

But the concern regarding the specifics in terms of a program or a project as expressed here by the gentleman, we want to make sure that our particular project is going to be properly reported, not only in terms of the reporting requirements but financially also. That's an area because Navajo is large. That's an area that we're having discussions about as to how we're going to address that.

Beyond that, the SAMs also. Based on experience, the SAMs supposedly is something that we have to do to allow for formal acceptance of I guess progress and accomplishments as to what's happening with any particular project. You have to have that SAMs number in place to report. In my situation also, as similar to Mr. Harrison here, working with my own community with a farm project. We had to get a SAMs number identified and we were told that we shouldn't have to be paying for this. Again, because of the checks and balances and accountability, we had

our local chapter administration who fully supports our farm project. Their administrative staff went online for the SAMs. We got the instructions, the information from NRCS, the USDA helping us to go online and secure that information. But we had to pay for it. There's an annual cutoff for that. Every year we had to pay \$500. That amount is insignificant to a lot, but reality is that a small community, we have to pay for that.

Again, checks and balances is like my being the project lead for my community, I can't go in there and tell the chapter, the administration staff there, you're going to do it this way. It's kind of like they have to figure it out. It will help them know, but we had to go through that process to pay that. We had to dish out for two years, \$1,000. That took from our farm projects. That's our own internal monies that we have generated and all. We were told that time again, we should not have been paying for that. But we're already registered with this particular whatever account number and all, so we have to continue using that until our project has been completed. Thank you.

Angela Peter: Can I just respond to you? You do not have to - in my understanding and in my experience - pay for a recertification to get a SAMs number. You'll keep your SAMs number. But there is an organization called FED-something that will send you an email that says, your certification is due;

your recertification is due for \$599. I've recertified for ATCA [phonetic] every year. It's not very hard. To me, it's not worth \$599.

Keisha Tatem: As to your comment on NEPA, unfortunately what's happening across the country is, every state conservationist and every BIA regional director pretty much is working out how it needs to work at their level. And so what we're doing currently for the Navajo region is we are in communication with them. This is part of the streamlining of our conservation process between BIA and NRCS. We are developing a joint NEPA process between the BIA and NRCS, where BIA who really is the lead when it comes to NEPA on tribal lands is giving us some thresholds so that we can use our process, and then a threshold when it needs to be, because ours is a little bit more streamlined, and when a full NEPA evaluation is needed. Hopefully by this time next year, I'll have some good news to share with you as it relates to that process. If we're successful, we would definitely share it with our counterparts around the country.

Mark Wadsworth: Just a question on his project. That was basically a previous disturbed land ever since the 1900s. They had to do a FONSI. Shouldn't it just been category excluded for previous disturbed land so they don't have to go through the EPA?

Keisha Tatem: It could have been. I don't want to pass the buck. That wasn't our decision to make. It wasn't NRCS' decision to make. Once we engaged BIA, they determined that was the best way to deal with it. And so we just kind of go with that unfortunately. I don't have a better answer than that. I'm sorry.

Gilbert Harrison: Again, thank you, we're talking. Maybe it's good that this issue came to the surface with this particular project. The producers, we are frustrated and hopefully we'll like to see an irrigation system completed before we have to commit to a rest home. But what I'm saying is, I think this project has brought up a number of issues.

The other thing that I really like to have USDA address is the issue of cost estimates, because that basically really puts a hamper on many of our efforts. Again like one of my recommendations, don't sign a final contract until you know all the cost - the total cost. That way you have one contract that you work with. But right now, we are locked in at the frontend of a project. We are stuck with that number years down the road. I think that's one issue. I don't know who would be in the position to say, let's go ahead and change the policy to where we have the agreement to the final cost estimate at the end of a project.

The other thing that I would really like to see happening here is the Navajo Nation charges us something almost like 18 percent or 19 percent overhead cost to a project. Now you have not only the cost of a project but you've got to add that overhead cost for a final tally. Those are the kind of things that I think needs to really be looked at from the financial end also. The legal requirements, yes, we have hang-ups but also on the project-side, these cost overruns really cause a headache. I think there needs to be a rethinking by the USDA on how do we get a handle on that. I think that's another critical issue, Keisha, that if your office or some other office can take the lead role, and say, let's take a look at how do we decide how to do this cost thing.

Then the other thing like I said is the ability to draw down against that final contract number to do these projects, because you had to pay for many things like we said - surveys and the NEPAs. That some of this is not identified upfront, who's going to pay for it. We didn't know that and I'm just finding out that we're supposed to have done that. Those kinds of things I think we need to look at a thorough financial impact on a project before a final cost or determination is made. I think that would really help not only us but other projects. Thank you very much, Keisha.

Keisha Tatem: Mr. Harrison is correct. When you sign a contract for EQIP and let's say if you sign a contract this year with FY16, you sign a contract for the amount of funds that's in that contract for FY16. Those costs are set for the fiscal year for which you signed that contract.

What needs to happen on the communication side - what NRCS needs to do on the communication side - this may not have happened in this particular case but I'll give an example in a minute. When we're doing our conservation planning which should be happening before we go to a contract, we should be in communication with that producer with developing when he thinks he's really going to put those practices in. If he's not ready to put a practice in within the first 12 months - because there is a requirement to install a practice for the program within the first 12 months - that means that person is not ready to have a contract.

I'll give an example. On Navajo Nation we have another project. It took our planner seven years to work with that community before we were ready to go to contract. So for seven years, he worked with this community on a grazing project on just the conservation planning side, until they were ready to say, okay, we're ready to actually purchase and buy and move forward and install practices. Then he moved them to the

contracting process. And so they were able to sign a contract and move right into installing practices.

That is an area that I think that definitely NRCS we need to do a better job across Arizona. I can only speak for Arizona in this particular case. That's something we definitely need to do a better job of, because the intent of the program is not for you to get a contract and wait four years to put it in. That's why the costs are set ahead of time. You get a contract and within 12 months you should be installing the practices. I don't know if anyone knows that.

Mark Wadsworth: We sure appreciate your comments and everything. We'll move on to the climate change portion you wanted to discuss.

[Off-topic conversation]

Barry Hamilton: I'll be real brief here; briefer than Gilbert. With the climate change piece here, climate change right now as you hear in the media, you hear when you go to meetings with other USDA agencies, that's a really big buzzword, right? So I will just like to ask this council that at the next time when you guys have a meeting if you could invite us to come back and speak to you about climate change as it relates to what's taking place on our tribes nationwide. The BIA and the USDA they just put out a report on nine specific sites as far as where climate change has really been degrading the tribes in the

West. I'd like to share that with you at the next meeting if you would like.

The other thing I would like to share with you too is some proactive things as far as what NRCS is trying to do from headquarters level as far as working with your tribal colleges and your VISTA program. The tribal colleges are engaging with us, as far as assisting us, as far as with the technical, and also with some program aspects. As we work with the students, we're providing education to them. They are actually working with some of the landowners as far as providing them some technical assistance and also some outreach assistance as it relates to programs.

Now we have four tribal colleges that we're looking at as far as to be a pilot as far as here in the West. And so that will be coming out soon. I can't tell you exactly which one of those are right now but they'll be coming out soon. So if you invite us back, I'd like to bring that report back to you with my partner over there, Mr. Lawrence Shorty. When he gets his stuff here and talk, he might be able to provide you some more insight on it. But him and I we're working together with this here at headquarters and so we'd like to come back and present to you. Thank you so much.

[Off-topic conversation]

Gilbert Harrison: I think specifically in the Southwest, out here too, besides the climate change, we need to really talk about conservation of water because water is a big issue out here. I go across towards the East in this country, they have a lot of water. But out here, we are suffering. It's very difficult. I think there needs to be some discussion on conservation of water. How can we do that? Talk about sharing of water.

Just about four or five years ago, I went to Niagara. I'm not telling you why. That amount of water that goes over the fall, that's a tremendous amount of water. You come and talk about the San Juan River, it's a trickle compared to what they have. And yet we fight over that water between the states of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and California. Something has to happen. I think in addition to climate change, there needs to be some discussion about conservation of water out in our neck of the woods. Thank you very much, Barry. You have a happy holidays and you take care.

Barry Hamilton: Thank you Mr. Harrison, my good friend.

[Off-topic conversation]

Porter Holder: Thank you very much, Barry. Our next presenter will be Estelle Bowman, assistant director of Tribal Connections. Is that right?

Porter Holder: Thank you very much for the extensive work that you've done to get me the access that I wanted. I appreciate that a lot.

Mary Ann Thompson: Vice-chair?

Porter Holder: Yes, ma'am.

Mary Ann Thompson: While Estelle is getting set up, I would like to say for the record that, Gilbert, I'm glad that you kept on keeping on and getting the attention that this NRCS project made it, and identifying issues that needed to be resolved and getting to that point with the project. Good job.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you.

Porter Holder: You are resilient, Gilbert.

Leslie Wheelock: Mr. Vice-chairman?

Porter Holder: Yes, ma'am.

Leslie Wheelock: This is Leslie. For the record, we had a conversation; I do not recall whether it was on the record or off the record about our FRTEP agents and the terms of their contracts. And we ended up talking about how they have a two-year term. In fact, that was changed in 2013. They now have four-year terms and their contracts will come up for recompetete in 2017. Thank you.

### **Tribal Connections**

Estelle Bowman: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Estelle Bowman. I'm the assistant director for the Office of

Travel Relations at the Forest Service. It's good to see some of the familiar faces. I didn't meet everybody the last time. But we were in D.C. and I gave you the overview, our two-page overview of tools that the Forest Service has developed over the couple of years that I've been there. I've been there four years and we are working to do better partnerships with tribes across the country. One of the things I mentioned on that tool listing was our tribal connections mapping project that has been going on for about ten years. A very expensive endeavor, some starts and stops over the time. We finally were able, since we last met, we actually got it online and it's available to you to use. Anyone can use this tool.

One of the things that motivate us at the Forest Service is getting all 40,000 of our employees on the same page about working with tribal governments. We want to honor the tribal government-to-government relationship. We want to be more understanding and more inclusive of our tribal partners especially when we're doing work on the land in the national forest that used to belong to Indian people. So we like this quote here. Deputy Chief Leslie Weldon is very much involved in our sacred sites response. She's very much involved on the day-to-day operation for the National Forest Systems. She's the deputy director that oversees all of the 193 million acres of forested lands and grasslands.

The tool, as I mentioned, was one that we started ten years ago. It was intended to be an internal tool so that when the Forest Service staff which we get complaints from Indian country, we're constantly changing. That's the culture of the Forest Service. Every two years you move on to a new job and a new part of the country, or you get a promotion and you move from a district ranger to a forest supervisor to working in the Washington office. So we constantly are a culture where we do change out staffing every two years. That's really hard for tribes when you develop that relationship. That one-on-one with somebody on your national forest and then you're gone, and they take a wealth of knowledge.

So what we wanted to do was develop a tool that could be used internally. So anytime you came on new as a Forest Service employee, you'll be able to look at this tool and figure out which tribes used to be in that part of the country, used to have that land, may have a treaty that still requires obligations of access. So we wanted to make sure that we had a tool that was easily available for our needs. Well, it became apparent once we started talking to tribes while we would like to hear what you're telling your employees as well, we want to know that you're giving them the same information that you give us. So our agency relationship can be stronger by sharing all

this information. So we moved from being just an internal tool to being a public tool.

What the map is, is talking about these three layers where we are connected as peoples. So we're looking at what the lands are, the 193 million acres that the Forest Service is in charge of. We're looking at current federal, tribal reservation lands and allotments. We are looking at the third level of this mapping tool that we have which is based on the Royce Maps from the 1800s so putting these three levels of information together. So there's our commitment to Indian country. And we say it all the time as we go out and we really want to mean it. So hold us to it every time you have a Forest Service personnel, make sure you remind them that these are the priorities of our agency.

We talk about a 4,000-mile connection. It's a little less than 4,000. I think it's 3,796 thousand miles of land that is adjacent to tribal lands. You got a reservation up against a national forest or grasslands. So we want to be able to be better partners as we look at that connection. When we started to run out of money to put this project together, we went to our friends in the Forest Service Fire & Aviation Management. And they became a really interested partner because one of the things that happens in Indian country a lot and we've heard it time and time again is that tribal forests are better managed than the national forest. Tribal forests are more resilient to

fire. They are more resilient to insect infestation. The unfortunate part is those shared miles when a fire starts on national forest land, it doesn't know the res [sounds like] boundary and it doesn't stop. It goes on and it impacts Indian country. The same thing with infestation of any kind of disease or insect, it starts on National Forest System lands and can impact our tribal neighbors. So Fire & Aviation right away jumped in and said we need this tool to understand when fire is going to impact Indian country.

It also helps us to uphold our treaty responsibilities because a lot of the treaties, the language includes that tribes still maintain a right to hunt and gather on national forest systems lands. So we need to honor that and we want to look at where we can cooperate with tribal country, where our interests are the same in managing the resource.

So we talked a little bit about the layers, the contemporary layers, we went first, of course, to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. We asked them what does this look like? What is Indian country today? What are the reservation lands? What are the individual tribal allotments? What do those look like? And they have a GIS Board, Geospatial Information Services Board, and they pool all of their agencies together to figure this out. And so one of the best layers they said they had was the census layer. So that's the layer we've all agreed, as

federal agencies, we would use to look at contemporary tribal lands. So that's the first layer -- I mean this middle layer.

The bottom layer you see in the green is the Forest Service lands. We have that because we have to know what we manage. So we know that there's 193 million acres. That one we already had. The next one was the Indian lands and that's the one the BIA said use the census layers. Okay, we have those two. This top one is the one that's kind of the premier that we really are excited to share with you. It's the ceded lands and those are Royce Maps from the 1800s. They were original Indian lands ceded to the federal government. Royce went out as a cartographer in the late 1800s and took the treaty language and drew the maps.

They're not to scale. They're not legal. But to the best of his ability looking at what the treaty language said. This hasn't been done yet. So this is our first attempt at improving the way we do services and work with Indian country. So this is a Royce Map. It's hand drawn, so it's not legal. It's hand drawn in the 1800s. It's looking at different boundaries by state. They're on file with the Library of Congress, so what our GIS service did for the Forest Service is we took them and digitized them. So we have that as our ceded lands layer.

So you look at this and this is the language of a treaty. As you see where it says, it talks about a land place. It talks

about a lake. It talks about lands based on somebody's barn. So you're looking at things that may not exist today. So this was the best guess of what this looked like in the 1800s when he did the maps. It's important because we are in a time where we don't have a lot of resources and we need to coordinate and cooperate with one another. We all know land is important. We also know the impacts of climate change on our peoples. So we are having a similar situation as Indian country on the forest and we want to be able to be better neighbors. So this is one of the reasons why it's really important.

We want to educate our staff that tribes still have an interest in those national lands, in those national forest systems lands, forest and grasslands. We want to be able to have our staff know when an important issue, whether it's local or national comes up which tribes they should be consulting with. Which tribes still have an interest? And this is kind of important for the tribes that were removed and ended up in Indian Territory in Oklahoma today. A lot of those tribes still have interest in forests as they were being pushed out, so they still have a treaty right and a right to be heard on very contemporary issues that may impact those ancestral lands.

This is actually what it looks like. We don't have internet connectivity but you all have phones. You can look it up and it shows beautifully on the phone. When we did this

presentation at the beginning of the year in January, and Leslie can attest to this, it was really clunky. We were so excited about it. We were ready to release it. And then the GIS people from other agencies came in and they said, "No, we have a better platform for you guys. We know how to do this. This is our job. Let us show you what we can do with this tool." So it's really cool.

It shows up on your phone. You can navigate and play with it. You get lost in this. You can play with it all day and figure out where your interests are. What it shows when you pull up, it shows the boundaries. The red will show up as the 4,000 connected boundaries we have with Indian country. It will show the treaty that's on file. You can click on and find out which tribes were there, which tribes were removed, which tribes are currently there. This is the contemporary map that the census has and this one does the reservation lands and the allotted lands.

Leslie Wheelock: Estelle. Go ahead.

Angela Peter: Is there a way to -- or do I have to go online to actually see Alaska?

Estelle Bowman: Alaska will not have those. You'll have the one tribe that has reservation lands. You'll have that one, but you won't see any of the others. So one of the things that the next step we're going to do is we're sharing this with

everybody. We're not asking tribes to give us information that they don't want to share. Some tribes are very sensitive. So I think the ones that are willing to share, we're willing to take that and go a step further. We have a lot of federal agencies that are using the tool now. EPA is using it. BIA is using it. So they all want to pitch in their money and figure out where we can improve this.

Angela Peter: Since you went and segued into my question, anyway I'll just say it. So our Alaska native allotments, are they counted in any of this 567 federally-recognized tribes and 56.2 million?

Estelle Bowman: So for the contemporary if they are on the census, yes.

Angela Peter: Oh, they have to be on the census to be --

Estelle Bowman: If they are on that census layer. For that layer, you're looking right at that page that you're looking at now on the PowerPoint.

Angela Peter: Okay.

Estelle Bowman: This one, this one will show. The one that's up there on the screen, that's the census map that was given to us. That's the one they wanted us to use. What's going to change over the next ten years, things will change again. What's going to happen is, when they do this interior buy back land program as well, that's going to impact that.

Those folks are looking at this map, too. They're indicating they're going to make some changes each year as they get rid of the fractionated lands; they're going to make those improvements on this map. So we're all trying to, as federal agencies, come together. We don't want everyone to reinvent the wheel. We want everyone to start using this as best as they can. And then when we can all collectively come together to make changes, that's what we want to do.

Angela Peter: Sorry. I'm just following up here. I almost got really excited there for a minute because I was hoping that I could get the names of all of the allottees in Alaska so I could get them some information. Thank you.

Leslie Wheelock: I have a question. This is Leslie. I have a to-do on my to-do list which is to find a map that's showing all of the tribal trust lands. I think what I just heard you say is that even this map is not using tribal trust lands because everybody decided that the best map to use is the census map. The problem that we in USDA are having is within Rural Development, RUS, we have a program - Severely [sic] Underserved Trust Areas. And I have been asked whether there is a map of trust lands. And I gather the answer is no, which makes my job a whole lot easier because I would have been beaten up a ton over here to help me try to get a map of the trust

territories. But that's useful. However, isn't one of the layers still layered trust lands?

Estelle Bowman: Yes.

Leslie Wheelock: Okay, just checking.

Estelle Bowman: So this is the contemporary. It's got some of the listed lands. It got some of the trust lands. The ceded lands, also, they're not going to be the trust lands but they're going to be the lands that were tribal lands that are now under the Forest Service authorities. When we get to having this out for a little bit longer, it's only been available since the beginning of September. So once we get this out, we're going to be getting in lots and lots more comments. As you actually use it for your specific needs, definitely shoot us an email and let us know what's working for you and what's not working for you. We're getting a lot of good feedback from our federal partners or federal agencies that said, oh, we didn't even know you were doing this. I'm like we've been doing this for a while. So now that they're on board, it's a good resource for us to all use and as federal agencies come together so we don't spend the same amount of money and time developing the same product.

And any of these layers are available to you. So if you're a tribe and you're looking at forest lands and you just wanted the forest land, you can take that layer and just click up at

the top and take just that layer. If you want to look just at the Royce Maps, the ceded lands, you can just click that and that's what you'll see.

Mark Wadsworth: Mary Thompson.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you. Estelle, I like what you're doing with the maps there. I'm going to go back to one of your previous slides that says on the contemporary tribal lands, there are 567 federally-recognized tribes. And 56.2 million acres of tribal land held in trust. And then I go on look at your maps, not necessarily the ceded land layers but on your contemporary tribal lands, this is the census map.

I have a big problem with that. Because in the census, and I think this big problem kind of relates to the different programs that use census information or census data or census numbers when it comes to putting a number on Indians. The census allows you to self-identify. And I think just as a side note to self, next time I'm going to self-identify as one of those rich Indian tribes from maybe Southern California that gets 142 million per cap [sounds like], 142,000. No, that's a side note. We can strike that from the record.

Back to the point and I'm serious about this, on your contemporary tribal lands and I'm going to look at North Carolina. And in North Carolina, can you see that tiny little dot in the corner there next to Tennessee? That's the

federally-recognized Indian tribe in North Carolina. And then you look on them state and you see all that pink there, that's self-identified. And so that parcel of land there should not be counted as part of and probably is not counted as part of that 56.2 million acres of tribal land held in trust because it's not.

Estelle Bowman: No, it's not.

Mary Ann Thompson: It is not.

Estelle Bowman: No, it's not.

Mary Ann Thompson: Neither is that one of the 567 federally-recognized tribes, okay? Because of that, exactly the point that I'm making right here, I disagree with the programs using data information from the census because it is not accurate. It is skewed and the numbers are wrong. And I'll say that for the record. And that's my opinion and some of these backs it up. Thank you.

Estelle Bowman: So in response to that, I think it is very important we have Tana [phonetic] from the BIA as your new rep. I think we can work with her and get her adjusted to this. We can introduce you to our folks at BIA that are telling us this is the map to use for right now. As I said we are working with them. So as we have more conversation, that can be one that we'll make sure this is brought up as well as this is a concern.

Mary Ann Thompson: Please bring that up as a concern.

Estelle Bowman: Okay. So you see the Forest Service map. Everyone can have access to this. This has been ongoing for a long time. We update it as we transfer lands, bring back in new lands, and so we have this. It's very busy. So when you look at putting them, layering them all together, it becomes too much. So on the tool that you have, you can go in and take what you want to use and what's helpful to you as you view it.

So here are the shared boundaries as an example. This screenshot is right off of the internet connection. You see the bright orange, it sometimes shows up as red but the bright orange on this one is the shared borders. You see the green. That is the borders of the national forest lands. And then you see the lined in vertical lines - that's current reservation land, tribal land.

So when we're doing projects, if you're out in the field, you can quickly look at the section of land that you are interested in pursuing partnerships collaborations with tribes on and use this as your tool. So putting it all together, we've been talking about it independently, that's what's it's going to look like.

There's a big claim on it. It's not legal. The guy was doing it by hand-drawn maps looking at language that may have changed over time as landmarks may have changed. So this is definitely a teaching tool. It's something we were using

internally to teach our 40,000 employees, the importance of our relationship to the tribes. So again, right there, it should not be used as a legal instrument. We want to make sure that that's not what you're using it for, that you're using it for informational purposes only and seeing where you can do projects or collaborate with us.

And we took it back to the GIS folks and we said we want this; we want that. Can we afford it? And they said we can make a few tweaks on it, so we did. We'd added some different things where you don't have to see the whole world when you get on the map. It's just North America. We've done it so that's your homepage. We have a home button. We have different information in the dropdown boxes. Eventually, we're going to link it to the Library of Congress so you can go in and actually see the treaties that are being referenced.

That's what the front page looks like. You'll have to click on that you agree that you're not going to use this as a legal tool, informational purposes only. Click on that and then you go into the map. It's currently where it's located. It's on the Forest Service Office of Tribal Relations webpage. So if you're looking for it, you can just Google in Tribal Connections Forest Service and you will get that map link.

And don't get lost in it. It's really fun to use and you're like what about that tribe? I want to know what they

look like and who they partner with. I was supposed to be giving comments and feedback. I allotted myself three hours; I ended up being on there for six. I lost track of time but it's a really fun tool. Something we hope will be used appropriately for our staff, and if tribes want to use it, great, if states can use it, great. If federal agencies can start educating themselves as well, that would be even perfect. We just want people to be able to use it and not reinvent these layers because it was really expensive and it was hard to do.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Leslie.

Leslie Wheelock: This is Leslie. I just have a very quick follow on. The Royce maps are available online at the Library of Congress website. I will send the council members the link because it's a very cool tool to use for our youth who are given projects to look up their treaties and look up the lands that their tribes once lived in, and look at the number of treaties that affect the tribes throughout their histories. The maps, they're kind of cool even though they go to the notch on the tree across the river and have all kinds of really interesting descriptions in them.

But it's a great thing I think for kids especially if they're into mapping and that sort of thing, just to see what happened historically. I mean Royce went out and walked these treaty lands and surveyed in order to draw these maps. That

report was put together by the Smithsonian for Congress which is why it's in the Library of Congress. And it's just the history behind everything that went into putting that together. It's very cool. And then to bring it into the 21st century, people have been trying that for a very long time. Thank you, Estelle.

Estelle Bowman: You're welcome. Mr. Chair, thank you for inviting me back. I hope you guys get to take the tool home and use it.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you very much. It's very interesting. I have a little different question here. We've been talking about one of the issues with the forestry service in the area of leasing land from forestry service, for grazing and other purposes. And we've been talking about what we call home-based requirements and I'm not sure whether you're familiar with that or not.

But I think a couple of years ago we met in Washington, D.C. I think the forestry service at that time that they were revising their policies and regulations on this requirement for base property. And we don't know, we haven't heard or haven't gotten any written reports on where the status of that is because if you live on a trust land and you have livestock, it shuts you out. The regulation shuts you out from applying for a lease on forestry service lands. That was expressed as a concern.

We wanted to see what the forestry department was doing to update those so that they would allow Native Americans to participate in that program. If you're not familiar with it, maybe we can inquire to see what status the updated regulation is.

Estelle Bowman: So Allen Rowley is the director of Rangelands Management and Vegetation Services in the Washington office. He seats right next to me. So I know a little bit about what's going on there. They have a tribal representative that meets with my staff every quarter, Ralph Giffen. You guys saw him at the last meeting. And I think a couple of meetings before we had Ralph come to the table. Because we were really excited two years ago that we were going to get these revisions done, we did report to this council - Ralph did - that they were in the works.

Here we are four year later and they're still in the works. And we understand that there is a concern around that issue. When the revisions get published then that's when we will start accepting public comment on them. So we don't have an update. I talked to Allen. He was invited. He unfortunately could not attend, but we don't have a date for those revisions to come out.

Gilbert Harrison: Mark, thank you very much. Since the guy seats next door to you, I'd like to request maybe for our next council meeting the following information.

Estelle Bowman: Okay.

Gilbert Harrison: First one, how many total grazing leases does forestry service have right now across the country?

Estelle Bowman: Okay.

Gilbert Harrison: Okay, the total number. Second is the subset of that. How many of these grazing leases are minority renters? And another subset of that is, of all of this minority, how many leases are being afforded to Native American tribal ranchers? We're trying to get that in. And finally, has the Forestry Service, within the last five years how may leases have been cancelled because we hear it's just automatically renewed to whoever is leasing it now. Because I know you have regulations. So if you don't do this, we're going to terminate it. But has there ever been actually one or two that has been terminated for cause? So if we can get those four bits of information and have this guy report that to us, we'll really appreciate that. That gives us a foundation of some of the information we're requesting and address some of our concerns upfront. Thank you very much.

Mark, is that something that we can --?

Mark Wadsworth: Yeah. It's basically action item number 18 on our recommendation list. And we further went into recommendations 19, 20, 21, and 22. We can share those with you also.

Estelle Bowman: Okay.

Mark Wadsworth: And probably an update on that.

Gilbert Harrison: In addition to four specific, if it's updated, then I request it. Thank you.

Estelle Bowman: Mr. Chair? All right, thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: The next one's Lawrence Shorty.

Mary Ann Thompson: No, it's Caroline.

Female Voice: We have two.

Mark Wadsworth: I'm sorry. Caroline Parker. I'm sorry about that.

[Off-topic conversation]

Caroline Parker: Good afternoon. It's been a long day. There's a lot of great information. Thank you all for the opportunity to come and speak before you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not going to give you a lengthy presentation but I'm going to try to address what I think Leslie wanted me to address here.

The Office of Advocacy and Outreach primarily does a lot of coordinating for outreach functions. We're a very, very small office. But under our office, one of the things that we're most proud of is the fact that we host a partner meeting every

quarter. During that partner meeting, we invite anybody that wants to participate to be on the line. Our FSA, our NRCS, our RD, GIPSA, all of our partnering agencies at the department, bring their new programs and services that they have. And they get on the line and they explain what new opportunities that are coming up.

The other thing that we do is, as a part of registering to get on the call, we ask partners, what are your questions? What are the things you want to hear about? As they tell us the things they want to hear about, we reach out to those particular agencies, and get that person to be on the next call to respond to some of those questions.

Like for example, we had a request that we have somebody from the National Appeals staff to get on the line and tell us, how do I file an appeal or once I've got a rejection letter, how do I respond to make sure that I fall within the time constraints and that I'm responding and protecting myself appropriately? So we listen to our audience as to what types of things they want on the agenda and then we reach out to our agency partners to come and respond to those things.

One of the things that I know that you know the Office of Advocacy and Outreach does is that we administer the Section 2501 Program. We are currently working on our 2016 notification so that should be out, I'm hoping between February and April.

But for 2015, the most that I can say about the program is that there just isn't enough money. When I say there just isn't enough money, the cutoff for scoring on the applications was 93. Well, if you made a 92 that's still an A-plus. There's a chance that you didn't get funded. So with the limited funds that we receive - the \$10 million - we funded 54 projects in 34 states. So trying to make sure that is geographically dispersed and trying to make sure that we take the money as far as to get the most bang for our buck. We also funded a policy center. This go around last year, we did not fund the policy center and we used that money to make the funds go further to organizations and land-grant institutions. Do you have a question?

Leslie Wheelock: Excuse me for interrupting but for folks who don't know what the 2501 Program is. It's one of our great programs.

Jerry McPeak: That's where we set our very first meeting. I know all of you folks in Washington, D.C. know all of that and what I mean. We got a number for you.

Caroline Parker: You ask the hardest questions, so I'm going to answer anything that you want, Jerry. The Section 2501 Program is a grant program that we utilize to extend the outreach that the department does. So community-based organizations, non-profit organizations, universities - they come to the table and they put together an application to tell

us, how are you going to help small and beginning farmers in the local communities? How are you going to help individuals access USDA programs whether it's housing, whether it's business programs? How are you going to help us to make sure that people who have historically been left out of the program and have not been able to participate in the program, get an opportunity or get an equal share of USDA funds? That is what that program does. It was funded at \$20 million. In the 2014 Farm Bill, it was cut to \$10 million. It's authorized actually at \$30 million. We're hoping that 2017 or in the next farm bill that it is funded at the full level.

Leslie Wheelock: If I may?

Caroline Parker: Yes?

Leslie Wheelock: You all know some of the 2501 former recipients. They include the Intertribal Ag Council. They include Tyonek, and they include Farm to Table in New Mexico. That's working with the small minority farmers to put together food hubs. They work around the country in all different kinds of communities. I think it's one of the best programs that we have and it's a shame that it's too small, because it funds people in your communities to work with your communities and it's super. So if you ever have the chance to talk to somebody about putting more money in that package - and I don't really

care who that somebody is - but go talk to him about it because it's an important program. Thank you.

Caroline Parker: Thank you, Leslie. The other thing that we do is that we handle the Farmworker Program. The person that was running that program left and went to California and we just recently appointed a person to the Farmworker Program. And she will be getting that program stood up and doing some great and wonderful things with that program.

We also handle multiple advisory committees. The New and Beginning Farmer and Rancher Advisory Committee just submitted recommendations in May of 2015 to the secretary. Out of the New and Beginning Farmer and Rancher Advisory Committee, the Land Tenure subcommittee was stood up. That subcommittee submitted recommendations in September of 2015 to the secretary. There is a taskforce that has been created, which Dana works on, to respond to how we will implement the recommendations that were submitted to the Land Tenure subcommittee. The land tenure issues affect tribal organizations, as well as it affects everybody. So we're hoping that those recommendations get put in place and address the issues.

We just had a meeting in September of the Minority Farmers and Ranchers Advisory Committee, and recommendations have been submitted to the secretary from that advisory committee as well. We handle the Higher Education initiatives. I should also say

that we have some field-based people and those people have worked diligently assisting with the StrikeForce efforts. We handle the Higher Education initiatives, the 1890 Land-Grant Program, the Hispanic-Serving Institution Program and our 1994 Land-Grant. You're shaking your head.

Leslie Wheelock: What do those numbers mean?

Caroline Parker: Oh, thank you. I'm sorry, if you work for the government long enough it becomes alphabet soup. The 1890 Land-Grant Institutions are those 19 institutions that were granted land-grant status in 1890 so that African Americans could have an opportunity to go to college and participate and accept help in those local communities.

The HSI Universities are the Hispanic Serving Institutions. We work with those institutions on working in their local communities and also with all of the HEI Programs, making sure that we have adequate representation from those communities in USDA so that USDA looks like the face of the country. We also have the 1994 Higher Education Program which is the Native American Institutions. I'm not going to steal Lawrence's thunder; I will let him go over that program.

The other thing that I wanted to mention was that we also worked very diligently on Receipt for Service. Receipt for Service is responding to legislation and the first 2008 Farm Bill and then again in the 2014 Farm Bill, where any one that

comes in the USDA office and is asking for assistance. In 2008, it was just if they asked for a receipt they would be given a receipt. In 2014, the Farm Bill says that everybody will be given a receipt when they come in the office.

I'd like to explain the Receipt for Service Initiative, the legislation in that. It protects USDA and it protects applicants that come in for USDA services. So that it will eliminate any miscommunication about what you were coming in the office, what service you were seeking. It will also create a record to show that you came in the office and that we provided you the service that you were looking for.

I do want to mention that a lot of you have seen Kenya out visiting projects. She came out to Alaska. She's been out to Oklahoma. Lawrence has been out to a whole lot of the Native American institutions and visiting tribal land. But I went out to Arizona. In three days, if you believe it's possible, I covered 25 percent of the Navajo Nation. I worked with Mr. Walter Phelps and got to see a whole lot of the concerns and issues in Arizona. As a result of that we set up a meeting at headquarters with our Water & Waste Disposal folks, and went through a whole lot of the programs that are available to address the water and waste problems. I've made myself available that whatever additional programs he'd like to seek

out that we will certainly make the connections which is what we do - we do coordination.

With that, I also want to mention that BIA was at the table while I was there in Arizona. With that, I will turn it over to Lawrence to talk to you about the work that we do. You have a question in the 1994 Program. Yes, sir?

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you. Gilbert from Navajo. The Council here makes recommendations to the secretary. You've just mentioned your advisory council makes recommendations. What kind of coordination do you have as far as making recommendations so you don't have conflicts? The things that are coordinated, how do you do that or do you do that at all within departments before the recommendations go up? Thank you.

Caroline Parker: Well, we can always do better coordination. Leslie and I were talking about that the other day, but I have yet to see the same recommendation come from two advisory committees in that -- so the Minority Advisory Committee would definitely include all minorities, and they're focusing on minority issues. The New and Beginning Farmer Advisory Committee is focusing on new and beginning farmer issues.

Certainly they cross over but the recommendations are sent to the secretary. The recommendations are sent out to the different agencies to see how we can address those

recommendations, whether or not they can be implemented right away, whether or not they're going to take legislation to address. But the recommendations are shared. They're published, and we'd be more than happy to send copies of the recommendations that we have from the other advisory committees to this advisory committees if it would make it helpful.

Leslie Wheelock: Mr. Chairman?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes?

Leslie Wheelock: One of the things that happens in this committee is that they do raise beginning farmer and rancher issues. I think to the extent that we've got those crossed-talked. It actually supports the recommendations up to the secretary. So I think that Gilbert raised a good point. I think that that in particular, yeah, I'm raising them all the time. The secretary calls American Indians, America's first farmers, and he doesn't realize they haven't had access to their land or water for a couple of centuries, and that they are just getting started in farming especially in Alaska. And so I think to the extent that we can coordinate those, we should do that.

Caroline Parker: I'll be more than happy to do that. It has been very helpful to me hearing the concerns that have been raised here at the table for the last two days. If you've noticed I was here the whole day, because I was just trying to make sure that I picked up on the items of interest that were

coming across the room. But I'd be more than happy to provide that information. No other questions? I'll turn it over to Lawrence.

Lawrence Shorty: Hello, Mr. Chairman and council members. Thank you for allowing me to come back and present again. I think this is the third or fourth time that I've been before you - twice being in D.C. and twice being here. So I want to provide some updates on the things that we're doing at the department to help ensure that the schools with whom we work with and the communities that those schools support have access to the programs.

As Caroline had mentioned that the numbers have meaning. She'd mentioned 1890s. I'm the program director for the 1994 Program. That is a short way to describe it. In the 1994 Program, the number refers to the year that the schools got land-grant status. So this is just a refresher from the first time that I had presented. That came from legislation from '94 called the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994. One of the things that the department was required to do was to establish a memorandum of agreement that the secretary shall develop and implement a formal memorandum with the schools to establish programs, to ensure that tribally-controlled colleges and Native American communities equitably participate in the

Department of Agriculture employment programs, services, and resources.

The tribal colleges are chartered by Indian tribes and arguably they are extensions of the Indian tribes. The reason I said arguably is because they have multi-descriptions. At any moment we're talking about them as tribal institutions, Native American educational institutions, higher education institutions, land-grant institutions, and tribal colleges. Our collaborative work with the schools has sometimes reflected that quick-changing of the descriptions. Some of the schools embody their tribal college nomenclature more forcefully [sounds like] than the 1994 Land-Grant institutions.

And so our work has been two-fold - to ensure that the programs and services are available to the schools but also to help the schools develop the land-grant capacities. The work that we've been doing is we work to have agencies incorporate the schools in their plans that they were to develop. We've done presentations to civil rights records within USDA for the agencies at the civil rights group that they have, and have explicitly said that, we know that your plans include Native Americans in terms of your hiring, promotions, and practices but include with that another vein that in addition to hiring poor Native Americans or tribal or however you describe it, include one that is expressly for the 1994 Land-Grants.

The reason being is because we've worked with some agencies especially the National Resources and Environment, Mission Areas Agencies. They quickly reach what's called parity with the civilian labor force. What that has caused in some instances is that the agencies believe that little needs to be done in terms of outreach and recruitment anymore because there's already a pipeline of American Indian and Alaskan Native employees coming into the two agencies Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service, for example. What we found as we reviewed some of their activity reports is that there's been very little outreach to the 1994 Land-Grants, especially those that have a natural resource component. And so that's one of the things that we continue to work on.

I think that in time we'll be able to have agencies that are able to be comfortable with creating, you know, have some social tracks. Because, again, throughout [sounds like] the parity and many of them feel that they've been able to maximize our outreach.

One of the activities that we've been doing too through our leadership group and with the Office of Tribal Relations is to explore what the schools' specific needs are. This is knowing what the needs are, understanding what they do best. So that the department and different agencies can best respond to support what they do best, but also to support what their

specific needs are. Many of the specific needs are around facilities development because the schools are typically very small and the types of grants and loans that they may have access to, they're believed to be pretty small. Many of the school population are growing but more importantly the capacity of the schools and some of the buildings and the infrastructure at the schools are sometimes poor; not all but in some instances they are.

Also they're interested in trying to create more opportunities for internships at the schools because we're still working on our pipeline to coordinate with schools for getting more students from the schools to work in USDA agencies. As I reported last time with respect to our federal government-wide Pathways internship, agencies across the federal government are still developing their mechanisms to continue to do outreach. With that said the department has spearheaded an activity where they've been doing on-the-spot recruitment, sometimes called on-the-spot hiring where we've been working within the department but also sometimes with OPM in order to go to a site to collect resumes and do interviews and then perhaps offer jobs at some of the sites.

So we're been really pleased to partner with BIA especially for that. In Indian Health Service, we had about a hundred Pathway opportunities for USDA and its agencies, the Bureau of

Indian Affairs, and the Indian Health Services at the American Indian Higher Education Student Conference. We're doing a lot of things there. We're really pleased by that number but we still have a means for improvement because in choosing that site although the students were from tribal colleges, there was a specific opportunity for them to break away and apply for the opportunities because the students were so occupied in their competition activities for the conference.

The Department did an event at the Society for the Advancement of Chicano and Native American Students within the D.C. area. There have been some other participatory events around the country where American Indian and Alaska Native students were encouraged to apply too. This on-the-spot recruitment event has gone around the country and has been working within the land-grant system primarily in order to promote Pathways recruitment opportunities, but there's still some work to do within that area too.

What we have been doing is we've been hosting monthly calls with the land-grants to introduce Mission Areas and their human resource people to the tribal colleges, and to discuss the past opportunities that have come up through the Pathways internships so that students in the schools can be ready for the next cycle that will be coming around.

In doing that too, we've been doing some needed outreach for the schools to understand what the agencies do and what internships are available. And so we're continuing along with that. We've gotten much in the weeds with that, where we've done how to apply for the Pathways internships so that the tribal college students get a sense for how to develop an application and how to receive notifications through the USDA jobs website. So that if they're a computer science or an IT-specific person, they'll be able to receive announcements to their email addresses. We're quite pleased with that.

We've been looking at who the schools serve and the communities each of the tribal colleges serve because we're trying to work with agencies to promote Pathways internship opportunities near the schools. The idea being that first and second year students may have a reluctance to leave home. Some students don't want to leave home but if there is an internship opportunity like at a service center that is near one of the schools, if a student can compete for those that is from a tribal college. Not all students that go to tribal colleges are Indian students. That would reflect very positively on the school. We've been looking at the communities that the schools serve. We're looking at census data. Even though Ms. Mary Thompson is somewhat concerned about the census data, what the data is showing us is that -- and many of those communities that

are served by tribal colleges, as you know, are among the poorest in the country.

And so we're working to try and make an argument that if we could have some opportunities near some of the schools as one of the elements of how we do our recruitment to Indian country including American Indians in Alaska, new tribes, and people who attend tribal colleges that, you know, a dollar goes further in rural South Dakota than it will in D.C. If we're able to help develop a student in rural Oklahoma, that puts money into the local economy and that's going to have a larger impact than it would in D.C. as one element, not the sole element.

I want to make that clear because I know that the mechanism that we have is the American University. It serves a very strong purpose so this is another opportunity that we should be looking for. As Barry Hamilton had described, we've been collaborating with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to help them develop an activity with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium to focus on climate change. And as Barry said, as that gets developed and stood up, we will be back to report that to you.

Related to that, the Volunteers and Service to America projects that we've been doing in Indian country is starting to yield some pretty impressive results. We currently have six areas that are program business sites this 2017. They include

Iḷisagvik Community College in Barrow, Alaska; Leech Lake Tribal College in Cass Lake, Minnesota; United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, North Dakota; Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in Albuquerque; Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College in Hayward, Wisconsin; and the College of Menominee Nation in Keshena, Wisconsin.

So we've coordinated projects. We've created a brainchild basically to focus on land-grant development for the schools. We were able to get a partnership with the Department of Interior and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to provide dollars for those projects. But we are providing the structure to assist the schools and projects that benefit the schools as well as the community as opposed to just benefitting the community. Also it has the function to assist in the development of the schools' land-grant strategic plan. And so we're developing the tribal colleges' land-grants. We're in our third year and among the things that we've had as outcomes, over \$150,000 have been secured in grants, cash, and in-kind services by those volunteers.

We also provide an opportunity for students or the volunteers who serve as volunteers to have a non-compete opportunity for federal government positions. We have placed them. But a recent VISTA at the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, applied for and received and gotten into Rural

Development in California as a result of her prior service. So even though she wasn't American Indian herself, she worked for that tribal college that served the tribes in New Mexico. She gained a skill set based on serving rural tribal communities and the land-grant. She's now been able to take that into a federal government position. We think that's a win even though it's not an American Indian person that's doing that.

We, with the Office of Tribal Relations, we're collaborating with the First Lady's Let's Move! in Indian Country. We've begun to focus and are finally been able to have tribal colleges and their activity supporting that initiative discussed to webinars. We just had the College of Menominee Nation participate. We have a full list of executive summaries from schools that participate in the First Americans Land-grant Consortium Network annual conference that could easily fit into those initiatives. It gives those schools an opportunity to shine within this administration's activity to promote healthy lifestyles and reduce obesity. We're quite pleased with that.

That's part of also the Generation Indigenous Youth Initiative. I was on the planning committee and participated with another USDA employee to have a presentation where we taught people how to apply for Pathways opportunities. And so those students are from around the country that sought to participate in the White House initiative over the summer.

Of special note, this is going back to the VISTA discussion and to the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa College. Part of what they have to do was find funding for the schools in order to continue with the capacity building. They reported that they were able to assist in getting a - she was able to assist in that school getting a 2501 grant this past year. The skillsets of the VISTA volunteers are quite strong. We were just quite excited about what we've been able to do. With that, I'll open to questions.

Mark Wadsworth: Just a question. With tribal land-grants for the most part, most of those are two-year institutions?

Lawrence Shorty: Yes and no. For some degree programs, students must first get a two-year degree before they go on to get [audio glitch]. I have it actually listed out.

Jerry McPeak: But most of the colleges are two-year colleges, right?

Lawrence Shorty: Yeah, they have a two-year mechanism [sounds like] right, but there are -- 13 schools do have a bachelor's degree program. Half of those that have the bachelors programs, they usually have them in pairs [sounds like].

Mark Wadsworth: I guess, is there an example like for instance my degrees in the agricultural economics, agri-business, is there some sort of mechanism where a two-year

student could start their four-year agri-business degree or major? I guess all their credits would transfer to the land-grant within the state, that there's a natural flow of that education going back-and-forth.

Lawrence Shorty: Hi, this is Lawrence Shorty again. The majority of the schools we have collected data from have an articulation agreement that will enable -- with the state schools including the state land-grants. If let's say you're a student, you apply for a Pathways opportunity and let's say it's with Rural Development because they focus on business in part. If you get into the Pathways system, they could utilize their authorities to enable you to -- because they want to hire you for a degree or a position that requires a bachelor's degree. They could with their retention authorities once you're in Pathways agree to have you make that jump from a two-year program to a four-year program.

Mark Wadsworth: Well, I'll just say this out loud and maybe because I'm biased but this whole Indian country agriculture just needs a whole influx of agri-businessmen educated in that area. It's just a huge demand in need I believe but - yes, Angela.

Jerry McPeak: Let me take where you're from on that just a little bit since I was in education. I know we need not apologize but to get to where you are. If those colleges are

not accredited by an outside accrediting agency, they ought to fold up. That's pretty harsh but if they can't get that level of credibility, they just have to fold up. We had one in Oklahoma that needed to fold up. Everyone was hurraing on how right it was. I'm like, it sucks. Fold it up and it needed to fold up. So the question you're asked is if those colleges can't be accredited, large enough that you can go to Harvard, then they need to fold up. You go home.

Lawrence Shorty: Some of the agencies, especially like NRCS, they have been supportive to help schools ensure that they have the right curriculum for them to recruit students. In the past they've offered support to the schools in order to make sure that students have those basic requirements. NRCS employees currently too are working to ensure that the schools have that mechanism built up because so many of the schools have environmental science or natural resources degrees, and NRCS sees a great opportunity. And so they're working to ensure that as you've described, so to speak that that doesn't happen.

Caroline Parker: I'm thinking in response to your question, following off of what Mr. McPeak said. If that two-year college is not accredited, then to transfer their credits to a four-year institution is going to be a problem.

Lawrence Shorty: It shouldn't happen.

Mark Wadsworth: Like I said, I wanted to take that just a step further and say, okay, they could start a two-year agribusiness degree within this college. I don't think there's any college yet that I've heard of in Indian country that has this. That they would then continue if they so choose to go on to a four-year, master's and doctorate.

Caroline Parker: Most of the times, the states have a legislation that will allow land-grants to transfer to land-grants and be able to move through the system. That's what happens with the other colleges.

Mark Wadsworth: Because within my area, we're basically very STEM orientated very much into wildlife, and we're managing a lot of our treaty rights through that, through subsistence and get a hundred gathering that most of our talent seems to be going more into the biologies, the fish, as opposed to going into the ag which we have a huge demand for too. It's just our little situation.

Caroline Parker: I think Ms. Bartuska mentioned a lot of opportunities for the STEM program areas.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Angela.

Angela Peter: I don't have --

Jerry McPeak: Are you going to make it through the rest of the day?

Angela Peter: I'm going to make it through the rest of the day. I just wanted to go back and say I've been on this council for five years. Have we been here five years?

Leslie Wheelock: Yes.

Angela Peter: I don't think that there has been a single member - maybe Jerry - that has not said that we need outreach. Because to me there's a continuing theme that potential farmers and ranchers would apply for programs but they didn't know about them. I think that and I said this before that we need outreach. We need it 100 percent. The fact supports in Alaska, we wouldn't -- NRCS has given us as much as they could and OAO has stepped up and helped. That's helped us to put on a fantastic symposium. But we need more than that. I mean, you guys know what I've been saying forever. But I just want to thank you, Ms. Parker, and to let you know that if you could identify any ways to show support for getting the funding for OAO for tribes, I will get a hold of every 229 of them in Alaska.

Caroline Parker: A lot of their recommendations from the Minority Advisory Committee mirror that recommendation. We're very, very small and we try to make sure that we're not visiting the same organizations every year but I can tell you that I've already gotten ten requests. Can you come to North Carolina and help us pool together the people that we need in order to make

sure that it's an agenda that includes all USDA programs? We just don't have the people to -- and I talked to Leslie the other day. I guess we just have to coordinate better, although she's all over the place all the time.

Leslie Wheelock: There are a couple of things. One thing to answer your question directly, we have these bosses up on the Hill and they're called Congress. I think you know the names of the people that those people in Alaska could get a hold of at any point in time. Not just on this program but on the Fedepro [phonetic] program. The things that work in the lower 48, sort of, or better than they do in Alaska and how Alaska could do things better if they were just done differently, and that kind of thing. Nobody in the lower 48 is going to argue for Alaska, like Alaska's going to argue for Alaska.

Angela Peter: But they get tired of me.

Leslie Wheelock: Well, that's the purpose of getting everybody else wrapped into this.

Angela Peter: There's 229 tribes and I have travelled to ten of them. I've lived there all my life. I'm behind NEPA [phonetic] here.

Leslie Wheelock: Yes, you are. Mr. Vice-Chair, a couple of other things. Outreach, coordinating the outreach within USDA is something that I have been pounding around the department on especially recently. Barry works with IAC to put

on webinars talking about USDA programs. The 2501 Program funds people in the community to outreach on USDA programs. We have one whole staff member - when he gets his real job back and that stops being, doing two people's job - dedicated to outreach in our office and usually at least half of an intern. The USDA programs are wide, vast, and different and it's very difficult to market them, if you will. If we were a business, we'd be out of business because we don't market well.

We're going to be working on a tribal guide to the programs of USDA. We're going to slam it together and then we're going to go talk to people and ask them if it's any use at all. But I think that we have the last guide that was put together for Indian country, it was put together, I think, during a Republican administration. You know we've got programs that came out in the 2014 Farm Bill that aren't in that guide. And I think that we have a better way of focusing than the website which is a dog's breakfast from my perspective. But we do a lot of outreach. It's not coordinated as well as it could be.

The other point on tribal colleges and universities, the secretary when he visited Pine Ridge, he spent a lot of time with tribal youth both at Thunder Valley CDC and at Oglala Lakota College. The students at Oglala Lakota College whom he spoke with, there were about 15 of them, were some of the most impressive young people I have met. I think people who don't

know tribal colleges and universities imagine that you've got a bunch of 19-year olds running around the schools. In fact the oldest person who was there was 37 years old and a single father of three kids who worked a job in Rapid City, which is an hour-and-a-half commute. He came home, tucked the kids in, and then did his studies - his homework. The secretary looked at us, me, and said, if we had one of these people come into Washington on an internship, could their kids enroll in our daycare center at the Forest Service Building?

Estelle is back there shaking her head. The answer is no. If the secretary asked, my guess is the answer could be yes. But that place is oversubscribed. How do we accommodate that kind of a situation because that wasn't the only single parent in that room of 15 students? There were at least five single parents, men and women, in that group of people. I think the youngest was probably about 21 and the oldest was, as I said, 37. So there's a challenge there. If we can focus on our local state offices, picking up one intern - I mean, just one - that's a step up and that's helping the economy and that's helping the students and that's giving them some hope that they might be that one next year.

But it also pulls those people into USDA. Two of the students that met with the secretary showed up at the ACES conference at our on-site hiring event. One of them, we had two

different agencies fighting over. But they were studying, they were doing research work in soil science and water science, bison genetics. Cool stuff. Jerry has a tendency to say, the kids that are going to make it, are going to make it. We need to worry about the rest of them. A lot of these kids are going to make it, and a lot of them we need to worry about. I just wanted to thank you all for everything that you do for our kids and for our folks in our communities.

Lawrence Shorty: Lawrence Shorty again. As Leslie was mentioning the students, these were undergraduate students, first and second year students that are doing that high-level research. Completely impressive. And presenting on it.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you. I'm a [indiscernible] most of the time. I keep writing down, outreach, outreach, outreach. How many times have I said that? They'll start putting on the hash marks. I'm wondering about the land-grant our area but colleges. If you don't have a 1994 Indian land-grant college in your area but you have an 1890 land-grant college in your area that still reaches out to all minorities, right?

Caroline Parker: Absolutely, yes. They can apply for scholarship opportunities. I mean, you don't have to be black to attend those universities.

Mary Ann Thompson: I think maybe that's a misconception and I didn't know that too so it's not just outreach. It's education, education, outreach, outreach. Thank you.

Lawrence Shorty: Mr. Chairman. It's exactly like Caroline said. I have family that graduated from NC A&T 1890, and then another HBC on Hampton Institute.

Caroline Parker: I did, too.

Mary Ann Thompson: Cool.

Caroline Parker: Very last comment, unless you have any other? I didn't recall anybody from the Food and Nutrition Service speaking but one of the things that I have been promoting everywhere I go is the Summer Feeding Program, where the state - but through the Department of Agriculture - will fund the administrative cost of feeding children throughout the summer. The statistics show that students that are not in school, they don't eat a well-balanced meal. I would just like to take the opportunity to pitch that you get somebody to come and talk about the Summer Feeding Program. In fact now they are almost doing it all year round to address the nutrition issues in tribal land country. Thank you.

Jerry McPeak: That's a good program and we have a lot of [indiscernible in Oklahoma. I think we just started utilizing it. It works like a dream.

[Off-topic comments]

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Caroline Parker: Thank you.

Angela Peter: Thank you.

Male Voice: We have this you-should-retire talk about once a month. That's kind of the tenor and the --

Dana Richey: If I can interrupt, this is Dana Richey. I know. We are lacking a quorum of eight people, so what I can suggest is that we term the next discussion which will include having a March or April meeting, term the discussion as an administrative discussion --

Jerry McPeak: Porter is going to be back, isn't he?

Dana Richey: -- which does not require a quorum of eight people.

[Off-topic discussion]

Gilbert Harrison: This is Gilbert from Navajo. I'd like to go ahead and maybe adjourn the meeting but continue with the meeting on an administrative level. We can talk about some of the topics that are still needed to be discussed so I'd like to put that before the council. Thank you.

Dana Richey: Yes. Please proceed.

Mark Wadsworth: Then move to adjourn the meeting and then go to an executive session - just open. The public's still invited to be here.

Female Voice: If you want to hear us wrangle about schedules.

Mark Wadsworth: Any second? Seconded by Angela. All those in favor say aye.

Male Voices: Aye.

Mark Wadsworth: Any opposed? The motion passes, unanimous. One of the things that Sarah Vogel just did kind of discuss this out in the open, too, was she had written down two recommendations and I'll read those. This is paraphrased so bear with me a little bit. I'll try to get it correct. What she was recommending is that for the Secretary to view the FSA Farm Loan Programs that have been very beneficial on the micro level that we expanded not only from FSA but other program agencies looked at the model of a micro program possibly with the EQIP or whatever it may be but that approach, things that have been working so it's one of her first recommendations.

Also, one of the other recommendation is that if there is a foundation established with the cy pres funds through the Keepseagle settlement, the council requests that USDA funding support its programs and activities and not being reduced in light of the settlement. So those funds wouldn't be considered as a part of the funding for IE - an example the FRTEP agents or as such. In light of the reduced years of neglect that all of

our tribal members have for the past years. So those were two for approval ones. Leslie was first.

Leslie Wheelock: Just a point where the micro project philosophy request is recommendation number 6 made in May 2014. It's on the table at the back of the book. The Farm Service Agency and Rural Development are the two main lending agencies within USDA. FSA has a micro loan program, RD has one. NRCS offers the Conservation and Innovation Grant and there has been some initial action taken. On an ongoing basis, OTR discusses with agencies the need for flexibility in program requirements. However, if you want to make that a stronger direction or put some deadlines in place or whatever that, that would be fine, I think that recommendation mirrors or is very close to this one.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you. Oh, Angela Peter.

Angela Peter: This is Angela Peter from Alaska. I just wanted to echo one of the previous recommendations to make sure that I'm on the record. After Ms. Bowman's presentation and the fact that Alaska is not even on anything that has to do with anything she was talking about, I would like to express the critical need for Alaska to be included in the next ag census. It's like we're not even part of the United States. Oh, one more thing. This is just an admin thing. Me and Mark were talking a little bit about this, and maybe if the recommendations could be introduced earlier in the agenda, and

then they could be addressed or at least ponder what it is throughout the two or three days we're here, we could think about them a little bit more or whatever. And then after farther down the agenda, we could finalize or pass them. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Jerry McPeak.

Jerry McPeak: I totally agree. In fact, that's on my list as well. We have talked several times about people talking to us or at us. I have faith in the people here in Washington D.C., honestly, whether I sound like it or not. I think they're good folks trying to do what they can. And so I'm not concerned about their knowledge. I'm concerned about their academic knowledge or their knowledge; I'm concerned about that they don't know what's actually happening out there. I would like to, we set up our meetings early the first day. Give us time, and I mean time, for us to kick around some of the things that are already on our minds before we got there. Some things that we've run into that there are problems already, like Gilbert's thing, and have it early enough. If we're going to be short, let's be shorter then. Then the downside of that is I know you invite these people in to talk. They spend a lot of money to get here. The upside of it is, again, I have faith in Jim. I have faith in the folks that work, I mean that can provide. I don't think they're out there trying to beat us up as we found

out early. The Keepseagle Settlement, as Jim has pointed out, may have changed the culture. But we need to have more time to say about the things that are really happening out there and that are working on. Again, I might have several times just say this but have it earlier. More time for discussion, more time for asking question, have it in the very first part of the agenda that we have. We may come with question but have that in the very, very first part of the agenda.

Mark Wadsworth: Gilbert.

Gilbert Harrison: Mark, this is Gilbert from Navajo. I agree with what Jerry said and what Angela said. I think maybe the way to do it is you have two days of meetings. Maybe one day ought to be basically set up for our business, and then another day can be for presentations because it gives equal opportunity. Right now, we know we have some important things to discuss and many of our members have already left. Maybe we ought to talk about our stuff the first day. The second day can be basically earmarked towards reports. Maybe that might work. I don't know. Thank you.

Leslie Wheelock: Other comments? I would love to hear other comments on that. I'm sorry. Leslie.

Mark Wadsworth: Go ahead, Leslie.

Leslie Wheelock: This is Leslie. This is your meeting and yesterday, we dismissed early. I think we were all kind of

tired as we are now, but the fact that we were all here yesterday to be dismissed early, I think says something about the possibility of structuring the sessions differently and focusing on ourselves first day. We -- Derrick spoke about what's happening there. You spoke about what's happening in Navaho. We've got a little bit from Angela about Alaska. We've got something from Mary. I don't think we got anything from Oklahoma that was worthwhile anyway. I don't know, about Porter, nothing, nothing. We didn't hear from you this time. You got all your questions answered. I think that if we focus on getting some information out of Indian country so that we could make recommendations from Indian country, we might do a little bit better. Also, I think we've got a challenge going on here with OAO on how to get those recommendations to the secretary faster than their committees can. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes Jerry.

Jerry McPeak: Continuing on that line, that's exactly what we picked up yesterday. I'll be candid with you. I know that you folks have taken the time to make the presentations, but we'd like to ask you questions and I would suggest that those folks do not come here with such, perhaps extensive discussions like we had some folks. Like if you answer questions, it's going to be yes or no. Yes-or-no really works really well and you don't need 30 minutes of explanation. I don't know how you

shut someone down from that but if we could just ask the questions and let you answer those. If you don't know, that's even more important as well. I don't know. That's great. The fact that you don't know, is a point that we should've asked that question. That's great because I know you want to fix it. You just haven't got to it yet.

Mark Wadsworth: Porter.

Porter Holder: Leslie, the one thing that I did -- of course, you all know me. I know cattle, grass, if you get past that. I'm sitting here in this chair, listening to everybody, wondering what the hell you're all talking about. So the one thing that you did get from me that I haven't quite figured out how to put it into a recommendation yet, was the part about when I was speaking to Jim about the youth - the 18 to 21 having the three years of records of in the business. It's hard out there and it's not a perfect world, and I agree with Jerry. You people from D.C., you all get it, you all get it, and I really appreciate that. There is a bit of a disconnect, I don't know, at the ground level, if it's because your staff out there in the county offices are so scared of you that they are strictly by the book which is I understand, they got rules and regulations. But there are unique situations out there and it's hard for a kid.

I know once you turn 18, you're not a kid but you're not supposed to be. But it's hard for them to produce three years of records. When we've been incubating along, and it's like Jerry said, "Maybe my daughter's at home tending my stuff. Maybe I should pay her for income tax purposes." We don't do that. That to me is something that is a little stiff there - the three years, to come up with three years. A kid at 19 years old to come up with three years of records stating that he's been in the business, to me, that's a little stiff. The kid I'm talking about in particular, he's got 20 head of cattle put together. Well, they didn't fall out of the skies. He's been working on this for several years. To me, that ought to be some proof saying, "Okay. He's been in this. He knows what he's doing."

I know the language has been changed in some you say but that's the only thing. That's what I brought to the table this time. To me, that's a little stiff because the way we do it, that's how it was done and it's yet to be seen if I'm going to succeed but so far we got along all right. But that is the one thing that I come with today is that's a little stiff in place. I haven't quite figured out how I want to put that into recommendation, or even if it needs to be. But that's what I bring to the table today.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you, Porter. And you did. I apologize for kind of pretending to overlook that. One of the things that I think however from that, is that there's a big focus in USDA right now on beginning farmers and ranchers. If we don't catch our kids when we can catch our kids, then if there is a holdup - and Jim will do this better than I will - but if there's something that we can find that allows us to look at this with some flexibility. This is not just a tribal issue. This is a family ranch, a family farm issue. These kids have been out there working. They have been given some kind of a responsibility by their parents and they've been doing it since they were five. They're not going to have the records. Having a parent sign off on something and say, "Johnny's been doing this since he was five," probably isn't going to be enough. How do we figure out what the right balance is? You took the microphone next so I'm going to let you go.

Jim Radintz: Yeah. Thanks. I think I explained before, this particular issue of yours, Porter, is one of those where we don't have the flexibility we'd like to have because of the statute. But I remain convinced that at least in the situation that you and I discussed, I think there are ways to deal with that. And I think we actually have some directives out there - at least one directive - that I can point to that supports that position. That said, that is one of the challenges that as we

manage programs in Washington. To be honest, a lot of the laws that we have to deal with are written by a bunch of 20-somethings that are fresh out of college and think they know better than everybody else. They're working on Capitol Hill and that's just kind of magnifies that. That's off the record but that's --

Leslie Wheelock: No, it's not.

Jim Radintz: But that's kind of the way the world works up there. We do struggle with that and we work. Obviously, we're prohibited from lobbying but we do try to educate the folks up on the Hill as to where roadblocks and barriers are. We did have some success in the last Farm Bill in showing them where maybe some changes would be productive. We'll continue to do that. So I don't disagree that there are some barriers there and I think Leslie's exactly right. The focus is on beginning farmers and this is larger than just a Native American farming and ranching issue. It's a beginning farmer issue. I also have -- I'll give you this before I leave. I got our state office information that I want to give you and get you to talk with them, too, because they have immediate control now.

I'll just say one other thing that we work on and that we've talked about some of the staffing issues that we have in FSA and farm loans and really the agency as a whole but I always work to try to get our folks into doing more kind of analytical

thinking. Sometimes they get so used to following the rules, they just want to use it like a cookbook. I tell them, we pay you to think and if I didn't want you to think, I could probably program a computer to do this and I can't, so that means I need you to think. I don't know that they're really afraid. They always talk about being afraid but try to fire somebody, it's a real challenge. So it kind of cuts both ways there but anyway, we'll continue to work on that.

Porter Holder: Okay. I appreciate that, Jim. And I've made the statement before, it's no longer about me. In fact, it's no longer about everybody on this table. It's about the youth in my book. I want these kids to be educated well enough to take care of me when I get old. Somebody's going to have to.

Jim Radintz: So there is an ulterior motive there.

Porter Holder: This is an ulterior motive. Thank you very much though, Jim. I appreciate it. Leslie you take it.

Gilbert Harrison: Mark, can I call on the council here? Let's get a consensus about the structure of our meeting. We normally have two-day meetings. There have been some recommendations. Normally, the first day we have most of the council members here is that do we want to basically talk about council issues and some of the other things that we need to address? And then maybe structure a second day for presentation and other things that are important but informational type.

Let's get some consensus so we can move forward because I've got a couple of recommendations I need to lay before you guys here. One thing at a time, I'm at a point where I can only think on one thing.

Mark Wadsworth: You know, and I'll be just honest with you too, is that we scheduled a lot of time when John Lowrey was here for working sessions also during that scheduling period. It's just a matter of -- I don't see any problem with us having time at the beginning and having time at the end. Is that the consensus that you want from us right now?

Gilbert Harrison: So we agree on it before we leave.

Leslie Wheelock: Yeah. This is Leslie. We did that because the council asked for it.

Jerry McPeak: I think we've tried to do this before. We've made this suggestion before and we've had one or two where we did that. We did better at it. I felt like we relapsed this time from my standpoint.

Angela Peter: I'm just talking from council. We always take care of the action items right away. That way you have your quorum but then that would mean that we'd all have to get the recommendations early and everything. So I don't know. But I would just want to give my two cents on that. But I'm all for having at least know the recommendations ahead of time and then

I could take these two days to really digest them instead of having it one hour.

Mark Wadsworth: And it needs to be said that Mary Thompson is here so we have a quorum again.

Jerry McPeak: Following that thought up, Mr. Chairman, that's actually something I wrote down. We've got to tell the Office of Tribal Relations who we need to talk to and what we want to talk about. It falls back on us to tell someone that these things are bothering us ahead of time so that if they need to have someone there, that's again self-responsibility for telling someone that this is something that's bothering us because most of this stuff is not new to us.

So two other things while I have the floor. One is I'm the Caucus Chairman in Oklahoma, so I have to run their meetings. One thing that bothers me is folks that are flipping, doing this and leaving the meeting all the time and I was leaving the meeting all the time. I apologize. So with that, I'll give you an explanation. There was a school in my area that's predominantly was 90 percent Indian, 85 percent Creek Indian. If we don't find some way, the states going to shut that thing down at the end of December when these kids start at December 18th so it's just an excuse, I guess. But I work with the state Department of Education and the Governor's Office trying to find a way. We can't win it. I've got to win it politically. I

can't win it logically because we screwed up. I apologize for being gone.

FYI, the Chickasaw Nation in Oklahoma is one of the most successful tribes in the United States. Governor Anoatubby is their leader. This is the state where the Governor Anoatubby made. I'm just giving this for information. I'll bet you Porter's heard it. The Governor Anoatubby says, we're going to have a drop on revenue. He is leading the entire tribe to rely less on federal help all the time. He looks at businesses now to where they can be self-sustaining as a business. Now, all of us had different tribes or further along on that scale than others, and is it that everyone should be on the same one. He, as well as the Choctaws, are pretty much subscribing to that and we were. We've changed legislation. I'm not sure we've been having it. But that's unique concept. That's a unique thought but in reality folks, Obama's been the best president we've had in 100 years for Indians, the best in a century at least. Regardless of who comes in next, they won't be that good. In another instance, they could be downright horrible.

Every bunch of successful tribes that's where they're heading, is trying to -- but again, we have evolved. Those tribes have evolved quite a way so they can do that. Like my governor's office, again, it's a Republican governor's office. You get along with them really well. When they make compacts

with us, they'll look at me and say, "Jerry, your tribe done pretty good. We're not going to give you as good a deal as this smaller, weaker tribe over here." And he does it and I'm okay with that because he's trying to be fair and let that smaller weaker tribe grow where they can sustain themselves. But that's what I think things are headed. I agree with Governor Anoatubby. I think we're going to have less federal help, so I just think that's where things are headed.

Gilbert Harrison: Mark, I know time is moving. I'd like to make two recommendations here before the council here. One is I like to really ask the secretary to ask NRCS to analyze or review the thing I presented here by my presentation on a project cost. I told you we get stuck with the money upfront and we're stuck with that even though there are price increases. I think there ought to be some method of adjustment of those costs. I think that would make it a lot easier. Otherwise, we've experienced a lot of problems trying to find monies to cover the cost overrun.

Jerry McPeak: Like a test [sounds like] for inflation?

Gilbert Harrison: I think that's something that we'd like to ask maybe through the secretary to have NRCS review their procedures on how they set a price on a project.

The other one that I like to recommend for our group here is to ask the Secretary, again to ask NRCS-EQIP program to

provide a methodology where when somebody gets a contract, they can draw down against that contract as we go along. They get your NIPA done. NIPAs are \$10,000 to \$15,000 a piece, depending, when you get that done, NRCS should be paying for it if there are right of ways or whatever. The next one is the design that could come up to pretty much 20 percent of a cost of a project. The designers are going to want their money right away upfront. They can't wait until the end of the project.

Then the third one should be basically drawdown against this when your construction project starts because on many of our trust tribal properties or tribal lands, we have a law that says they give preference to minority and Native American contractors. A lot of them don't have the ability upfront to be able to finance a complete construction project. So if they could have those kinds of flexibilities provided, I think it will really be helpful. I know that other federal agencies provide that kind of flexibility within their contract and payment schedules. And so I think we ought to ask at least to take a look at it. I don't think it's a statute. I think it's more of a policy-type of a requirement so maybe there can be adjustments made, particularly for projects that are on trust lands. To me, those are two key issues. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: I'm just going to say what my experience with just everything that you just talked about. When we

applied for projects on our land through EQIP or whatever it may be, is that USDA does have technical assistance to do your NIPA for you. They also have the in-staff designers and people within USDA that design the project to their specifications. Also, there is the ability currently within EQIP to request 25 percent of your EQIP upfront as a part of your payment to get started. Also furtherly, you can structure your EQIP projects into different phases. So if you've accomplished phase one, you're paid for phase one's cost. I'm just telling you this. This is what I've experienced with what I worked with. Maybe it is, Gilbert, that the Navajo Nation does not recognize NRCS' technical assistance with NIPA or they do not recognize the engineers within NRCS. You know, it just amazes me that you have to go out and get independent contracts for something that is to be provided by USDA.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you, Mark. When we first started this project, NRCS said they could provide technical assistance to do NIPA and the design. When we actually came down, and so okay, let's start the NIPA process. First thing was we don't have the staff, we don't have the funding. So now, you need to get somebody. We can reimburse to later on. I mean, that's the financial burden that's placed upon the producer. Whereas, like you say in your area, maybe they have enough staff; maybe, they have enough people. And again, the other thing too is you don't

get reimbursed until the project's completed. If that takes two years, there's two years of money that somebody has to foot the bill.

Now, I agree with you, Mark. Some areas you have relationships and things that make it happen like drawdowns. But if they can do it in your neck of the woods, why can't Arizona do that? I think there needs to be some consistency. Maybe that's why I say, maybe the secretary should have his staff look at that and come out and say, okay, this is workable. It's worked in Montana; maybe, let's do it over here in Idaho. Because upfront, yes, NRCS has said, that's all part of the contract. We'll take care of this and we'll do this. But on Navajo, our state is the size of West Virginia, and we have only one technical office in Flagstaff of the nation that provides technical assistance. Our designers and our people that review the designs are in Phoenix, eight hours away. So do you see what I'm saying? All we should ask is the secretary to say let's be consistent on how we create our producers. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: And I'll tell you this, too, just for the record too. In no way am I justifying what have happened or occurred with the Navajo Nation. I'm trying to understand that here as I'm sitting here talking with you also. But the thing that I was unaware of that, actually, your projects worked under the EQIP umbrella. They were first under a CCPI and I don't

know what the exact requirements of that program may have been. Maybe it was required that you had to do your NIPA or whatever. But then when it's changed to the current new program, the RCCP or whatever the heck was. That's the first time I've heard that one. Maybe it's different from what EQIP is. So I can only talk with my experience with EQIP.

Gilbert Harrison: Okay, well, I agree. We just need to have the secretary or his staff, people that work in this, review their policies, make sure that it's applied equally across all service areas. Thank you very much.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Mary.

Mary Ann Thompson: Thank you and I do apologize for losing that quorum. The Southeastern Caucus had a meeting at 4:00. During break, I slipped up there at 4:30 and I meant to get right back. As far as recommendations, and I'm not sure how to word this, but if there were some little factsheets that could be sent out or distributed with any changes or to any of the programs that makes utilizing the programs and other resources a little bit less complicated. That those changes being forwarded out across Indian country I guess. There were several of them that were discussed here today, and these little changes here and there, and little amendments, or a few new programs have come up.

As I was in the caucus over here for the Southeast, they were talking about a couple of things that maybe they just haven't got the information on as far as the changes to some of these grants and grants for the establishment of CDFIs to lend money. During your presentation, I had written some of these things down. So that group didn't know about it and they are right here at IAC or maybe it was just a misunderstanding of the information that was given. But if there were some factsheets that could be distributed and circulated, I think that would help a lot of these folks. If there are no factsheets then I would make a recommendation that the changes be noted and distributed.

Mark Wadsworth: We were also talking here, too, if we would like some time to draft your recommendations after this meeting and submit them. And then we maybe possibly have a quick phone call on them or core comments to the new recommendations. Then we could get those out within a couple of weeks. That was kind of discussed but I just want to know how you guys feel about that?

Jerry McPeak: Along those lines, I'd like to suggest since we do have so many absent that we formulate what we would like to have as recommendations. There are some things that I have left that I sure want to mention but I can just as well put them in an email to everyone. There are some things that perhaps I'd

like to have as recommendations. But I hate to see so few of us act on things we call recommendations when I'd rather see them all.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Gilbert?

Gilbert Harrison: Mark, I think that's a good idea. We ought to have some time to submit all our probable or recommended recommendation to Leslie and then we can distribute it and have a conference call and go over each one and maybe do that that way. Thank you.

Mary Ann Thompson: Mr. Chairman?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, ma'am.

Mary Ann Thompson: I would be in agreement. At this point in the day, my brain cells are a bit fried too. I'm going to have to go stop thinking, and stop talking. And I'll probably be better off for a bit.

Jerry McPeak: A cold Margarita.

Mary Ann Thompson: Oh, thank you. But actually of all the information and there's so much that we absorb in these two days that maybe on the trip home because I've got eight hours flight time, I have time to think about this and can better write down or say what I mean. Thank you.

Jerry McPeak: I'll agree with that.

Leslie Wheelock: Well, I don't have a problem with getting folks on the phone. However, I just wanted to say, we had a bit

of a trouble getting people on the phone to talk over the issues that Porter had raised earlier with Dr. Clifford [phonetic]. So I don't know if we can kind of figure out a general time that make sense that we can focus on rather than sending out an email that says, okay, when do you all want to talk because you all are working really hard. Some of you do not work near a phone or you get to a phone in the morning and you get to a phone at night, and how do we do that?

Jerry McPeak: It's about [indiscernible] if he knows he's got to get on the phone at 1:00, he'll get there.

Mark Wadsworth: Angela?

Jerry McPeak: I'll give you my word he'll get there.

Angela Peter: I totally agree. I mean the timing difference, Dana I think can attest to that. She called me at - what - 6:00 in the morning. And then we're having a hard time with the committee even. We're so busy and everything. Is there a way we can have an email confirmation? Like this is from me, I agree with this.

Gilbert Harrison: Yes, float some days.

Angela Peter: I don't know. I'm just trying to fit them.

Jerry McPeak: Three o'clock Washington D.C. time is what time [indiscernible], 3:00 being?

Female Voice: Eleven.

Angela Peter: Four hours back.

Jerry McPeak: Is that all?

Female Voice: Yeah.

Angela Peter: Is that all?

Jerry McPeak: Honey, we're --

Porter Holder: Three o'clock will be 11:00 our time right here, right?

Angela Peter: Three o'clock?

Porter Holder: No, 3:00 in D.C. will be 11:00 AM in your [indiscernible].

[Off-topic discussion]

Mark Wadsworth: Leslie, we had our previous recommendations, is it all right if we just circulate that with all the council?

Leslie Wheelock: I think that's fine but I think that we need to do that expeditiously.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay.

Leslie Wheelock: I don't know where those are right now. They were edited because we had left one off of the list. And so when we're putting reports together, we included it on the list. If it's in my inbox, then it's in my inbox. But I think that if you want that circulated, we ought to take care of that next week.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay.

Male Voice: Are we going to add the recommendations that we think we want to take on now?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, you can just add to these ones or go from there if you want to add or edit also. It sounds good. We'll get those out. Everybody has to respond by the 18th. We want that quick or we're into Christmas.

Leslie Wheelock: Yeah.

Mark Wadsworth: Oh, we want it quick. We want to speed this process that's --

Angela Peter: Well, set a date then.

Mark Wadsworth: The 17th.

Angela Peter: Oh, I'm sorry. Okay, let me put in my phone. [Cross-talking/off topic conversation]

Mark Wadsworth: The 18th is a Friday.

Angela Peter: So 17th --

Mark Wadsworth: It's my birthday. I know this.

Angela Peter: What time? What time?

Leslie Wheelock: The close of business, the close of business on the 17th to have a call, are we having a call or we just get the stuff in?

Mark Wadsworth: To have our written recommendations into addition because we'll send these out, we probably could have those out by Friday.

Gilbert Harrison: Let's do December 17th?

Female Voice: December 17th.

Female Voice: One week later.

Angela Peter: One week.

Dana Richey: Yes. If you get it to me on the 17th, I can compile all the edits and return it to you on the 18th of December.

Jerry McPeak: And then we're going to look at whether we're going to approve them out, right?

Dana Richey: Right. I'll compile them. I will then circulate them back and ask for any additional comments, questions, edits among the entire group.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Jerry?

Jerry McPeak: Mr. Chairman, I imagine. There's others sitting around the table that are like myself. I have some comments that I think are important. I have some questions. I don't want to make them recommendations, but there are things I'd like to have answers too and also some observations. Would you like us to put those on a separate box? How would you like to handle that?

Mark Wadsworth: Just as long as you separate them, that would be fine on whatever format.

Leslie Wheelock: What do we do it for the next 25 minutes?

Mark Wadsworth: I guess we need to talk about the next meeting or something to that effect.

Leslie Wheelock: Okay, I just want to make sure that we're not blocking conversation when we're out here.

Mark Wadsworth: No.

Gilbert Harrison: Mark, again, that's what they had here. Next meeting, a face-to-face meeting, I think we ought to have it in March before our term ends. Maybe Mark, you can think about sponsoring this in your neck of the woods somewhere, sometime in March. That's one. The other thing I'd like to request here. I'd like to request Tana with the BIA, maybe at the next meeting we should ask the Secretary for Indian Affairs to come and at least sit down with us because many of the issues that we face are critical. You know this, BIA, things. We need to at least have a good heart-to-heart discussion with him on what are some of the things that we're facing. So those two, I'd like to put on the table for the council. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Yeah. And for clarification too, there was talk about possibly having it in North Carolina in the early spring. I know if we try to do it in my area, we're going to be, iffy-iffy, the weather is good because I'd like to show you guys rangeland or farmland and everything, but if it would be better weather in that area.

Jerry McPeak: I can tell you from having in Oklahoma even though that's what I could have done too. We have the largest stocker sale in the world. But there is not time to get that.

I want to go your deal. I'll take them, but it just swarms you.  
I can tell you from putting that deal on, whoa.

Jim Radintz: As long as we have --

Mark Wadsworth: [Cross-talking] anymore after what  
happened.

Jim Radintz: I was going to say. As long as we go  
someplace that doesn't have tornadoes, I think we'd be okay.

[Off-topic discussion]

Mark Wadsworth: Can we kind of agree though that let's  
look at North Carolina?

Angela Peter: Yeah.

Mary Ann Thompson: North Carolina's fine.

Angela Peter: March in Alaska's a little bit not going to  
happen.

Leslie Wheelock: Nope, nope, nope.

Angela Peter: Not yet.

Mary Ann Thompson: That would be great. [Cross-talking]

Angela Peter: Maybe because next time, we won't be up for  
authorization or whatever next year. Maybe then we could plan  
on Shemina [phonetic] in July or June or May - May, June, July.

Jerry McPeak : We may not exist. If we don't have  
[indiscernible], we don't exist anyhow.

Mary Ann Thompson: That would be great. If we could come  
to North Carolina and welcome you, we get things set up and

everything. My only hope is that everybody, the other board members, Dr. Leonard, everybody could travel - Val, Joe --

Mark Wadsworth: And also there was a request I guess through -- Sarah is busy all the month.

Dana Richey: Yes, Sarah told me before she left. She would prefer the meeting be in April so that she could attend. She I think is booked with some conferences or conventions in the month of March. So what we'll do is I imagine Leslie will look at people's calendars for probably March and April and see what's available.

Leslie Wheelock: Mr. Chairman?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Leslie.

Leslie Wheelock: This is Leslie. Mary Ann, if you have some recommendations of times to come, if we could piggyback on the back of something that is already happening, that pulls the tribal folks together, it doesn't have to be anything really formal. But I know they have regular meetings there and help us figure out dates early. We can have it as late as April 25th. The other question concerning the Oklahoma trip, everybody or people who went on that trip made a commitment to spend extra time on that trip. People don't always have extra time. So with regard to the seasons, the planting, and the harvesting, if we do want to do extra days, there may be an ability to do it. But we need to plan around who can be there for the meeting.

And then if it's only two days that you can afford to spend away from your operations, then we ought to have the meeting on those two days and have whatever extracurricular on the other days.

As far as travel is concerned, Las Vegas became a problem yesterday, I think late yesterday. The Office of the Secretary cancelled Dr. Bartuska's travel this morning. I started getting emails around 4:30 to 5:00 this morning. And the optics, USDA, I don't know if you know but they're probably 40 to 50 USDA people here, most of whom don't get the same scrutiny that Office of the Secretary folks do as well as the high level executive staff. We've got four high level executive staff on this council. Some of us have to report our travel. So it's noticeable when we've got three or four executive staff heading here. Dr. Bartuska just happened to still be in Washington when everybody noticed that there were a lot of people traveling to Las Vegas. Las Vegas will get scrutiny because of the GSA situation, because it's Las Vegas.

I wrote a note, a rather nasty note. I don't write nasty notes. I try not to. Dana will argue with me on that, but I try not to write nasty notes. But I write short notes. I get very short with people. And I told them we have two conferences. We have two travel conferences going on here. I had even forgotten about Colt [sounds like] but we were working both conferences. We had a consultation on Monday. We had

Chief Weller speaking as a keynote speaker at IAC. And we've got all of these people who have to be here for the council meeting in addition to which we brought additional people to speak to the council. The optics on that get really ugly, really fast. And I get that but this is the best place that we know of to get this kind of participation from our tribal constituents other than the regional tribal meetings, so this is where we come.

This is where we have the exposure to the youth if we want it. I would highly recommend that we get them in here the next time and let hear from them because as we did it, as we've learned in Oklahoma, hearing from them is a very useful, touching, painful sometimes experience. I think that we need that experience. And they're here. If we're going to do this again, we ought to figure out. If there's a youth component to it, we need to pull it in. That's all I have. Thank you. That killed the conversation, didn't it?

Mary Ann Thompson: Yeah.

Male Voice: I think so.

Mary Ann Thompson: But I'll be checking. We'll find something.

Mark Wadsworth: Are there any further comments or questions?

Gilbert Harrison: What is the outcome of the next meeting?

Mark Wadsworth: She is going to get with Mary and see if there's a possibly, maybe even a USET around there meeting that we could piggyback to get more tribal representatives around that area.

Gilbert Harrison: Back at South Carolina?

Mark Wadsworth: North Carolina.

Mary Ann Thompson: And if not, I know that the Southeastern Caucus is having their youth symposium going on, but it's in Florida and it's going to be right about then too. We'll look for things in North Carolina. We'll see. I'll check and I'll be in contact with Leslie.

[Off-topic discussion]

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Jerry?

Jerry McPeak: Mr. Chairman, we can't accommodate everything as you guys -- we'll be in session at that time. It will help me if we can get it toward the first or toward the end of the week, one or the other, so I don't have to miss quite so much time and I'll be there out of town [sounds like]. Which bring me to another thing; I'd like to have an update on who our members are. I think we got one that Dana was able to visit with or someone was able to visit with and besides he really wasn't a member, which we already knew and it doesn't matter. There's another one that I don't know how that deal [indiscernible] they were [indiscernible] on how our membership

is really is. Well, we can't make a quorum because we have one that never did come and one that doesn't seem to come. But you're right. Right now, we have this, what? Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday that we did, right in the middle of the week that we're doing this.

Female Voice: Tuesday, Wednesday.

Jerry McPeak: It's better if you guys to travel like with money, [indiscernible] winters, something like that.

Leslie Wheelock: Ah, it didn't matter.

Dana Richey: It doesn't matter.

Male Voice: No.

Leslie Wheelock: No. We don't have any --

Male Voice: We'll be here when we need to be here.

Jerry McPeak: It doesn't matter when they rest you all about the travel times, the dates.

Leslie Wheelock: Weekends, non-weekends.

[Off topic conversation]

Mark Wadsworth: Just an FYI too, we did discuss this situation with John Berry. John Berry did politely resign due to his other workload. But he also, as a part of his position, we were sitting within a very short timeframe if we would have tried to refill that position with anyone, seeing as the whole thing is kind of in limbo land right now. So it was kind of

left up to if we have the next go-around with next applications then when we'll refill that particular position.

Leslie Wheelock: Mr. Chairman?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes.

Leslie Wheelock: An alternative of what was attempted when this council was seated was a geographic distribution. We had two people from Oklahoma on the council. One reason for that was to balance out Jerry. No, I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. Oklahoma had the largest number of Keepseagle claimants and has a rather large number of tribes. There was a desire to ensure that we had representation from Oklahoma. We have an option of going back and looking at the applicants from the last round who applied. They would still have to go through all the clearance and everything. We had at least one from Oklahoma. And going back, kind of actually contacting whoever applied and asking them if they're still interested. That we could probably get done before the next meeting, it takes a little bit of time to get them through clearance. And then we don't have any control over that. Dana?

Dana Richey: This is Dana Richey. I did pull the applicants from Oklahoma for the 2014 round, and there were three. I forwarded those to Leslie. I don't know if you saw that information. I did follow up with the White House Liaison Office about how quickly they could vet a person or two. It

would be about one to two weeks for them to do that vetting. But first we have to determine, do we want to pursue those applicants? And then secondly, are they available and interested?

Leslie Wheelock: Do they want to come for just one meeting or however few meetings we might have before we have to do everything else?

Dana Richey: That's right. What I'll do is I'll resend that information to you and we can follow up.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you.

Gilbert Harrison: How about Tawney? Have you heard anything from her?

Leslie Wheelock: Tawney contacted us and said that she couldn't make it. Her mother is seriously ill. And she just didn't feel comfortable coming that far away from home.

Jerry McPeak: How many times that she's missed. I mean that's great for this one time but what about with the other times? No offense, we kind of have mom and our kids in school. Some of those kids, I don't want to be kin to because they had so many people died and were sick. I won't be kin to you. I'm just saying.

Porter Holder: That was the second thing she said last year. She came to the Western meeting in September a year ago. She didn't come to Vegas last year because her mother was sick.

She didn't come to the D.C. this time because her mother was sick. I'm not saying. I'm not that doubting her at all but that's been on a more deal.

Jerry McPeak: I really don't get that.

Female Voice: It's terrible. Everybody knows [indiscernible].

Mark Wadsworth: All righty, I think we're kind of wrapping this up, are we? Anybody else have any comments or can we adjourn?

Jerry McPeak: Move to adjourn.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay. We'll just accept this.

Gilbert Harrison: I second the motion.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you. We're done.