



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Council for Native American Farming and Ranching

September 25, 2014 - 9:30AM
Washington DC

Mark Wadsworth: All right. We'll start with this meeting today for the Council for Native American Farming and Ranching. We'll begin with a call to order and then I'll go through a roll call. Please, as I read your name, answer, "here". John Berrey?

John Berrey: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Tawney Brunsch?

Tawney Brunsch: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Gilbert Harrison?

Gilbert Harrison: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Porter Holder?

Henry Porter Holder: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Derrick Lente?

Derrick Lente: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Jerry McPeak? Jerry McPeak is not here.

Angela Peters?

Angela Peters: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Edward Soza? Edward Soza is not here.

Mary Thompson?

Mary Thompson: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Sarah Vogel?

Sarah Vogel: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: Mark Wadsworth? I am here. Also, Chris Beyerhelm?

Chris Beyerhelm: Yeah.

Mark Wadsworth: Val Dolcini? But we have Lilia in her place who is here. Dr. Joe Leonard?

Joe Leonard: [Indiscernible].

Mark Wadsworth: Okay. Thank you. Nice to see you.

Leslie Wheelock?

Leslie Wheelock: Here.

Mark Wadsworth: All righty. I've asked Gilbert Harrison, if he'd do a blessing before we begin the meeting. Could we all stand?

Gilbert Harrison: Lord, we come before you on this beautiful, cloudy, drizzly morning here in Washington, D.C. We're thankful that most of the members of the council, new and former members, are here. We ask that we have a good perspective and good communications and that we may be able to make good recommendations on behalf of the people that we represent - farmers, native farmers, ranchers. And may we be

able to do something that will help them in the long run. We ask this in your name. *Hozho na'ha' lii, Hozho na'ha' lii, Hozho na'ha' lii, Hozho na'ha' lii.* Amen.

Just for information, *Hozho na'ha' lii* means all is well, and in Navajo we say it four times, four directions. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you, Gilbert. Carrying on with the next item on the agenda is a review of the agenda. Our next one will be with John Lowery. Then, we'll have a farm bill at 8:00 from Leslie Wheelock. We'll go through a budget update. I think that budget update is about funding that the council has available for the meetings. We'll have a small break at 10:45. Then, we'll have the Keepseagle update from Christine Webber from Cohen Milstein law firm. Then, we'll go on to the Forest Service Grant and Program Guide discussion with Muriel Murray. We'll break for an hour and a half lunch. The lunch is on your own. I'm sure the guys here will tell us where the best place to go eat are. After that, we come back at 1:00 and we'll begin again at 1:30.

All of us were sent in our packet a review of the National Agricultural Statistics, the census. We'll go through that. We'll have an update on the Forest Service Leasing Regulations from Ralph Giffen. And then go in to the Tribal College Exchange and Vista Program presentation by Vinnie Panizo from

the 1994 Tribal College Program. We'll have another small break at 3:00.

Then, we'll go through NIFA's Organic Ag Research and Extension Initiative and The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program from Erin Daley. Then we'll go to the status on the USDA Tribal Land Grant College and University Program from Lawrence Shorty, director of the 1994 Tribal Programs. Then we'll go into a working session with the CNAFR. We'll look at the reply from the secretary from our last letter, a review of the last two years from the previous council, discussion of the new council goals for the near term, and then any other council issues and topics. We should be out of here by 5:30.

I guess you're up next, John.

John Lowery: Thank you, sir. I would like to do a request, one change to the agenda for today. At the 4:00 working session, we have a reply letter from the secretary. I would like to have that removed and have that put on the working session for tomorrow at 2:45.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Gilbert?

Gilbert Harrison: John, I think on behalf of the new members here and some new visitors here that I see and hadn't seen before. Maybe it will be nice to have a little presentation of what the council members and what is our

objective very quickly just to let them know, so that at least we have an idea of what our charter is, not detailed. I don't see it on here. Maybe it's somewhere, I'm not sure but I think it would give everybody an idea of what, where we're going, and what we're supposed to be doing. Thank you, Mark.

Mark Wadsworth: All right. John? Thank you

John Lowery: There is a suggestion to move, first, the reply from the secretary to tomorrow's agenda at 2:45. Anybody have any disagreement? Yes, go ahead. Okay. It's been moved to move that agenda line item to tomorrow, all those in favor?

Male Voice: Aye.

John Lowery: Anyone opposed? Motion carries. Thank you, sir.

A quick review of your meeting materials in the binder, there's a table of content at front. In the binder, we have provided the agenda. Also a letter to the council from me, that was one of the things that was discussed within one of the sub-committees. It was a letter from designated federal officer to council members. Letting you guys know what all is going on and what all is expected. I think it would be good to read the letter into the minutes, if you guys do not mind. I could do that once I've done reviewing the materials.

Let's see. On Tab 3, is the May 2014 Letter of Recommendations to the secretary from the council. This is what

you guys approved at our May 2014 meeting. On Tab 4, what we have done is put together a guide here of the different recommendations that you guys made over the past two years. There were 22 recommendations made altogether. What we tried to do was to give you an update on what all has been going on with those and notes for those. This is something that we will discuss during our discussion periods. Also on Tab 5 is the Farm Bill implementation document. Leslie will be going over that today. Tab 6 is just a 2012 census of Ag Demographics information. This is just a one pager, just to say, hey, this is where American Indians and Alaskan Natives rank with regard to the number of farmers and the percentage of farmers. The NASS people will go over this later on. I do apologize for using these acronyms. NASS is the National Agriculture Statistics Service.

On Page 7, you have the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative document and also Beginner Farmer and Rancher Development Program document. Erin Daley will go over that today from NIFA, which is the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Also Number 8, was the recommendation templates that we started using last year, as a way for you guys, as we are discussing stuff, as you are hearing discussion, that if you want to write down ideas for recommendations then hey, here goes a template for you to write it out and jot down

your thoughts and questions. Number 9 is the *Federal Register* notice with regard to the council meeting. I wanted to make sure that that was put in there. The *Federal Register* notice, we are told by law that a *Federal Register* notice has to go out at least 15 days prior to every council meeting, and that's what we do.

Also on Tab 10, was the press release announcing that each of you individuals have been selected. We did give you guys a call prior to that. Also for those who were not selected, we did write up a letter. We did send it to individuals telling them that they were not selected, but that we will keep their information in case there is an opening in the council. As Andrew said before, there are about 200 Federal Advisor committees within the USDA. We do our best to share information with regard from applicants to this council to other councils who might be seeking a tribal voice. We hope they all are seeking a tribal voice on their advisor committees.

Also, we always try to provide you guys with maps. We provided you with a map of the hotel, because we understand that we could sometimes get lost. Also, we provided you a map of the D.C. Metro in case you want to get around later on. And then, we provided directions from the Ronald Reagan National Airport to the Holiday Inn Capitol Hotel.

What we did in the front sleeve, we provided the USDA quick reference guide. This is something that one of our departments came up with last year. That's what it is, it's just a quick reference guide of all the USDA programs. We do have a ton of these. If any of you want to take some of these back home like some of you have done in the past, please let me know and we would definitely bring some more over tomorrow. Also on the back sleeve, we have provided additional notepaper just for you to jot down some stuff. Within the binder itself, we provided the 2012 Census of Agriculture for American Indian Reservations. This was just released, I think, at the very end of August, so this is pretty much fresh off the press. We will get an overview of this from the National Agriculture Statistics Service today.

Also in front of you, you have some pens and you have a notepad for note taking. We've also put out some sticky pads around you just in case you want to grab something and write. With that being said, I want to read in the letter that was drafted and sent to you guys in your binder. It's dated is September 6 --

Female Voice: Isn't that in the last agenda, or first agenda? No? Okay, sorry.

John Lowery: September 16, 2014. Dear Council Member, welcome to the 2014 - 2016 Council for Native American Farming

and Ranching. I am thrilled to see the secretary appointing such a diverse group of farmers, ranchers, business owners, and stakeholders from across Indian country. When reflecting on these experiences, we must also acknowledge what gathers us together.

Established as part of the Keepseagle settlement, the council was created to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on ways to eliminate barriers to participation for American Indian, Alaskan Native farmers and ranchers in U.S. Department of Agriculture programs.

The CNAFR is tasked with advising the Secretary of Agriculture on issues related to the participation of Native American farmers and ranchers in USDA programs. It includes farm loan programs, transmit recommendations concerning any changes to USDA regulations or internal guidance or other measures that will eliminate barriers to program participation for Native American farmers and ranchers, examine the methods of maximizing the number of new farming and ranch opportunities created through USDA programs to enhance extension and financial literacy services. Examine methods of encouraging intergovernmental cooperation to mitigate the effects of land [indiscernible] issues on the delivery of USDA programs. Evaluate other methods of creating new farming or ranch

opportunities for Native American producers and address other related issues as deemed appropriate.

The previous CNAFR has made great strides to promote both outreach and efficiency of the department through recommendations to enhance access of financial capital, promote credit development opportunities, strengthening environmental stewardship and many others.

As we continue to build on these successes, I look forward to working with each of you. Sincerely, John Lowery.

Designated Federal Officer, Tribal Relations Manager, Office of Tribal Relations, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you John. Excuse me. We'll running a little ahead [sounds like]. Go ahead, Sarah.

Sarah Vogel: I wanted to emphasize a little bit what John said. I think this is one of the capstones of the Keepseagle litigation, and the goal would be to make USDA programs work in the future as good as can be. That's why this council is here. This is one of the issues on which, you know, in the settlement, USDA embraced the idea of this council. It may even have suggested it. I can't recall. But it's a big deal.

I also wanted to commend the secretary for expanding the scope of this council's past credit. In other words, the lawsuit was only about credit. But this council deals with all of the USDA programs, which is huge, because that is essential

for future progress of Native American farmers and ranchers. Just to commend USDA for doing such a good job of establishing the council, establishing the scope of the council, and providing facilitation for the council. It's huge and it can even do more.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Chris Beyerhelm?

Chris Beyerhelm: Mr. Chairman, perhaps this is for Leslie and John. At the last meeting and other meetings we've had, we've talked about the importance of collaboration with BIA. Even to the point of having them as an advisory member of this council. Is there an update on where we might be on that?

John Lowery: We do have a member from the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs' staff, who has been appointed to serve as a liaison. I have spoken to her. There she is. Kathryn. There she is. Yes. Kathryn Clause is here. She is a direct counselor for Kevin Washburn, who's Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. We work closely with Kathryn on a number of USDA issues. She is great. We definitely appreciate her in our office. She will be attending all of our meetings. Yes, sir. Excuse me. Do you want me to get her a seat up here with us?

Sarah Vogel: Yes, this one.

John Lowery: Seriously? I'm serious. Yes?

Sarah Vogel: Yes.

John Lowery: All right.

Sarah Vogel: And if you're good, we'll give you a nametag.

Kathryn Clause: Good job, Sarah.

Gilbert Harrison: I need to watch what I say about BIA now.

Kathryn Isom-Clause: My name is Kathryn Isom-Clause. I'm from Taos Pueblo. As John mentioned, I'm a counselor to Assistant Secretary Washburn. I'm here as a liaison. If there are any issues that come up, I might not immediately have the answer in technical, but I can definitely bring it back to our folks at BIA or the Assistant Secretary's office and make sure the concerns that are expressed here are heard over there as well. Thank you.

John Lowery: Yes, Gilbert. Gilbert Harrison.

Gilbert Harrison: This is Gilbert Harrison from Navajo. I'm glad that you represent the BIA here because many of the issues that we face and talk about have direct relationship with the BIA, the regulations and stuff like that. And we need to all work together to overcome or make it easier for programs to take place on trust lands, particularly. So, welcome, and I need to watch what I say about the BIA.

John Lowery: Thank you again.

Kathryn Isom-Clause: Thank you.

John Lowery: We're a little ahead of schedule, ten minutes, but is that workable, Leslie?

Leslie Wheelock: It is workable in my experience. It is workable because [indiscernible].

Mark Wadsworth: While you're getting ready, Leslie, we have a lot of guest in the room at this time. Guys, would you like to stand up and introduce yourselves to us? We'd sure appreciate it.

Male Voice: [Indiscernible] from USDA's [indiscernible].

Paul Moorehead: I'm Paul Moorehead. I'm attorney here in Washington with Chairman John Berrey.

Allan Walk: I'm Allan Walk and I'm also with John Berrey.

Female Voice: Good morning. I'm [indiscernible] and I work with Kathryn at [indiscernible].

Female Voice: Hi, I'm [indiscernible] with the USDA 1994 Tribal Land Grant for Colleges and Universities.

Female Voice: Good morning. I'm Joanne [phonetic]. I'm with USDA and I'm working [indiscernible] to open up the office of the [indiscernible].

Lawrence Shorty: I'm Lawrence Shorty. The Program Director of the USDA 1994 Tribal Land Grant for Colleges and Universities.

Male Voice: I'm Mike [indiscernible], Director of [indiscernible] Management [indiscernible].

Male Voice: I'm [indiscernible]. I work for the USDA [inaudible].

John Lowery: Thank you.

Leslie Wheelock: Because we have a little bit of extra time, our budget review is going to have to be delayed until Val arrives. What I've done is to ask Lilia to describe for us this wonderful new product that is on the USDA website, that is a tool to help people find their way on our website.

Our website, if you've been on it, is large. It's a little bit difficult to maneuver around and find what you're looking for. Lilia's worked very hard with a number of people in USDA, including the Office of Tribal Relations, to try to make it easier for, especially, our beginning farmers and ranchers and our veterans that are coming back to get access to programs and find out what they can find out. I'm going to ask Lilia to use some of our free time here to describe this great website for you. Can you do that? I don't know, if there's another easy way to do this with a microphone, so do you want me to [indiscernible] or are you okay?

Lilia McFarland: Let's get started in a second. Thank you guys. I wasn't expecting this, but I appreciate the opportunity to talk to you guys about what we're doing. And, again, apologies, Val Dolcini, administrator of FSA, would be here. But he's also chairing the National Food and Agriculture Council this morning which is also convening. He'll be joining us shortly today. I am USDA's New and Beginning Farmer and Rancher

program coordinator. It's a long roundabout way of saying that across USDA, the programs, the policies, and the outreach that touch people who are getting into food and agriculture production, I work with along with the wonderful team that we have in place here administering the programs that touch new farmers and ranchers, including Chris Beyerhelm, who runs our credit programs.

I have been in my role about seven months now. When we started looking at what the needs for new and beginning farmers and ranchers were, we realized that our website was really big and really sprawling. There was no one place where you could go to get all the information that you needed, especially with the new tools that we just got through the Farm Bill, through all of the new programs that are kicking back up and starting to run again. We needed a place where folks could come to find information and where folks doing outreach, could help connect people with programs outside of FSA or NRCS.

So, what we did is we established a website, www.usda.gov/newfarmers. I encourage you all to play with this in your spare time. We're really proud of this. For the first time, all of our stuff is in one spot, divided by the needs that new and beginning farmers and ranchers have. Leslie, if you don't mind clicking, let's get started.

Leslie Wheelock: One of the things that we've been trying to inform USDA about is the fact that a lot of our tribes and a lot of our tribal citizens are new and beginning farmers and ranchers who are just getting access to our lands. We have tribes come in monthly saying, "Gee, we want to start farming. We want to be the first to do this. We want to start feeding our people. How can you be sovereign if you can't feed your people?"

There's this growing movement in the Indian country. So, when the secretary comes out and he talks about our native people as being America's first farmers, we've had to retrain people about the history of our land, and our inability to access our land at all times, and the movement across our land, and what that's meant to keeping our traditions alive, and accessible. So let's get started because we're encouraging our tribal folks to work through this as well.

Lilia McFarland: Yes, ma'am. Working with the Office of Tribal Relations, we've made sure that this website includes a lot of the resources not just available to new farmers in general but new farmers who are also tribal producers. It's just getting started. We kicked this off in June. We're still making it better all the time as we roll out new Farm Bill programs. We would love your expertise. If you guys will take a look of this, if you find programs that are missing, things

that will make this a better tool for Indian country, we would love to hear it, so that we can continue growing and expanding and making stuff easy for folks.

The other things that we've been working on as we've looked at how we help new and beginning farmers under the leadership of the secretary and deputy secretary, is making sure that our outreach reaches the folks who need it. That the Farm Bill implementation is done and done well, and that as we place priorities on things, that we keep the needs of new and beginning farmers in mind. Does anybody have any questions? While we're occupying these 10 minutes, are there thoughts, advice, wisdom you all have for me?

Gilbert Harrison: Good morning. Gilbert Harrison again, from Navajo. It's always exciting to hear new programs that are being implemented. But one of the things that we always experience, particularly Native Americans living on trust land, is that these programs are not really friendly when you come to trust property, because basically, anything you do on the trust property, there's tons of regulations associated with it. That becomes a big nightmare. I think somehow, we got to work with the Bureau and others to ease up some of these bureaucratic requirements. Right now, as a new farmer, you've got that thick of regulations to deal with. You have BIA regulations to deal with. You tribal regulations to deal with. Many of our younger

farmers just walk away, so somehow, I'd like to see, when you talk about new farming initiatives, figure out ways to get around that.

The second thing I've said before, I represent many farmers on trust lands. We are not part of a Navajo tribal ranching operations or Navajo tribal farming operations. We are basically individual farmers. Many of our farms are basically five to ten acres in size, so that makes it really hard to say I want to borrow money from USDA. How are you going to work that farm? Those are little farms. I've always said I represent the little farmers because I have less than 20 acres, and I'm trying to make a dollar out of it. If anybody knows how to make some money out of 20 acres, let me know.

The third thing is, when we talk about new farmers, new programs, I've said before, the next generation of farmers, how do we create interest? How do we create that attitude of, I want to get into farming? It is hard work. It's almost like 24/7. You have make a choice on weekends. You go to a pow-wow or do you work the farm? Those are the kinds of things we face. Specifically our younger generation, they have little ear plugs and they like to text. How do we break that?

I think those are some of the things that I see as barriers when we talk about new farms, getting into farms. It's nice to say I want to get into farming. But when you actually start to

get into it, it's a different story. So as you talk about, "We're here to help," I'm saying I like to see that come true. Thank you very much.

Lilia McFarland: Thank you for your very thoughtful comments, I think your comments are spot on. I had the privilege of working with the former administrator, Juan Garcia, on the last iteration of this committee, and I know that a lot of these issues were discussed. I'm looking forward to hearing what this committee recommends and thinks and guides, especially on these issues. These are things that we're hoping to take into account, as well, as we develop our programs and initiatives and outreach moving forward.

It's an exciting time to be considering how we get this next generation involved in ag. Enrollment in ag colleges are up, kids are going back to school for stuff like these. There's such an excitement about our food. I know that you guys are seeing this with the issues of food sovereignty. Who grows the food for the folks who were here. We just did a really interesting event at the White House, a Champions of Change event, where we honored an incredibly wonderful native producer. You all may know her being, A'dae Romero. She's working to get kids in the reservation that she grew up on back on the farm. She's done some really cool work. I won't occupy time here talking about it, but it's something that we pay attention to a

lot. There seems to be a lot of energy coming around this issue. I'm looking forward to seeing what you guys recommend.

Mark Wadsworth: Derrick Lente.

Derrick Lente: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning everybody, I'm Derrick Lente, Sandia Pueblo, New Mexico. I can appreciate the website that you've established at this point. I think that I in a sense would represent the younger farmer so to speak. I know by experience. I have a 12-year-old daughter. We just established her first farm service loan, or perhaps, it's a different loan for her to buy some cattle. I know that the process for that was quite cumbersome and in a sense a little bit bureaucratic. For me, it's a lot easier to pick up a phone or to have an app or to look at a website, and say I can fill up an application for a loan or look for some type of information, because for me it streamlines the process.

I can appreciate something like that you have on the screen right now. If you're able to have all the documents that are necessary for an application, or perhaps for a lot of my peers that also have an interest and want to have an opportunity to farm or ranch on our respective tribal lands that, they too can have access to it.

I'm not saying that we should go out there, hold their hand, and buy them a computer so they can access the Web as well. What I'm saying is, perhaps, make a little bit more

streamlined so that everything is in one place. Perhaps, it already is on one place, I just haven't seen the website yet. But I think that there is an interest in tribal country by the younger generation to continue what our ancestors did. I think that, if any type of assistance from anyone that can be provided will be much appreciated and highly used. I appreciate it.

Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Yeah, Mary Thompson.

Mary Thompson: Good morning. Lilia, in a lot of our past meeting conversation over the last two years, I realize it's a great accomplishment that the BIA office is represented here today. But of all the things that we have talked about and discussed, a lot of issues such as leases and contracts and the timeframe that it takes to go through the BIA process. Of all the issues that I have been discussed, what if any has BIA, your office and the Office of Tribal Relations, sat down and gone over and what we have on those? Have you all sat down and discussed any of those things?

Lilia McFarland: In the last council term, the BIA Facilitation Subcommittee meeting, I think we didn't really end up getting a lot of participation. I think that the timing was bad or something, so we met individually - me, John and Leslie - but I think we need a little more guidance. I mean, you have expressed very clearly that the regulations need to be

streamlined. I've made that point several times to my bosses. I think you're right, we do need to continue to work on that a little more strongly this term. So I'm going to bring that back today.

Mary Thompson: I don't know, did I miss this somewhere in the subcommittee discussions? BIA Facilitation, would that be where we'll address a lot of these things?

Lilia McFarland: I'd defer to John, but I believe so.

Mary Thompson: Okay, I'll hold more comments. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: John, Mary had a question.

John Lowery???: Thank you very much. You know, Gilbert, I just want to point you to the fact, the United States Congress passed legislation over the last few years that helps tribes and tribal members bypass some of the regulatory processes within the Bureau of Indian Affairs to do some self-determination on how they manage their agriculture leases where you don't have to go to the secretary for approval. You could design and create your own leases outside [indiscernible]. The tools are there currently.

Mark Wadsworth: Chris.

Chris Beyerhelm: If I could just follow up on Mary's comment and begin with Gilbert's comment. We have done some additional work behind the scenes a little bit. In the last Farm Bill, Congress did instruct BIA and FSA to work together on

appraisals. For instance, if BIA had done an appraisal, we would accept their appraisal. If we'd already done one, BIA would accept ours. We're working out the details of that. That's one of the things that takes a long time sometimes.

We've also exchanged information where our folks know who the local BIA folks are. When we do have a loan application, we're able to call somebody and say this loan application is coming. Can we expedite it? What we're hoping, at a bigger scale, if some of those need to be elevated, we've got some contacts between ourselves where we can put some expediency to those kinds of things. Some things are being done.

Lilia McFarland: I can add one more quick point to that. We enhanced memo use. John has been heavily involved. There are some more things we can talk about in a subcommittee meeting, but I think there have been a lot more efforts on the ground in the regional level, which I think is where it's most effective. But we're also talking between John's office and my office quite frequently about how we can work together better.

Leslie Wheelock: Good, thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you all.

Leslie Wheelock: I would like to, on behalf of the council, thank Lilia for allowing me to put her on the spot. I personally thank the council for your indulgence in allowing me to present one of our outstanding young people at USDA

supporting many of our programs and this tool. I want to remind you that we would like your comments. We would like you to go online, play with it, figure out what questions do you have that aren't being answered. Let's see if we can focus on some of Gilbert's and everybody else's concerns that have been stated around the table. If additional concerns arise, please let us know. I'm going to jump in to the Farm Bill.

The 2014 Farm Bill, among other things, I'm sure you're aware that the Office of Tribal Relations was made permanent in the 2014 Farm Bill. I would refer you to Tab 5. Under Tab 5, there is an overview I've gone through. This is an overview of communication devices that's created in USDA, and it's rather broad in general. If you, in flipping through that overview, have specific questions about specific items, I may not be able to answer them at this point in time. But we certainly should answer some of them during the meeting if we have time, and we'll be sure to answer them after the meeting. If you have any questions about some of these programs, please let me know.

Since the 2014 Farm Bill was enacted earlier this year, we have rolled out at USDA a number of new regulations. We've consolidated programs, put funding out there because if you know about what has happened, this year we had the 2014 Farm Bill followed very closely by our 2014 fiscal year appropriation. Until that appropriation became available, there were many

elements in the Farm Bill that weren't yet funded, that we couldn't roll out the programs for. In addition, some of our programs had been tweaked by the Farm Bill and had to be rewritten. The new regulations had to be pushed through the system, some of them very quickly through the system. What we've tried to do is to ensure that tribal concerns are heard during these really very rapid fire implementation processes.

The first major implementation was of the disaster relief programs, especially initially for our cattle disaster relief programs, which had not had appropriation funding for the prior two years, which now with funding were pushed out into the world for people to access. Those programs have resulted in a lot of funding going out to our ranchers primarily. We've also had some farm disaster relief that's gone out as well. Those were at the top of the list because we had people who were hurting through droughts, through the winter storm of last year, and through a number of other environmental situations that caused some of our ranchers to go out of business to be quite honest. We were hoping to stem the loss of our folks who were out there working the land.

To give you an example of some of the work that's been done, I wanted to tell you about a regulation that's flowing through our office because this is the kind of thing that we see a lot. The Office of Tribal Relations is the office of

consultation with tribes. We are the point of consultation. We assist with consultation requests. We also are sitting at the table as these regulations come through. We're sitting at the table before the regulations are written when there are decisions being discussed that could go one way or another. Some of these are very serious, how do we implement this? It doesn't tell us how to implement, it just says, do this. In other cases, we have congressionally mandated language that gets dropped into a regulation, and we can't really do anything about it. That kind of congressionally mandated regulation, we do not consult on because the consultation over that language is something that actually should have occurred at the congressional level with our state senators and representatives. Once that language is in place, this council as well as individual citizens and tribes, has the ability to raise issues and problems that they're having with current regulations. That can be raised here at USDA and should also be raised with congressional representatives, if you have that ability.

The things that we are working on that have a decision to be made, the secretary wants to see every single one of those decisions as it's made. Which means that one of the groups that I sit on sees every single decision before it's made because we review the recommendations that go to the secretary. What has been happening, I'm delighted to say, is that there are

situations that come through. To give you a couple of examples, a nonprofit organization, oftentimes we'll talk about a nonprofit organization and we'll take about at 501(c)(3), which is the tax code designation for your typical nonprofit, money-collecting, disbursing organization. But tribes have a separate nonprofit capability, and that's the 7871 nonprofit status, equating a tribal organization to a state tax status, which causes the organization to be tax exempt.

Some of those 7871s act as nonprofit, some of them don't, so there's a very technical line there that it gets down to our grants makers actually having to figure out what the organizations do. But that's no reason not to allow those organizations to be recognized as nonprofits. What we're seeing is a gradual increase in understanding of the little quirks of Indian country that are big quirks to us. They're very important, and it took a lot of time for our tribes to get 7871 instituted.

In the legislation, we saw the word tribes added where we saw states before but not tribes. For clarification purposes, our regulations are coming out, seeing more and more tribes added in, Indian tribes added in, Tribal Conservation Advisory Committees added in. Things that are to us something, it's the way we work. It's how we work within our tribes. It's how we work among our tribes in some cases where we have Tribal

Advisory Councils at the state level, where we have the Pueblo councils, where we have other groupings and regional tribal organizations that are working in this space. They're starting to be recognized as what they are, which is the organizing voice of the tribes within that area. It's very encouraging from my perspective.

What we're working on is getting the language right rather than having to have these discussions about you're leaving the tribes out. We're not seeing so much of leaving the tribes out. We have a lot of people talking about different tribal concerns within the realm of putting in regulations. Fractionated land has come up recently because they're new 2014 Farm Bill proposals that talk about how you deal with land. There were discussions around who owns the land? Who gets to make the decision? Is it the owner of the land? Is it the person working the land?

Well, we have an interesting understanding. There are a lot of folks in agencies like FSA who are out there working the tribal issues and who understand that these land issues are really big. They're at the table. We're at the table. The people around the table suddenly are talking about fractionated lands, and they're not Indians. I'm not sure where that one stands, but one regulation in particular is coming out. It requires our tribal landholders to make a decision if they're

growing certain crops. In order to implement this, we have to work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs pretty darn closely, because there's a distinction between who controls the land and who works the land. We're doing that. We've reached out across. We're talking to them. We're getting the groups together, our team, educating the Bureau of Indian Affairs about what this regulation is and telling them to stand back because the goal is to get the person who's on the land, who's working the land, to fill out the paper work.

You will see more of that as we get the regulations through our office. Because if you're not on our Listserv, you need to be on our Listserv. I don't know, Josiah [phonetic], if all of our council members get our Listserv material. It comes out weekly. That's another way that we're trying to communicate these programs as they roll out. At the next meeting, we will have for you a summary of not only the Farm Bill programs that have rolled out this year but the funding that has gone out through the end of October. That we can tell has gone out to our tribes, our tribal organizations and our tribal citizens. We have put together that compilation rule development. FSA does it every year. Some of our agencies have better collection methods than others in terms of identifying our individual tribal members. The tribes are pretty easy. The tribal organizations are usually pretty easy. Our individual tribal

members, we don't always get because we don't have checkboxes. We collect what information we can, and we'll be presenting that report at the meeting in December.

That's a high-level summary. I didn't want to walk you through everything in 20 minutes because it's difficult. If there are sections of the Farm Bill that you have questions on, we have a little bit of time for a couple of questions. If you have additional questions having looked through the material, seen the information on the Listserv mailing or seen anything else that you want to talk about, please let us know. If we got some time at the end of the session, we'll be happy to start pulling through some of those questions. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Our next topic is budget update. I don't know who the person is.

Leslie Wheelock: The budget update, we actually put Lilia in that spot because we don't have the person here to do the budget update. We are expecting a continuing resolution to be passed by Congress that will extend the funding of the Department of Agriculture, as well as the rest of the federal government at current levels. I don't know when that's through. I haven't seen the most recent version. There was an attempt for a full year, but we think right now it's less than a full year. That we will see after elections this November. We'll

seek again debate over the funding of the resolution. Yes, Henry.

Henry Porter Holder: [Indiscernible] December 11.

Leslie Wheelock: December 11. Thank you. Do you know if it's been passed?

Henry Porter Holder: It was passed Friday.

[Indiscernible] that all USDA seem to receive the .0554 production funding, so basically flat.

Leslie Wheelock: We have to hope that didn't apply to the Office of Tribal Relations which has been flat for three years. Thank you. That's a big help. So continuing resolution goes through December 11th. There's a minor reduction year over year from last year. It will be picked up again after the election. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, Gilbert.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you, Leslie. I know that after you have your discussions, these regulations are published for public comment. When can we expect some of those to come out? Thank you.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you, Gilbert. Not all of the regulations are published for public comment. There are a number that are allowed to go into effect immediately under rule-making regulations. Those that come out are coming out on a rolling basis. Those that are coming out for consultation, I

don't want to guess, but I think we have some that are out for discussion right now from rural development. Chris, do you have any out right now for public comment?

Chris Beyerhelm: We don't have any out right now. They were scheduled to be October 1st, but now it's going to be sometime between the 1st and the 15th, so be on the lookout for those.

Leslie Wheelock: So, we're expecting to see in the next quarter, between now and the end of the year, we're expecting to see more on the regulations coming out on either an interim basis or a rule for discussion. Essentially, under the administrative rule-making procedures that give a window of time, usually 90 days from USDA for comment, to the extent that we can get them into that Listserv. We publish them on that listing. There will be some consultations. We have been trying to consolidate the consultations at the national and regional meetings in order to ensure that we have tribal members not needing to travel additionally, and in order to ensure that we have additional tribal members.

I am hoping and thinking that we will have some consultations ready for the IAC Conference where we will have our next meeting, and that would be in December. There have been listening sessions. We're trying to get our arms around this a little bit better because those go out as general

announcements not specific to our tribes. We do try to get that information out as best we can. When we start seeing consultations, what we will have is a separate listing on the Listserv, the email that Josiah sends out. By the way, Josiah sends that out. But we'll have a separate heading on that document so that you can see the things that are open for public comment and the consultations that are coming up.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you, Leslie. My personal interest on those regulations are that I want to make sure that farmers and ranchers that reside and do their work on trust lands are treated no different than ranchers and farmers that live *off* trust lands, in private lands. There's been some issues that have come up because of that difference. I think that needs to be clearly addressed. Thank you very much.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you, Gilbert.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you. It looks like it's break time. We'll adjourn and back here at 10:45. See you then.

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U.S. Department of Agriculture

Council for Native American Farming and Ranching

September 25, 2014 - 10:45 AM

Mark Wadsworth: As everyone's getting settled again, the next agenda item will be on a Keepseagle Update with Christine Webber, and here she is. We're handing out a few materials here.

Christine Webber: Thanks everybody. I'm Christine Webber, and I am one of the class counsels who have been representing plaintiffs on the Keepseagle case for the last many years. I want to start off with apologies from Joseph Sellers. He was planning to be here. Unfortunately that your meeting ended up coinciding with Rosh Hashanah, so he is off celebrating the Jewish New Year. Otherwise, of course, he'd be happy to be here with you. But the timing is really quite good because - John is in here right now - we just filed last night with the court, our Motion for Modification of the Settlement Agreement, and that's what I was here today to tell you about. So the timing is quite good and you will now all have a copy of the actual signed modification and the proposed trust agreement.

So to back up a bit, the reason for the modification is that in the Keepseagle case, after the conclusion of the claims process and after all of the successful claimants had been paid out, we ended having roughly \$380 million remaining from the original settlement fund. Under the terms of the original settlement agreement, this was just supposed to be divided up equally amongst organizations nominated by class counsels to the court to provide services to Native American farmers and ranchers. Given the amount of money left over, which was far more than had been anticipated - we thought at most there might be a few millions dollars, not 380 million - we have engaged in negotiations over the last couple of years with USDA through their returnees at the justice department about how the money that is remaining can most effectively be used. We really thought that, to an extent, it was going to be distributed to non-profit organizations, that there were people who were far more qualified than a bunch of lawyers in Washington D.C. to identify the best uses and where the money can have the most impact for native farmers and ranchers.

Along the way, we also had raised, and this is at the class members and some of the class representatives urging, we had raised with USDA whether they would agree to change the settlement agreement so that money could go directly to the prevailing claimants, allowing them to have more than the cap of

\$50,000 per tract acre claim which had been built into the settlement agreement. We were not able to get agreement on that change which would have been a major change in the terms with the settlement agreement. As with all settlement agreements, at least with most settlement agreements,; it was not the change that we could impose without agreement of the USDA.

Without the ability to pursue that change, we did focus on how could we modify the Cyprès [phonetic] Provision, the provision that dictates the remaining fund would be going to non profit organizations. How could we modify that to make the distribution of the \$380 million have the greatest impact for Native American farmers and ranchers? What you'll see in the papers that have been provided, what we negotiated was dividing the fund in two parts. First, to take \$38 million to be distributed within six months of the court's approval of this change, and that would basically be distributed very similarly to the way the original settlement agreement was drafted, which means class counsel will be responsible for making recommendations to the court. The court ultimately has final approval over those recommendations with the goal of getting some money out to community as quickly as possible.

The bulk of the remaining funds, however, and this is what we thought would be the better distribution mechanism, will be placed in a trust, the Native American Agriculture Fund. We

would nominate -- the court would appoint a board of trustees. And once those trustees are appointed, they would take over control of the fund and will decide which projects to fund and also how quickly to spend down the funds. They would have 20 years within which to operate. The funds have to be distributed by the conclusion of the 20 years. They can be distributed sooner if that's what the board of trustees decides. But the restriction, of course, in addition to the 20 years, is that all of the funds go to provide services for Native American farmers and ranchers, including those who aspire to become farmers and ranchers. For example, scholarships for students studying agricultural science and things like that would also be an eligible type of programs. When I say farmers and ranchers, I didn't mean to exclude the newcomers who are seeking to become farmers and ranchers.

In terms of the schedule moving forward, as I said, we filed these papers with the court just last night. The judge has scheduled the hearing for October 22nd. At that hearing, he'll hear feedback on the proposed amendment. As I said, many claimants would prefer that the money go directly to prevailing claimants. I expect the judge will hear from them at the hearing. Once the judge has made his decision to approve the trust, assuming he also approves the nominees, then the money would be transferred and the trustees would take control of all

decisions going forward on the bulk of the funds. For the 38 million that has to be distributed more quickly, the call is to fast track part of the fund.

We are working on a grant application as we will have that available by October 22nd so that as soon as the judge gives his approval, we will be distributing that grant application as widely as we can. There is one restriction applicable to that process that doesn't apply to the trust, which is only organizations which provided services to Native American farmers and ranchers prior to November 1st, 2010 are eligible for consideration. November 1st, 2010 is the day that the settlement agreement was signed. Basically, the goal is since we aren't going to have a board of trustees to provide long-term oversight for this first batch of money, we don't have a professional grant staff to do audits and get reports back from organizations to make sure that they spent the money as planned, we wanted to make sure that we only gave to organizations that had an established track record and have shown that they can be trustworthy with the money to make sure it really is going to benefit the class members, Native American farmers and ranchers. That was something we heard. We had a series of meetings over this past summer to get feedback from class members and the community. That was something we heard, a lot of concern about making sure that the non-profit organizations were ones that

really were putting the needs of farmers and ranchers foremost, and not just serving the organization's own self-interest.

We have also, as I said, we don't think the class counselor are the greatest experts on the non-profit organizations that serve major American farmers and ranchers, so we wanted to get input from folks with greater knowledge of agriculture, greater knowledge of grant-making processes and how to identify non profits that can most reliably handle these funds. So we recruited an advisory committee to assist us with that distribution of the \$38 million, and the advisory committee includes Porter Holder, who you all know here, who served in the last few years as vice chair of the council but also - and I confess it was actually our first qualification - because he is one of our lead plaintiffs and has been working on this case for many years even before the creation of this council. Another one of our lead plaintiffs, Claryca Mandan, who's also been working as I think the title is Director of Natural Resources with the three affiliated tribes, is also serving on the advisory committee.

Beyond those two named plaintiffs, we have three other individuals, including Mark Wadsworth, who you all know here, of course, has served so well as chair of the council for the last few years. In addition, we have Carly Hare who is the executive director of Native Americans and Philanthropy and who has been

particularly helpful to us in designing grant application and helping to make sure we have a good process. And Gary Cunningham who is actually the only member of the advisory committee who is not himself a Native American. At the time we got him on the advisory committee, he was I think the senior vice president at the Northwest Area Fund. He's actually recently taken a position and he's now executive director of the Metropolitan Economic Development Council I think is the correct title. He has done a lot of work making grants in Indian country over the last decade. So again, he's really helping to make sure that we have a good outreach process, that people know about the availability of the application for the grants. He'll help us go through the applications and make sure that the recommendations we forward to the court are solid recommendations.

A few additional things about the trust which is where the greatest part of the money is going and should go, we have not yet nominated the members of the board of trustees. We are going to submit our nominations to the court on September 30th so the judge will have time to review those folks before the October 22nd hearing.

Some basic outlines: there are 13 individuals for nominating. They are subject to term limits so that each term is three years; no more than two terms for any one individual

consecutively; no more than three terms overall. There is a conflict of interest policy. Anybody who is serving as a trustee, who is affiliated with an organization that may be seeking grant money would have to recuse themselves from any decisions about such grants. Obviously, not surprisingly, many of the people who have the most knowledge about agriculture and specifically the needs of Native American farmers and ranchers are themselves involved, whether it's through a tribal government, through a non-profit organization, through an educational institution, affiliated one way or another with an organization that may itself seek funds.

So we didn't want to turn away people who have such relevant expertise, but we wanted to make sure that people have confidence in the grant-making process, that it really is designed to meet the needs of Native American farmers and ranchers throughout the country and not just the organizations, which the trustees themselves may have contacts with.

We tried to choose a group that really represents the interest of Native American farmers and ranchers nationwide. We're looking at folks from every region of the country, from state recognized tribes as well as federally recognized tribes who have experience with different types of farming and ranching and who have also other skill sets that are important, such as being able to manage a fund the size of \$342 million, and

hopefully with prudent investments to grow that fund even larger, people who have experience running grant making processes, since the primary responsibility of the trustees is to give away the money over the next 20 years.

There are a few restrictions on what can be funded. As I said, all of the funds are to benefit Native American farming and ranching. There is a restriction on using the funds for litigation so other legal services could be funded but not anything that would be litigation. There's a bar on the trust engaging in lobbying or political activities, so they obviously won't be endorsing candidates or lobbying Congress in favor over against legislation. Other than that, it's really more of those few other negatives that can't be done. Really, the focus is on the positives of what can be most effectively done to provide services to encourage and nurture the Native American farmers and ranchers as they grow their businesses.

Educational institutions are eligible. That is also a change from the original settlement agreement. Although we referred to non-profit organizations, I should say that if a tribal government has a department of agriculture or has chartered an organization that is focused on farming and ranching, then those are also eligible to apply for funds. They can't go to just to general tribal government for any tribal purpose, but if they have a department or an organization that

they have chartered that is focused on agriculture, then they, too, can apply to receive funds from the trust. Again, as with all of the other non-profits who could apply for funds, as long as those funds are used to provide services to Native American farmers and ranchers and keep the connection with agriculture.

That's the overview. We have time for questions if folks have. There's many?

Mark Wadsworth: I don't know whose hand was up, the first ones. Let's go ahead. Mary Thompson.

Mary Thompson: Thank you and thank you for the report. The outreach process you talked about, the public hearings that were held throughout Indian country was part of this?

Christine Webber: Yes.

Mary Thompson: Now, I'm wondering about any data or input. Has it been compiled out from your outreach?

Christine Webber: Yes, and we actually submitted a report yesterday to the court. That actually is fairly voluminous. I did not bring that with me.

Mary Thompson: You did not. Now that, I would be interested.

Christine Webber: But I can summarize for you and I'm happy to e-mail if somebody -- I assume you have e-mail list for the council. I'm happy to forward that along. That was about

70 pages. I couldn't add that to what I was bringing this morning.

As I mentioned, the majority - let me break it down this way. The majority of the successful claimants that we heard from wanted there to be a new awards to the successful claimants. The number of claimants we've heard from in total, maybe a quarter of the total number of claimants that there were. We also heard from unsuccessful claimants. Their view was that the money should go first to unsuccessful claimants. Some said that they should just have a review process. Some said, I tried track B and I want to go back and try track A, which is a lower standard. And others, regardless of review process, said, oh, you've got so much money, just give it to us anyway. And then we heard from a small number of people who said, well, I didn't file a claim for one reason or another, and now I'd like to come back and file a claim. Depending on what their experience was, that was their first priority for who should receive additional funds.

Mary Thompson: Was that the majority of the data that you gathered was from successful and unsuccessful claimant?

Christine Webber: Yeah, and I'd say we probably heard the most from successful. Well, there were more successful than unsuccessful claimants. Eighty-two percent of the track A claimants prevailed. Most of the people we heard from were

successful claimants, and most of them said that they would prefer to have a new distribution to the claimants themselves. We did hear, and I don't want to suggest it was unanimous but that was clearly the majority view. I'd say three-quarters of what we heard were [cross-talking].

Mary Thompson: Okay. Well, I want to thank you all for coming to the southeastern United States region. I appreciate that one visit to Raleigh, North Carolina. There's a lot of Indian tribes in the southeast that I hope they were able to have their input whether the Florida tribes and some [indiscernible].

Christine Webber: I should mention we also had three telephone conference calls for people -- even though we had meetings elsewhere, it was not always convenient for people to get to the in-person meetings. We did have three very well-attended telephone conference calls, and I did notice that on the conference calls, we had particularly strong representation from the southeast.

Mary Thompson: Good deal. I appreciate you carrying my comments forward there. I have one other question, and it's regarding the grants that you are looking at submitting your guidelines for. Do you have a dollar cap on that?

Christine Webber: Oh, you mean on per grant?

Mary Thompson: Per grant.

Christine Webber: That is one of the things we're actually looking at right now and we have not set that yet. There probably will be a maximum for any one grant, but I'm not certain yet. One of the things we're also looking at, and I have to say I was not expecting it to this level of detail so hopefully I won't misstate the rule, but there is a trigger if an organization gets -- I think it's more than one-third of its budget, maybe it's more than one-half of its budget over a short period from a single source that can change it from a public charity into a private foundation and subject to some different rules for how they use their funds. For example, we want to make sure that we don't trigger that rule and basically change an organization's status by giving them more money than the tax rules let them sort of handle within a short period.

Mary Thompson: Oh, yeah, always got to comply with the IRS.

Christine Webber: Yeah. So the exact, that's one of the things that we're looking at that will probably lead to a dollar cap, whether it's a set cap or whether it's -- because we're going to be looking at the budget of an organization and figuring out what the maximum is that could be distributed to them without causing that sort of problem. Maybe we'll get sufficient applications that we won't be close to maxing out anybody's status, but obviously, that trigger was something we

very much wanted to avoid hitting and causing unintended consequences by trying to benefit people by giving them money. We don't want to end up causing them problems down the road with how their tax status changes. So there very well may be a cap but that is not yet set. We still need to get done between now and October 22nd.

Mary Thompson: I'm going to buddy up with Mark and Porter down here and see if I could get a suggestion or two. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Mark Wadsworth: And also, Christine, if you could make everybody aware this isn't written in stone yet. This is basically [cross-talking]

Christine Webber: Yeah. I should say this is all subject to court approval. As I said, we have the court hearing on October 22nd. While USDA and class counsel have now signed off on all the documents, the judge is the most important signature to get. I think there's an excellent chance that he will approve since the parties are in agreement. However, as I mentioned, there are claimants who very much want the funds go to them directly. It's possible that they will seek to appeal whatever decision comes out of the district judge. Although, interestingly, if his decision to approve the modification were thrown out, then we'll be back to -- well, we have to give away \$380 million tomorrow, like that. It still wouldn't be

something we'll be allowed to give to the claimants under either the original settlement agreement or the proposed modification.

But in any event, if there is an appeal, that could slow down the process for the grant making.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes. Gilbert Harrison.

Gilbert Harrison: Gilbert Harrison from Navajo. This twenty-years distribution period, they caught my eye because at one time we had talked about putting this into a permanent trust fund so it would be perpetual and it would continue to fund maybe scholarships or whatever or future farmers for generations. Now, where did the 20 years come from? That's a question because in 20 years, you know.

Christine Webber: Sure. It was a compromise between the parties' positions. We did originally propose an endowed foundation that would exist in perpetuity. That was not something that we got USDA's agreement on and this was ultimately a compromise that we hope will give sufficient time to have a long-term impact that will go on beyond the 20 years. But in terms of this particular board and this particular pot of money, it does have that 20 years sunset.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Angela Peter.

Angela Peter: Yes. Angela Peter from Alaska. In representing Alaska, I think I'd be doing a really disservice if

I didn't address this. Do you foresee any exceptions to your cutoff dates?

Christine Webber: Cutoff dates for?

Angela Peter: I think you said --

Christine Webber: Oh, for organizations that will be eligible? For the first \$38 million to be distributed, we won't have the ability to make any exceptions. After that, there is no cutoff date. Actually, one of the things we hope that the trust will do is identify parts of the country that are not as well served by existing non-profits and use the funds at their disposal to seed new organizations that will serve underserved parts of the country. Probably no part of the county feels totally well served but there are some that we know are worse off than others. We hope the trust will be looking into that and doing that, but with the 38 million, we're not able to fund any organizations that didn't exist prior to the November 2010 date.

Of course if an organization that existed prior to that time wants to expand its reach into other parts of the country that perhaps had the funds to serve previously, that would be something we could consider. But the organization at least has to have a track record so that we know we're giving money to an organization that knows how to manage grant funds since we won't - once the court approves the distribution of the 38 million,

there's nobody who really has authority to follow up on those organizations and make sure they're doing what they promised to do because that's the way the Cyprès fund works. That's one of the advantages of having a trust. They can have quarterly reports coming back and making sure everything is going as planned.

Once the judge approves the distribution of the 38 million, past council has no right to go to the different organizations receiving grants and say, hey, we don't think you're expending the money the way you promised. The trust will be able to do that but we won't be able to. That's why for the first 38, we just had to stick with organizations that had a longer track record.

Angela Peter: Okay. I just wanted to say for the record, Mary Thompson, I can appreciate you have lots of tribes in North Carolina, but I just wanted to reiterate that Alaska has 229 tribes. Our first Tribal Conservation District, which was Tyonek was established in 2005. There were two more in 2006, one in 2011, and seven more in 2014. The Alaska Tribal Conservation Alliance, which is I'm the executive director for, was established in June of 2011.

It's really hard to have a track record. We've been newly established and it's not reflective of the, I don't think,

service that we give to our people, but it's the fact that we have finally gotten the outreach that we needed so. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Sarah, go ahead. Sarah Vogel.

Sarah Vogel: I just wanted to say, again, thank you to the council for its support of the foundation concept. I think that was very important and we appreciate it.

Christine Webber: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you Christine.

Christine Webber: Thank you very much.

Mark Wadsworth: I appreciate it. Our next item will be from Forest Service Grant and Program Guide Discussion. Mariel Murphy?

Mariel Murphy: Yes.

Mark Wadsworth: Since we have a small break, Val, are you --?

Sarah: I'm not Val.

Mark Wadsworth: Are you sitting in for --?

Sarah: I am sitting in. He'll be here this afternoon.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay and your name and --?

Sarah: I'm Sarah.

Mark Wadsworth: Sarah.

Sarah: I'm the financial assistant for the funds for this agency.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay. Nice to meet you, Sarah.

Sarah: It's good to be here.

Mariel Murray: Good morning and welcome. My name is Mariel Murray. I work with the Forest Service Office of Tribal Relations. And I'm honored to be here to speak with you about a new tool that we hope that will be useful to all of you. Specifically, it's a guide to Forest Service grants and agreements. So it's a guide that we hope will help tribes as well as Forest Service staff and others to work better together and make partnerships work.

So in terms of the big picture, tribal relations in the Forest Service has three strategic goals: program development, upholding treaty rights and trust responsibilities, and partnerships. And it's the partnerships that we're really focusing on at the moment in producing this guide. So the overall goals of the guide is to enable tribes to more easily access grants and partnerships with the Forest Service. We know it's kind of complicated. It's even complicated for us sometimes to work with grants. We're just trying to make it user-friendly and to educate as much as we can about all these different opportunities for tribes to work better with the Forest Service.

In order to make this guide as user-friendly as possible, we did try to encourage tribal participation and we had focus groups with Forest Service employees, tribal members, and then

we also worked with many staff areas within the Forest Service to really make sure we had research programs, forest products, firefighting, heritage. We really tried to make this guide comprehensive and cover all areas of the Forest Service.

So this is what it looks like and it is available on the Office of Tribal Relations' website. I can show it to you later, but that's the link right there on the bottom. If you just put in "forest service office of tribal relations" in Google, the website will come up and it's right there on the top, so you can look through it at your leisure.

So what's in this guide? First, we give a very basic background on grants and agreements, sort of a kind of the definitional piece. What is a grant? What is Federal Financial Assistance? What are partnerships? Technically speaking, what is it that we're working with? And then we put in a flowchart and we're hoping that a user of the guide will look at this flowchart, which I'm going to go through with you in a second and be able to jump straight into the section of the guide that's most useful for them.

After identifying, after using the flowchart, you'll be able to see all these different programs I'm talking about with research, with firefighting, with heritage, and you'll be able to read about those programs. And once you've identified that maybe these are the types of programs that I could be working

with, maybe these are the kinds of opportunities that are out there for me, then we give the step-by-step instructions on the process for applying for a grant and partnering. Each program, of course, is somewhat different, but we wanted to outline that basic process who you can call. Finally, as an extra piece, we put in information on confidentiality and Indian hiring preference as they relate to agreements.

So this is the flowchart. We want you to start from the top and think what kind of project do I want? What kind of things am I trying to do on my farm or with my organization? If it involves research, then you go on the left side. Flip down to page 12 in the guide and you'll see all the different kinds of research that can be done, from technical transfer, joint research and you can kind of flow down from there. If the project does not involve research then we go from there. Is it something you want to be done on a national forest? Maybe the forest is right next to the reservation or something like that. Then you can flip down to page 6 and see all the kinds of programs that are being done on Forest Service lands whether it's heritage, whether it's firefighting, environmental education, many opportunities that you can find on Forest Service lands.

If the project does not involve research and it's not on the national forest, then let's say it's on private land that

the tribe owns or it's in trust land, then you flip down to page 9 in the guide and you would see much of the same kinds of opportunities that you would find on the Forest Service lands but then a couple more. Forest products, for example, some things that are more geared towards economic development. If your project does not involve research and it's not on the forest and it's on state land or maybe another kind of land that you're trying to work on, then we just want to put this in here that there may not be a Forest Service opportunity and we will recommend you to contact the State Forester or some other local authority. So this is the flowchart that's right in the beginning of the guide that we're hoping will sort of gear people through the guide to specific areas that are actually of interest for their projects.

As I said, after you identify -- you go through the flowchart and you identify, okay, I want to do forest products or there's this wood energy program or there's this forest lab that I can work with, after you do a little bit of that research, then you can review the process as I said. So what is the next step? How do I make this happen? If it's a federal financial assistance, which is really like a grant, then you can look on page 13 on the guide and it will outline that. Or if it's not a grant, if it's another kind of agreement most of the

time that involves match, then you would flip to page 19 in the guide and it would walk you through that process.

So now I want to give you some examples. These are in the guide. Most of the examples actually in the guide are anonymous just because we wanted to keep the confidentiality. Some of them are not. Some of them we have outlined. If there is something that you all see today that you would think would be a really great fit for your tribe or your organization or whatever, then let us know because we may be able to put you in touch with people that have done things that you might be interested in.

So here on this first example, it was with the Maine Indian Basketmakers Association, and they wanted to protect the black ash trees to make baskets. What they did was they worked with several different pots of money or several different programs within the Forest Service to make that work. It was great for the Forest Service because we wanted to protect black ash trees as well. So they worked with the northeastern region where Maine is and got some grants through them. They signed a memorandum of understanding to establish the terms of their partnership in general with the Forest Service, and then they combined that with the Wood Education and Resource Center, which is another resource to work with trees and protecting wood. So this is just one example. I think most partnerships that

happened are like this in the sense that there are multiple programs, multiple pots of money, if you will, that can make for successful partnerships that can last over time.

Another example here is with the Eastern Band of Cherokee. There is a community forest in Open Space Conservation Program grant which goes towards community forestry, making forests that are accessible. In this case, it was also to protect this area that was sacred and special for the tribe. And so this grant came out. The tribe was able to provide a match and they were able to create this community forestry and protect that area.

Another example here was between the Forest Service and Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. Again, a memorandum of understanding was signed. A memorandum of understanding is not a legally binding document. It's laid out loud on the table, let's establish what our relationship is or even the protocols of working together. And then from that MoU, the relationship is established and they can do a lot together. In this case, they had this MoU and they also had treaty rights. The Forest Service and the tribe were able to work together. The tribe was able to have a cutting area for firewood.

This is the last one I was going to show you. This is the Forest Service partnering with the Caddo Nation and Heritage and many other things. The Forest Service used this master participating agreement which is one type of instrument that can

be used for many different kinds of work to hire and train Caddo Nation members to be crews in Texas and Louisiana, so whenever the Forest Service needed to do surveys, archeological surveys, National Historic Preservation Act, 106 compliance work, they can just call up Caddo Nation and they can come and do the work on the land and they, of course, get the chance to go on their ancestral lands. And they can provide so much more than just a random person could provide in doing that kind of work. As I mentioned, this is a heritage example, but in this participating agreements, they've also worked with them to hire fire crews and do a lot of other kinds of works.

My point in showing you these examples is that there are a lot of possibilities, and the guide will hopefully just take you to that next step and also take Forest Service staff who are unfamiliar with how to work with tribes to that next level and make more partnerships work together better.

So that's all that I had. You can feel free to contact me, phone or e-mail. As I said, if there's something that was of particular interest to you, we can try to put you in touch with the right people. The Office of Tribal Relations itself doesn't give out grants or things like that really, but as you can see in the guide, there are a lot of Forest Service programs that really want to do more work with the tribes, so we can sort of

help to make some of those connections. Are there are any questions at this point?

Mark Wadsworth: Mariel, do you work with the ITC, the Intertribal Timber Council.

Mariel Murray: Yes. ITC, yes. We have done several partnerships with them. I know that to do the Tribal Forest Protection Act report, that was done with the Forest Service grant to analyze the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of that act so far. That was one. There was the Indian Forest Management Assessment Team report that was also done. The third decadal report which the Forest Service did with ITC and others which was also done with funding from different parties. So yeah, the ITC has worked with us in many capacities before.

Mark Wadsworth: And I was curious because you did mention both Forest Service and grasslands. When you are mentioning grasslands, is that because the Forest Service manages grasslands and some --

Mariel Murray: Umm-hmm. We have grasslands, or I should say there are grasslands in Texas, Arkansas. The one that I can think of, the name on top of my head is the Lyndon B. Johnson Grasslands, just in Texas. So yes, we do manage grasslands as well.

Mark Wadsworth: And finally, I'd like to mention that with Forest Service on our reservation, if there is any allotments

that are available for cattle grazing, we have the right for first option, for those allotments to have our cattlemen basically run their cows on that land free of charge, basically. But also, we have done cooperative agreements with you on our borderlands with the Forest Service, in which you guys would go through with the masculator [sounds like] and clear the border lane. BIA would go with their forest land people and cut down any major trees if they were in that area. Then we as the range program would go and then put up the fence. I know there's ways to work with the Forest Service.

Mariel Murray: That's great to know. I'd love to learn more about that. Yeah, I haven't heard about that before.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay. Thank you. Yes, Gilbert Harrison.

Gilbert Harrison: Good morning, Mariel. My name is Gilbert Harrison. I'm with the Navajo nation in Four Corners area. In our handbook here, we had made a recommendation through the secretary for clarification on a certain regulation related to the U.S. Forestry. It says here with the Office of Tribal Relations, we had asked for clarification. It's number 13 here. "The Forest Service offers permits that confer permission to graze on - federal livestock on federal lands. In order to obtain a federal Forest Service grazing permit, applicants must show that they own sufficient base property." And we asked how does this relate to tribal lands and tribal

members. I wondered if we had heard anything back on that. This is an issue that's ongoing on the reservation lands and trust lands. It's a copy here and we'd certainly like to have a clarification on that. Thank you.

John Lowery: Hey, Gilbert. This is John. We do have Ralph Griffen coming here after lunch, at 2:00, to discuss the Forest Service grazing permits.

Gilbert Harrison: Okay. Thank you.

Mariel Murray: And he's in the range department so he would be the expert on that. Are there any other comments or questions? Well then, thank you. Go ahead.

Male Voice: Mariel, we do have Lawrence Shorty here and also Vin is here to speak about the Tribal College Program and stuff, but are you able to discuss any of the intern opportunities for native youth in and around our national forest areas? Will you able to give a little insight?

Mariel Murray: Yeah. I'm not an expert on that but there are many opportunities which I'm sure you are aware of as well, the WINS Program, the Washington Internships for Native Students Program, which places native students across USDA, specifically with the Forest Service. There is also this new way to hire youth and youth graduates, which is the Pathways Program. Unfortunately, I'm not very familiar with it but it is the new

way for graduate students or just graduated students to become full members or permanent employees in the Forest Service.

The other opportunity I would highlight is the Student Conservation Association. They place students across government, but that's a really great way for students with specific backgrounds, specific interests to get in the door to learn in different Forest Service offices, too, in the field.

Male Voice: Yeah. The reason I brought that up is because there are forest lands throughout the country, natural forest grasslands as well. We do have a number of young tribal members who are interested in doing that type of work. We are actively working to try to get additional tribal members into the Forest Service area. I just want you to just hit on that and just let the members here know that there are opportunities for youth to work in those national forest lands.

Mariel Murray: In the past, actually, I should mention the Office of Tribal Relations has been able to sponsor certain interns in the field. For example, we work with the WTCAC, Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council, to sponsor some interns up there. A good way to think about it also is to work within an inter-tribal organization that already has a relationship with the Forest Service because they may be able to tie into some agreements that are already there to bring on interns as well. Thank you so much.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes. We have one more question. Sarah Vogel.

Sarah Vogel: The question I have is echoing what Gilbert brought up is during our last term of this council, we had subcommittees. One of the subcommittees was working on access of Native American, not tribes necessarily but individuals to be able to run to get permits on areas of grasslands that are being permitted out and have been for 100 years. There are several grassland areas in North Dakota, a number in South Dakota and I think all over the country. And Reid [phonetic] is a bigger expert on this than I because I wasn't even on this committee, but I have seen over the years the impact on Native American farmers and ranchers who are adjoining these grasslands and the grasslands are routinely and historically and probably for 100 years have been rented out - I used the word "rent" but the word is "permit" I think - rented out to grazing associations which were formed 100 years ago or more, and Native Americans were never members of these grazing associations.

The base property that is essential to be able to rent is now being utilized to perpetuate I would call it a de facto segregation, and I wish I had copied it and brought it along. But I recently saw an auction notice of an 11,000 acre farm, or ranch rather, with three base units and it was going to be sold for the millions and millions of dollars. They were selling the

leases along with those base properties, and this is right next to Native American reservations. So that's one of the things that we had asked the secretary to look at. I noticed in your guide, I just skimmed through it very fast. I didn't see a reference to the permits in grazing associations and the full historical issue. Of course, it's a very big process to unpack all of that and expectations and so on. But it's kind of, I think it's a problem that needs searching examination and I guess we're going to hear about that later. Am I right?

Male Voice: Yes, ma'am.

Sarah Vogel: Okay. We're not expecting solutions overnight but it would be good.

John Lowery: Yeah. But when we met with Ralph doing the subcommittees, apparently this is an issue that's not just a problem in the native community but it's also a problem in the non-native community as well. They have been looking at their lease and their rate permits and stuff and trying to see what types of flexibility that they have. So this issue here is not foreign to Forest Service, which is good because they have heard from other people about it. But definitely Ralph will be here. As Mariel said, that's his area of expertise. I definitely think that this is going to be the prime opportunity for us to definitely drill down on him regarding all questions that we have.

Mariel Murray: We didn't deal with permitting in the guide in general like specially used permits, grazing permits, none of the permitting. We just outlined some programs that you could be working with when partnering.

I just wanted to show you this is the website, the Forest Service website. You can come here to see. We will have the new range regulations up here for consultation once that's happening. And then at the top, you can see here is the guide on the top right. So you can access it at anytime, download it, print it out.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes. We have one. [Indiscernible]

Male Voice: I just wanted to say I really appreciate the work the Forest Service has done with the subcommittee. I think it's great that Ralph is going to be here. This is a moment of opportunity because the Forest Service is committing to change some of its rules. And it's going to be critical the people who know how that affects Native American ranchers, really contribute their comment and get their opinions heard. So this is the moment for that.

Mark Wadsworth: Yes, John.

John Lowery: While we have just a few minutes and we are running a little early, which is a good thing because we're usually running behind, I will contribute that to having good people to cite, John and Derrick and Tawney with us now. In

your chair when you came in, you found a bag in there. The bag was from the Agri Marketing Service, AMS. They did have a couple of items in there. They had a flyer here regarding their next tribal consultation which will be held on December 3rd. They also had the quick reference guide which you already have in your binder. They also provided you with the find-in-market marketing opportunities for smaller and mid-sized farmers and ranchers guide, pretty much listing the different programs that they have in there for the small and beginning farmers. They also had one other item in the bag, and apparently I have dropped it or something, but it was also representing other programs within the Ag Marketing Service as well. The Ag Marketing Service - and we have passed this out before in the past - they do have a number of federal advisory committee as well. They have things inside the peanut board, strawberry board, pecan board or pecon depending on where you're from. They have a number of federal advisory boards, too, and they are desperately reaching out to get some diversity on those boards. We will once again send out a list of those boards to you guys. If you know anybody in your community who can serve on these boards, they are desperately wanting individuals from diverse backgrounds to serve on this board.

As Mariel held up the Forest Service site, I saw within the corner it said that they had just recently appointed two natives

to their board regarding rules or something like that. The USDA is working to get a great representation on these federal advisory committees, and we just want to let all of you guys know that we are pushing for that. And as Josiah just said in our emails throughout the week that we try to send out every Thursday, we usually list whatever federal advisory committees are open and recruiting members.

I just wanted to say that and just once again encourage you guys to get out into your communities because I know some of you have probably heard people say, you go in that committee, how come I couldn't? And you can say, hey, there are other committees. There are tons of committees. We have 200 here at USDA. I can only imagine what all the other departments have, so there are numerous opportunities for people within your tribal community to serve on federal advisory committees, where they can put input in there and make sure that native voices are being heard.

Mark Wadsworth: John also, since we are going to be breaking for lunch, is there facilities nearby?

John Lowery: Yes sir. It is still raining so we have had some pretty days and then John and Derrick and Tawney came and they brought the rain with them. No, I'm just playing, guys. In the hotel facility here, we do have two. We have the Capital Bistro in here and we also have the 21st Amendment Bar and Grill

in the restaurant here. I've also been told that there is a grab and go little food place here in the hallway, and then there's also a McDonald's outside here. And there's also, I was told there's a sandwich and sub shop beside the CVS, which is beside the McDonald's. I don't have the exact address but it's all right here in this area here.

Sarah Vogel: And Starbucks.

John Lowery: Oh, and there's a Starbucks, yes.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you, John. Looks like we'll be breaking for lunch here and reconvening at 1:30 so we'll all see you then.

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U.S. Department of Agriculture

Council for Native American Farming and Ranching

September 25, 2014 - 1:30 PM

Mark Wadsworth: We'll probably be starting our afternoon session here. Everybody, take their seats. Next on the agenda will be a review of the 2012 Agricultural Census from the National Agricultural Statistics Service. I can see that your name is Hubert Hamer, is that correct up there? I'll just let you go.

Troy Joshua: Thank you. Actually, my name is Troy Joshua. Hubert Hamer is my boss and I'm filling in. I'm somewhat of a replacement. He would love to be here with you this afternoon. He had other meetings to attend and I have worked with him pretty closely on this particular project. I think previously you have had Chris Messer give a presentation to you discussing data collection. Now we're going to discuss some of the results and some of our findings from the census of ag. I have a short presentation. I think you have a copy of my presentation as well as a map. Then we also have some highlights from the census of ag.

Going on to the next slide, who is NASS, the agency is the data collector for USDA. I'm not only talking about our annual programs but we provide 120 data crops annually as well as 45 types of livestock annually. We provide data for over 400 to approximately 500 reports throughout the year. In addition to that, we conduct the five-year census of agriculture. The first census was conducted in 1840. NASS began collecting the census of ag in 1997 from the Census Bureau.

What is an ag census? It's a complete data collection of the agriculture and agriculture products that's been produced. It's conducted every five years. It's conducted on every twos and fives, so in 2012 we conducted this survey. We're looking forward to conducting the next one in 2017. It includes information on land use, production practices, income and expenses, as well as other topics that's not in our annual program.

How does one get counted? The farm definition is any place which has \$1,000 of agricultural products sold, products that were produced or sold or normally would have been sold during the census year which was in 2012, as well as government payments included. Now, reflecting back on what took place in 2012, we experienced a drought during that particular year. During that timeframe, it was a drought, which resulted in record prices for commodities, commodities for like soybeans and

corn. You're going to see some of the data when we're talking a little bit about the economics of the information.

One thing that we started doing this time was start measuring statistical significance, which you will see asterisks by things that are statistically different from the 2007 census of ag. By each item, we're going to have that, whatever is statistically different from 2007.

Jumping into a little bit of the numbers, number of farms and land and farms, as you can tell to the left-hand side of farms, that is an asterisk by it, which shows a decrease of 4.3 percent, which is also 95,489 less farmers. In addition to that, land and farms show a decrease of 0.8 percent. We reported that there were 914,527,657 acres of land in agriculture. The average size of a farm actually increased. That's an increase of 3.8 percent up to 434. Yes, sir?

Mark Wadsworth: When you say land and farms, does that include range lands?

Troy Joshua: Yes. Market value of agricultural products sold. The total value of agricultural products sold is significantly different but it's \$394.6 billion. That's an increase of 32.8 percent. In addition to that, we noticed that the value of crops increased up to 47.8 percent. The value of livestock sold, we reported \$182.2 billion. That's an increase of 18.7 percent.

This is the second time in history where we noticed that the value of crops sold is actually higher than the livestock. Reflecting back to the drought year, we had record prices for corn and soybeans and other commodities as well as hay. You had a shortage of hay around the country as well which resulted in the average sale price increasing at 38 -- yes sir?

Gilbert Harrison: Gilbert Harrison from the Navajo Nation. That average sales per farm, from my neck of the woods, I'd like to meet somebody that had \$187,000 in sales because there's two distinct categories that I see. One is where a farm is operated by a tribal entity, which is large in nature. Then there are individual family plots. Basically, it could be maybe 10 to 15, sometimes 20 acres. This is sort of misleading because I know for small farms like that it's very difficult to generate any kind of good reportable income. So do you guys make any distinctions between whether it's a corporate exercise or small individual farms? Thank you.

Troy Joshua: This is at the U.S. level, of course. We would be able to distinct because we have the data at that granular level, saying if it's corporate or if it's individuals. But later on in the presentation, I have it broken out by Native Americans.

Gilbert Harrison: Okay. Thank you.

Troy Joshua: If my memory serves me right, which would be right below 6,700.

Gilbert Harrison: More like it.

Troy Joshua: But you will see that later on. This is only at the U.S. level.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Just another question on the slide. Maybe it's later, too, and I apologize. Do you have any indication of how much of that increase is just reflective of the increase in prices that were received as opposed to production?

Troy Joshua: We don't have it broken out because we don't collect prices on the census of ag.

Mark Wadsworth: Got you. So it could be a combination of both.

Troy Joshua: It could be a combination of all two because in some areas, you will see the drought took place in let's say in the Midwest. But then there in the eastern portion of the country, they could have had a bumper crop, but they received the benefit from a bumper crop as well as record prices.

Moving on, number of farms from 1982 to 2012, this is all for the U.S. right now. As you can tell, the number of farms has remained fairly consistent over time, but we did notice a decrease of 15 percent from 1982 to 2012.

Land in farms from 1982 to 2012. In 2012, that's the 914 million acres, but from 1982 to 2012 we noticed over that 30-year period a 7 percent decrease.

The average age of principal operators from 1982 to 2012. Each census year, we noticed that the average age of a principal operator at the U.S. level increased about a year or so. From 1982, 50.5, and from 2012, 58.3. The average age has increased almost eight years. But we collect data not only -- this is just the principal operator, but we also collect detailed data on the second and third operator, just like the partners. We're also noticing that for the second and the third operators they are also increasing as well, average age.

Income and expenses. The income and expenses, we briefly talked about the \$394.6 billion showing a 32.8 percent increase. This is still at the U.S. level. We also noticed that the government payments remained fairly consistent farm-related income. That's showing a 70.6 percent increase, which is a result of custom farming, agritourism, you know, farmers becoming more creative.

Production expenses, that's showing a 36.4 percent increase. What's fascinating about this slide here is the fact that production is increasing at 32.8 percent, product sold, so the money is increasing at 32.8 percent. The production expenses are increasing at 36.8 percent. So the expenses are

increasing at a more rapid pace than your income. And then talking a little bit about the net cash farm income, that's increasing at 23.7 percent.

Farms by race and ethnic origin of principal operators. As you can tell, we've noticed that from 2012, which is orange, and 2007 is that we could call it green, we could call it yellow. I guess it's a yellowish color there. For Native Americans, it's definitely above 2007. Blacks is increasing, Asians. We noticed the larger increase is in the Spanish, Hispanic and Latino origin people.

Now digging a little more into the American Indian data, which is important to all of us. The total American Indian principal operators, which is race, the principal operator is American Indian. We noticed there's a 9 percent increase. We talked a little bit about the second and third operators. We noticed that there is the second line item of 58,475. We noticed that there is a 5 percent increase there. In total, American Indian operators, that's everyone that they can report multiple races. So we noticed that that's a decrease of 9 percent. That number went down to 72,198.

American Indian principal operators for selected characteristics, this is a very busy slide. I'm happy I do have you copies of it. One item, not going from left to right but

just circled, the one item of the average age is 58.1. For the U.S. it's 58.3.

Years on the present farm, majority, we should notice an increase for ten years or more. In less than ten years, we start noticing a decrease.

Primary farming, we noticed an increase there from 2007. Primary occupation is "others," so their primary occupation is off the farm. That remains fairly consistent. Then now looking at it breaking up by age group, 55 and over that line item, normally I'd like to walk but 55 and over, we noticed that those line items are actually increased. When I speak about the principal operator, I'm talking about the person that makes the day-to-day decision on the farm.

We're going to move on to American Indian farms. The total farms is 56,092. We noticed that that is a decrease. The total farms with American Indian operators, I'm talking about farms there in the acres operated. When I speak of American Indian for this particular one here, we collected data for three particular operators. We're not talking specifically just for principal operators. It could be someone that could be a partner or a son or someone else that's associated with the farm. It could be American Indian. We noticed that that particular number decreased from 2007 by 9 percent.

Acres operated decreased by 2 percent. That number is actually 57.2 million. The average acres per operation increased by 74 acres, that's the average size.

Moving on to American Indian and Alaska Native farms and ranch, total value of products sold. I must have had this number mixed up with a different number but the market value of products sold is \$3.3 billion. And I'm comparing \$3.3 billion to that \$395 billion we talked about previously. So, overall, for American Indians, it's \$3.3 billion. Comparing that number to 2007, it's \$3.2 billion.

Crops sale is \$1.4 billion. Livestock is 1.8. You will notice later on in the presentation that we noticed that American Indians and Alaska Natives, they normally participate in cattle and calves operation, but that's later on. The average size per farm is 59,398 compared to that \$187,000. There is a 6,000 number somewhere in the presentation. I do know it.

Cattle and calves, this is at the U.S. level. Cattle and calves is the highest valued commodity for the U.S. followed by grains and oils [sounds like].

Now looking at the top five crops for American Indian and farms and ranch for 2007, we have forage, we have all wheat for grain, corn for grain, soybeans for beans, and then cotton. What is interesting, in 2012 we have the top four. Those

remained the same, but then cotton fell out, and then we brought in spring wheat.

Female Voice: The same number of farms?

Troy Joshua: Yes, we have farms and acres.

Male Voice: We can verify that.

Troy Joshua: The top livestock items for 2007, we have broilers, layers, cattle, pullets, and turkeys. The broilers' inventory is 33 million for 2007. For 2012, broilers and other meat-type chickens is actually at 23 million. What also is interesting is the fact that cattle and layers swapped. Cattle and calves is number two followed by layers. Yes?

Female Voice: What are layers?

Troy Joshua: Chickens - eggs, eggs, eggs. They're reporting eggs. Broilers is like meat.

Male Voice: Broilers get fried.

Troy Joshua: Yeah. Sales of crops and livestock by commodity groups on American Indian operations for 2012, what's interesting about this particular graph, not to be confused between 2007 and 2012 here, this is a little bit different. The orange line is percent of farms, total number of farms. The yellow line is the percent of sales. And 35 percent of the American Indian operations are participating in cattle and calves, which occupies 30 percent of the sales are also in cattle and calves. So 35 percent of the total number is in

cattle and calves. Of the total number generated, of the 3.3 million, 30 percent of that is in cattle and calves as well.

All farms versus American Indian principal operators, farms by value of sales for 2012. What's interesting about this particular slide here is operations less than 25,000. That's 56 percent for American Indians.

Sarah Vogel: Is that 25,000 or 2,500?

Troy Joshua: Yeah, 2,500. What did I say?

Sarah Vogel: Twenty-five thousand.

Troy Joshua: No, not 25,000. Less than 2,500 is 56 percent compared to 32 percent for all farms in the U.S. From 2,500 to just below 50,000 is 33 percent compared to 43 percent at the all farms at the U.S. level.

American Indian farms and ranch by value of sales by group. Looking at and comparing 2012 to 2007, we noticed some changes that have taken place. We noticed less than a thousand farmers slightly down, we noticed decreases basically throughout the entire value of sales group. Also, the 2,500 and less group there, the bottom two tiers, that occupies 56 percent of the American Indian farms.

From 2012, comparing U.S. numbers to American Indian, this is in percentages again, and this is by size, so one to nine acres. The American Indian is in that orange. Yellow is all farms at the U.S. level. The orange is 27 percent of the

American Indian farms is between one to nine acres, and compared to the U.S. number, it's right around 11 percent. But just looking at it, American Indian farms that's less than 50 acres, that occupies above 50 percent of the farms. Each operation has less than 50 acres.

American Indians by size of acres, showing on the next slide, even though all categories here are showing a decrease, what's interesting is that the five acres or more is actually showing an increase. So we have more farms, we reported more farms in 2012 that have 500 acres or more compared to 2007.

American Indian - this is my 6,600 - so the American Indian farms and ranch income statement sheet. The market value of products sold is \$3.3 billion. That's comparable to - this is rounded, of course - to 2007. Government payments is fairly the same. Then total production expenses is \$3.2 billion. That's an increase of 10 percent. Just taking into consideration what took place in 2012 with the record grain and soybean prices, in addition to that, the majority of the American Indians, they have cattle and calves so they had to feed in which the input cost increased, which had an impact on the net cash farm income showing a 28 percent decrease as well as the average net cash income per farm decreased to 21 percent. And that number is \$6,623.

Top states at all U.S. farms for 2012, I mean, number of farms: Texas, Missouri, Iowa, Oklahoma, Kentucky. Value of product sold, California, they are well ahead of everyone else, followed by Texas, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas.

The top states for American Indian farms and ranch in 2012 in number of farms is Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, California followed by Montana. Value of products sold, number one is Oklahoma, California, Texas, South Dakota, New Mexico, and then number six is North Carolina.

Now, I'd like to show you a map, the number of farms with American Indian and Alaska Native operations. Each dot report represents ten farms. As you can tell, Oklahoma, we reported earlier number of farms. We have a number of large farms in Oklahoma, you'll notice, and where they're located. Then you'll see New Mexico. You have dots in California. Well, basically throughout the country. There is also another map that you have that we handed out that shows something that is similar to this.

Now all of the information that I have shared with you today is located on our website, which is www.nass.usda.gov. In addition to that -- I'm leading the team to update the 2017 census, which is called our content team. This information is being collected right now on our website. We are soliciting everyone for how we can improve the '17 census. We will take

all of this information internally and externally and how we can improve it.

We have a limited resource. When I say resource, I'm talking about 24 pages. We have also done tests with the Navajo District from New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah received a special study in 2012. We're going to continue doing research on that particular project seeing how accessible it was as well as if we could surely expand it or not. That concludes my presentation. Yes, sir?

Mark Wadsworth: Mark Wadsworth. On your data, when you started collecting the information specifically for Indian farms, Indian acreage, and as such with NASS, what year did that begin?

Troy Joshua: We mailed out the questionnaire in December of 2012.

Mark Wadsworth: No, the beginning of it, was it like in 2002, 1997?

Leslie Wheelock: We started in 1997.

Troy Joshua: Specifically for collecting --

Mark Wadsworth: Data on tribal Native American production records or acreage and stuff, maybe this is a question you could answer [cross-talking].

Leslie Wheelock: This is the third time that tribes have been included in the ag census.

Troy Joshua: Okay, 2002.

Mark Wadsworth: 2002, so basically we have had three census to look on?

Troy Joshua: Yes.

Mark Wadsworth: Because I honestly think that you're getting better when you're starting to work with tribes. Actually, seven years ago, I was approached on this data when you were collecting that. Of course, they called me up because I was a range manager. The way that they collected the data is they took a random sample of tracts that they had within the USDA database. The tract that they contacted me on was a tract where none of our tribal members really live. All it is rangeland, basically, where they asked me to answer these questions. Then they started asking me, what's the production, what's the value of your land and situations like that. I struggled with giving those answers for that specific area that you guys were talking in because, basically, I think in that particular area we have one operator that operated within that range unit. Now, if you would have took another range unit, I could have talked to 20 Native Americans producing in that area.

I guess as you become more and more adept at asking the correct, or I guess to get the most correct data, I just think that we should have more of a dialogue with you. Seeing this, I think we could help in getting a better measurement. Because

I'm looking at this top crop items, and it has forage for I guess 2012 and 2007. Well, it's 2007. It says, in forage, which I believe also includes pasture lands, ranch lands and everything, you only have one-and-a-half million acres. There are some tribes that have range land that is one-and-a-half million acres on their reservation. I think we can do better, I guess. That's just my comment.

Troy Joshua: One thing that I didn't mention is that every year we have a process in NASS where we reach out with community-based organizations. We recently had people from around the country and we had community-based organizations. We met to discuss how can we expand or improve what we are currently doing in our data collection process. We are constantly trying to improve our list. We're getting lists from everyone that we can that's actually farming, so we're constantly trying to improve our list. You should be on our list rank - we call it list rank - our list of farmers. What you were contacted by was like a random land to cover the incompleteness of our list. It's a segment of area frame that we do. But like I said it before, because of the community-based organization, we're trying to improve, trying to use them as a process for collecting our data for us, as well as, like I stated before, improving our list. We are constantly trying to

improve that. In 2007, we started doing this. We tried to do it more in 2012. It's definitely on our radar for 2017.

Mark Wadsworth: Angela Peters. Peter, sorry about that.

Angela Peter: They never get my name right. I have a question. Alaska is going to be included in the census for agriculture. How exactly are you going to do that when this is the first year? Alaska is huge.

Troy Joshua: Chris Messer was here the last time, and Chris and I we spoke before -- last week. There are other USDA agencies that's working fairly closely with the farming community in Alaska. So we're trying to get a list from other internal organizations so that we can try to send them out a questionnaire to see if they are actually farming. We have heard that it's a huge undertaking, but it's something that we have to do. So we are looking at opportunities within USDA to reach out to the farming community in Alaska. There is a person -- Chris Mertz is our Regional Field Office Director that's up in Washington State. Sue Benz is the person that's up in Alaska that should be working with the community up there.

Angela Peter: You were talking about subsistent activities when you're talking about agriculture in Alaska. I have the list of 229 tribes if you need them.

Troy Joshua: I would love to have them. My email address is - hold on, I have a card.

Mark Wadsworth: Troy, there's also another question.

Mary Thompson: Maybe just a comment. I was wondering, as far as true numbers, what statistic you have for how many farmers didn't even answer the questionnaire. It is an issue to get out to these small farmers or get out to rural farmers and get this data back. I'm wondering, what tribal organizations - and Angela has a good suggestion there - which ones do you partner with to get that data out? If you go straight to the tribes, if you go to the BIA agencies, because they're the ones that's doing a lot of the leases and contracts and things like that, so they have an idea of out there, or any of the other programs within the tribe other than just the individual farmer that you have?

Troy Joshua: We will utilize all resources available to us. We have gone to the tribes. We have gone to Bureau of -- ?

Mary Thompson: Bureau of Indian Affairs, and it's under the Department of Interior.

Troy Joshua: Yes, we have utilized that as a resource, yes. But anyone that we can utilize as a resource so that we can improve this process, okay?

Mary Thompson: Just to get more correct data back.

Troy Joshua: To get more because we don't know who we're missing. But we don't want to miss anyone.

Mary Thompson: Okay. This is just an ignorant question on my part, but once you gather all the statistics and all the data and everything, how does that help me the farmer, me the rancher? How does the information that you gather there turn around and go back to the farm and the ranching communities?

Troy Joshua: Well, other government agencies use this information. I would just say, now, I'm talking to someone today. For instance, if I say that there's 500 Native American operations in this particular county, and then you only have -- there's programs internally within USDA, so there's measures.

Mary Thompson: So they might appropriate funding based on your statistics, uh-huh?

Female Voice: The state allocations.

Mary Thompson: Cool, thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: We have Val Dolcini.

Val Dolcini: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Angela, in response to your question, I can amplify on what my USDA colleague from NASS said about how they go about getting word of the census out into the field. Each state has a USDA Food and Agriculture Council that's made up of all the various constituent USDA agencies that might be present in that state. In California, where I was just the State Director of the Farm Service Agency out there before coming east, NASS was very good about leveraging contacts and lists. Folks that other USDA

agencies like my own, or NRCS, or rural development had worked with to try and come up with a bigger list and a more comprehensive way of reaching everybody that they could. In addition, there are entities like the Intertribal Ag Council that we worked with quite a bit in California. They were good about helping spread the word about the census itself or other USDA program opportunities that existed. So the USDA family really tries to leverage one another's contacts and relationships to make sure that people aren't missed when it comes to the five-year census.

Angela Peter: I appreciate that. The only thing is since it's the first census in Alaska, you may want to have a couple of stages because people in Alaska are very hesitant to deal with surveys. I have actually been a contact for the census bureau in Tyonek where I'm from. They're always calling me because the people, they just don't want to answer.

Val Dolcini: It's probably a good recommendation, Troy, for NASS to start a little sooner in Alaska. I'd be happy to help with the FSA outreach up there.

Mark Wadsworth: Derrick's next.

Derrick Lente: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To follow up on the comment of Ms. Thompson, I realize that probably the reason why you issue these forms on these surveys is to hopefully get some type of funding to help Native American farming and

ranching. The first thing I did when I saw this was I went through it and looked for my pueblo or my tribe. I know it for a fact that I did fill out my own survey, but I don't even see myself represented in this book. What happens with people in my case where I was tracked down by one of your guys and asked to fill out the form, and when I do it to the best of my extent, that information is not even on the census?

Female Voice: It's Sandia Pueblo in New Mexico.

[Inaudible]

Troy Joshua: It's 2012, yes, ma'am. Now, is your - I might pronounce this incorrectly - pueblo?

Derrick Lente: Yes.

Troy Joshua: Is it - it's not identified at all?

Derrick Lente: No. In the state of New Mexico, we have 19 identified different pueblos. I see, let's see, there's one, two, three, four, five, six of them here represented. I'm from the Pueblo Sandia, which I did again fill out a survey, but then it's not listed in the appendix here.

Troy Joshua: In order for a pueblo or a tribe, a reservation to be listed, we have to have special permission. Now, we have a state statistician in New Mexico, Longino Bustillos. Longino did an excellent job from my information reaching out to tribes and pueblo. I guess what I'm saying is, in order for us to publish that data, we need special permission

from the leaders in that community. So if we didn't receive special permission, we didn't publish.

In order to rectify this situation, I would contact Longino and let him know or myself. I'll give you a card so I could let you know. I could share my information with everyone, and I could let you know how to do this because we would love to publish more. I had a lot of conversations with this with my state statisticians throughout the country about publishing more data because I want to see an increase. We published the same amount that we published from 2007. I will love to publish more data. That's huge for me because they have a potential of going down, and I forced them to publish more.

Mark Wadsworth: Next will be Sarah Vogel.

Sarah Vogel: In response to Mary's question, one of the ways that this data could be useful is something that we've seen here at this council. Under the Keepseagle settlement, FSA reports twice a year to this council on the top 10 states for Native American farmers and ranchers by county and all the other states by state comparing the population of Native American farmers and ranchers with the services from the USDA that are received. So if there is a disparity, FSA or we can look more deeply into it to say why is there a disparity? Is it lack of outreach? Is it skepticism by the Native American farmers and ranchers? Is it a bad apple at an office? We would have the

ability to deeply look at it and hopefully address things before they get serious. That's one way.

I have a question of Troy. That is, when you say you would like to publish it, you have the data but you can't publish it?

Troy Joshua: Yes.

Sarah Vogel: For example, American Indian operators by county, this map probably would have your pueblo? They're in here, but it won't be in this book. Is that right?

Troy Joshua: Yes, that is correct.

Sarah Vogel: So it's there but inaccessible. I didn't know that. I did notice there are some missing reservations from North Dakota.

Troy Joshua: Yes. I think Section 34 of the questionnaire is in the book. We are asked for the reservation or pueblo to identity it, but without special permission, because of confidentiality, because of disclosure, we would like to have special permission to publish data. Just talking about FSA, when I was in New Jersey, I was the state director in New Jersey. I worked fairly closely with my partner there, as well as NRCS and other USDA partners trying to reach out to all communities. The census was used a lot there. You have another question?

Sarah Vogel: Yeah, a follow-up question. On some reservation, if there are too few responses, does that keep them from being published, too, because of the fear of --

Troy Joshua: Disclosure? Yes.

Female Voice: -- disclosure of confidential information. What is that number?

Troy Joshua: There's an algorithm associated with it. Because sometimes we can have three operations, and we cannot disclose that number because of the number of operation but what that person is actually doing and type of farming. Because we don't want to divulge - we have so much information here - economic data, production, land - we don't want to divulge any of that person where we're compromising and sharing information that this is what that person and the neighbor can find out what this person is doing.

In addition to that, we have a situation where because we disclosed this particular operation or county, there's a complementary associated with it as well. We can't publish county A, we cannot publish county B either because it all has to add [sounds like] eventually.

Sarah Vogel: So there would be no list of peach farmers from North Dakota then?

Troy Joshua: I hope you don't have any.

Mark Wadsworth: John Berrey was next.

John Berrey: I'm the chairman of the Quapaw Tribe. We would like to have our information published, so if I can help free that up, that will be fine. I will tell you, I wasn't going to fill my form. I just kept throwing it away, but I keep getting a letter under penalty of law if I didn't fill it out. Finally, I got scared and filled it out. I think that worked pretty well, so I applaud that effort. So I did it fill out, you're going to arrest me today?

Mark Wadsworth: Leslie.

Leslie Wheelock: So a couple of quick comments. When I was there, National Congress of American Indians did help with, we worked with NASS, and helped to promote filling out these census forms, especially with the thousand-dollar cut-off. Because most of our tribal people, they'll look at this and they'll say, I have just have this little farm, or I just have this little garden, or whatever. They don't actually have to sell the product. It's a value of the production, the value of the products that they have. We barter a lot. We give away a lot. The value of that is important, and it's usually pretty easy to calculate.

NRCS in Alaska, we have the highest number of hoop houses or high tunnels being built in Alaska, so they would have those numbers. That would be an example of the kind of cross USDA fertilization and work that we can come up with. Derrick, I

think that the Pueblo Governor's Council would probably be a good source to educate about the importance of publishing. We possibly have a statistical issue with the number of farms in some locations. It's important to all the pueblos that the governors understand the importance and it doesn't look like it. You can see, they didn't all sign on to having their data published. You can work with them to help get that kind of a message out. I think we need to get more of the message out probably to our tribal leaders. That's probably something we can help with. The location or venue you use for that, it's the regional meetings and the national congress.

Troy Joshua: Yes.

Mark Wadsworth: We have two more individuals, and then we'll go on to the next one. Gilbert.

Gilbert Harrison: Good afternoon, Gilbert Harrison from Navajo. So you're the one that sent out this threatening letter, huh, saying if you don't do, we're going to come get you. But anyway, I wanted to ask a question. How do you account for - in Southwest, we have a major drought going on, so that has an impact into the crops and the livestock that's raised out on the reservation. Is that taking into account how the weather affects your statistics?

Troy Joshua: Yes. You're talking about kind of like our annual program, am I correct?

Gilbert Harrison: Yes.

Troy Joshua: Yes, we have models where we collect data. For instance, for crops, we collect data monthly. We look at the indications. We go to farming community, the farmers, and ask them what do they expect their yield? What is the yield on their land? Not only that but for certain speculative crops such as wheat, soybeans, corn, cotton, rice, we go out to the field. We start pulling the crops. It's called an objective yield where we'd look at the weight of the pods, the bulbs. There's a combination of two indications that we use, and the weather condition is a huge impact on what we are producing. Because what's interesting about what we do is the fact that for one month we're going to get an abundant amount of rain that can damage the crop, and then the next month we can have sun. We can say that the crop is done. But timely weather conditions can change everything. So yes, livestock - during 2012, the price of cattle was not good. But now, the price of cattle in some areas is pretty decent. I didn't want to say everywhere because not my --

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you.

Troy Joshua: Yeah, I didn't want to --

Mark Wadsworth: Mary, do you have a question?

Mary Thompson: Yeah, I do have a question. If I was going to fill out this Council for Native American Farming and

Ranching recommendation pamphlet, under the recommendation title would be NASS, and then under the issue and/or request: more outreach to educate rural Indian communities about the importance of data collection and at an earlier date. So the action item would be for 2017 census data would be making contacts and partnerships and start now? Okay, so who do I give this to?

Female Voice: Give to John.

Male Voice: And we're working on that.

Mary Thompson: There's a draft there. You can touch it up for me.

Male Voice: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Any more questions?

Henry Holder: Mr. Joshua, I got a comment that kind of a follow up on what Mr. Berrey said there. You may want to change the language in some of that census. I always fill mine out because I know what impact it has, but I have lots of friends and neighbors that do not fill it out. I ask them did you fill that out? "No, I didn't." Why? "Well, I don't want the government up in my business." I say they're not really getting your business. You're trying to be counted anything we can get. Some of these information in Oklahoma is going to be short. I can probably fill this table out with people that do not fill that out because they think it's the government trying to find

out what they do, what they own, and how much they own and all that. You may want to look at simplifying some of that language in that.

Troy Joshua: One thing that we're trying to do is highlight the confidentiality. When I was in Jersey, I received the same comments. I received it all the time. But I always tell the people that I'm a little guy. I can go to jail, I can be fined, and I have a family. So I don't want to go to jail, okay? I don't want to be fined at all. So confidentiality is key here, and we're going to highlight that more.

Henry Holder: I think that would be something that would get a better chance, especially in Oklahoma.

Troy Joshua: But we need friends because I can say this all day and all night, and I've been talking this and saying this for 20 years. But I still hear the fact that the farming community don't want to fill it out because they don't want the government in their business. We've never had a breach of data, and we don't intend to. So your information is confidential with us, but we need friends to tell that story for us because I can say it all day. And we are planning on getting out there in the community. You're in Oklahoma, I think you said. Am I right, sir?

Henry Holder: Yes, sir.

Troy Joshua: Will Hundl is the state statistician that's there, but he needs to get out too. When we had our meeting there, he was there and other people from Native American tribes. Jackie, what's the gentleman that was from -- is the name Stansti [phonetic]?

Female Voice: Steve Bound [phonetic].

Troy Joshua: Steve Bound.

Henry Holder: Steven Bound. I see, yeah.

Troy Joshua: Okay, you see?

Henry Holder: Yeah.

Troy Joshua: Yeah, so he was there. I'm putting a team together to talk about certain things that we have issues to try to improve the 2017 census. I plan on him being on that committee with me.

Henry Holder: He's a good guy.

Troy Joshua: Yes, he is.

Henry Holder: He is. He does well.

Troy Joshua: But I still need others out there. He can't do it by himself. But we're planning of getting out there and seeing more of us. If you need me to come out, just invite me out there. If you need Jackie or you need somebody from D.C. to come out to visit with you, we'll do that because we need to improve this data collection. We know this. We don't have a hundred percent but we want a hundred percent.

Henry Holder: A lot of these people, I mean, I try to tell them you're shooting yourself on the foot here. I mean, be counted in that way. This year we had the drought relief. They're not going to sign up on because they don't want the government in their business. This is not the government's business. We're rural out there. Some of the mentality of some people have not changed. And you're right, we've got to carry it too. We got to have friends. But we got to change that to get an accurate count. A lot of that, too, the older people that are really anti-government are kind of fading out now so the younger bunch is leaving [sounds like]. Like I said, the confidentiality thing has really pushed that. Maybe they will loosen them up a little bit anyway.

Troy Joshua: You talked about rural, I'm originally from Louisiana.

Henry Holder: There you go. You know what I'm talking about.

Troy Joshua: Yeah.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you, Troy. I sure appreciate that.

Troy Joshua: Sorry about the time.

Mark Wadsworth: Carrying on with the next agenda, we have the update from the Forest Service on the leasing regulations with Ralph Giffen.

Ralph Giffen: Good afternoon, and thank you for inviting me here. We had been working on trying to revise a lot of our ways in which we do work for quite some time, so we continue. At times, there's a great amount of opposition to doing things differently from inside and outside the agency. I tell you, sometimes it can be things that have to do with the environment and things that have to do with politics. So we're dealing with a lot of that, too. One thing that in talking with John and even some of the members here previously, we're trying to make sure that we are giving you the right information on what we're doing. The way in which we describe this and talked about this is very important.

At this time, what we are trying to do is revise our policies directive as what we're calling it and these are not at the regulation level. I'm sure many of you are familiar with this, but going down through the way in which we have to do things at least in the federal government is once a law is passed, then we have to build regulations on how those agencies that are under that law will operate. Those are the code of federal regulations. We do that. From that, then we will begin to work on those operating procedures, principles, and things like that that the agency is going to do, how-to kind of things in our manuals and handbooks.

That's where we are right now and we find that although there have been some changes in the law, we've had a difficult time going to address some of the regulations at this point in time. But we do really need to change some of our operating procedures. And so what we're trying to do at least get to those things and try to get those procedures in line with recent court cases, with recent regulations that have come out in our planning and in other ways in which we've changed some of the regulations so that we can then administer our range lands, administer our permits inside those regulations.

I'm trying to get a set of level in which we're not expecting great differences in how we regulate some of the grazing uses on national forest system lands. Certainly, there's a heck of a lot of contention out there. A part of that we've looked at. I think, in fact, when we tried to bring some of these directives out in 2005, some of the ways in which we addressed issues became so contentious that we had quite a few field hearings that had to do with those kinds of directives. We had to pull back from that and we're beginning again.

So where are we now? The latest effort that we have been attempting to get done started some time ago. Part of that is to figure out the best way in which can get information from very many different entities that will and have been using the national forest lands but also those others who have a very

strong interest in how they're managed. We had hoped that sometime in the recent past, maybe even the distant past, we would have been allowed to keep moving forward. At this point in time, we're still waiting for the permission to get the announcement into the Federal Register. Certainly, we are working very hard with the department and with the undersecretary's office and through USDA to be able to bring this forward.

What we're really going to do at this step though is not to present anything new. This is a different approach than most ways. What we want to do is ask people to look at what we have now. After looking at that, tell us what they see is something they like, something they don't like, and things that are missing from what they would like to see in our directives. We certainly know there are many things that we have to work with. There are many things that need changing. There just is language and there that is probably 35 years old that we haven't changed. In fact, there's even sections in there that deal with the information databases that no longer exist in our agency, so we're trying to catch up on that.

First is letting people know that we're going to do this. Hopefully, at any time, and I'm hoping it's within the next month, we will be announcing in the Federal Register that we will go out and ask for people to give us feedback on what we

have. We've also developed a number of contacts. In fact, I think unless someone else would be talking with John prior to when we release this and just give a heads up that we're going to do this. This is what it is and probably if we can supply some information on where it is and how we're going to roll this out again.

Once we go through that timeframe, we'll engage the Udall Center, the U.S. Center for Environment Conflict Resolution, to help us go and do a lot of interviews with groups, individuals as to what we have in our directives just to get even more in-depth ways and getting feedback from them. I'm not sure how many, we will have many different individuals and groups that they will talk to just so that they can get a different sense than just in a very mass public reply to what we've asked for. Once we've done that, we might even be able to take what they've done, summarize and find other groups. Maybe have some other focus groups that we can talk to and interview about some of the issues that they have or some of the ways which they would like to see us change what we're doing.

Typically, the announcement is a 60-day comment period. After that 60 days, we will start with our rewriting, revising of our directives which could take quite some time depending upon the issues we need to address, the ways in which we have to revise, how we are going to proceed or processes and things like

that. Once we do that, and this is probably a more critical stage, we will come back and present through the Federal Register our draft proposal for those directives. Then that will go through a period again of comment. We hope, again, to have either group or one on one forums so we can talk about those things and get more feedback on what we're going to do. Once we do that, we will put together the final directives work. Then, again, proceed to publish those things. So that then, hopefully, in a not too distant time we will have revised a lot of what we have on our operating procedures.

One of the things we are intending to do, too, is although we'll get a lot of comments on the "how to's." I know we'll get a lot of comments that will have to do with our regulations. In fact, there would be a lot of comments. You might even have questions that deal with how the law is structured and how we have to deal with that. We'll take those with our agency, and probably presenting those things to our department to figure out ways in which we can work on some of those things too. Certainly, Congress asked us on some of the programs of certain ways in which we might improve or certain ways in which we might change what we're doing. These things would be valuable to explain to Congress how through this public process we've got some feedback on how we'd like to or how people would like to see changes to the agencies.

I think so much, in fact, over the years, so many of the questions that I've gotten from people, it really deals with the way in which the law has been structured for grazing permits on the forest or grazing leases on the Bureau of Land Management lands. There are some very specific items in the law. It's at times very hard to present that without also saying that maybe there's not a lot of fairness in some of these things that were put together probably 100 years ago at least. We'll look at those and certainly we'll look at ways to improve that too.

One of the portions of our manual, which is a higher level than our handbook, has to deal with other agreements, and other agreements include agreements with tribes or individuals who are tribal members. It also speaks a little bit to treaty and rights that have to do with the tribal rights. We know that these portions are probably sorely out of date, so we've been working very closely with our Office on Tribal Relations in trying to really have a robust list of people to contact when we bring this out. We've already built a significant mailing list so that once we do get going, we will ask for comments from all of you, others out there too. A part of that is not just the informal part, which we would begin here with our initial announcement but get in to that formal consultation process later on. Again, we'd certainly take your advice on how you'd like to precede with some these things, but also we do have some

procedures that we'll have to follow in that formal consultation. Again, we're really trying to find a way to get a lot of information. It may be overwhelming, but it has been too long since we've looked at these things and too long since we revised them, so we certainly hope to do that.

I didn't bring any presentation. Like I said, nothing is on the street. I can't really give you something to see now because at this time we're still waiting to get approval to present that. But certainly once we move ahead, I can get information. We certainly do have a lot of information, places to go to look for this stuff. We'll be, like I said, working through our regional offices in the West and also with the Udall Center to try to get a very dynamic forum and conversation going on this. I would open it up to questions at this time if you really would like that.

Mark Wadsworth: John Lowery?

John Lowery: I'm speaking out of turn here. But I just want to say, first of all, the council has provided recommendations to the Forest Service. You've been able to use base property requirements.

Ralph Giffen: Yes.

John Lowery: Also, asking that to review the impact of the current system of preferences for grazing and permits on the ability of Native American ranchers to participate in this

system, and also develop guidance on best practices for how we're grazing, and also asking at the Forest Service to create a partnership with tribes. We want to hear from tribes during the review and revision of the grazing directives. So we have put those out there. I don't know if there's another way for us to include them during the comment section or just the letter to the secretary from the council satisfies that. But whatever we need to do to make this as formal as possible, we would do that, and I will continue to work with you.

I believe that there are a few individuals on this council who would love to be a part of any of those, of the interview process and also going back to their tribal governments and probably get resolutions and recommendations as well. And we definitely want to invite you back here to continue to provide us with an update as you move forward. I know that these processes can take a while. I've been in the federal system long enough to know that things can take years, two to three years. But I would definitely like to ask just keep us updated and also to keep our Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management subcommittee updates as well. Thank you.

Ralph Griffen: Absolutely, absolutely. Again, if you want to give me some names of people, I'm not looking for a very large generous list. Like I said, the Forest Service has I don't know how many hundreds of tribal leaders, addresses and

that or councils. So we certainly have that and we're ready to start working through that system. But, again, in the interview process, we certainly would appreciate some people. Not just leadership, we're looking for anybody who might have a different perspective on how to do this.

You know, I've looked at the letter and I've looked at the recommendations. I've talked to some of our leadership and replied to that. I'm not sure if they've completed a letter back to you. Some of what we're dealing with, really, in some of the recommendations but working together, we can do. Looking at some of them, it does touch on the statute and the laws. That, to me, is going to be the hardest part of how to do this because I know there are many people who see some of the ways in which we operate and ask us why. I can't say anything more than point them to the specific section of the law that says here's how we operate. And it may not appear to be fair at all, but to do other than what we have is tough to get outside of the law and still maintain your presence on the street. It's kind of like Troy had said.

So we're trying to do that. That's why I said also, especially with some of the groups who have not been part of the grazing, I'm trying to bring those issues forward to the department or agency to address. Again, it will have to be maybe in some recommendations to Congress as we go. Other than

that, there's not much more than we can do in some of the areas, although, certainly, we can look for procedures that our folks on the ground can probably do things better or in a different fashion. I can't tell you what they are. We're going through about everything we have right now. Yes, sir?

Mark Wadsworth: Gilbert Harrison.

Gilbert Harrison: Hello. My name is Gilbert Harrison. I'm from the Navajo in the Four Corners. We have two federal agencies here, your office and the BIA here. I think one of the issues we have is this base property and people and - ranchers that have a valid BIE grazing permit. They have a base property even though it's in trust status. I think somewhere along the way that needs to be counted as true base property when a person applies for leasing or grazing permit on other federal lands. Because right now, we're being told, you know, you're from the reservation, and because you don't have base property, you can't apply for a federal lease. Yet, they're both federal properties. If you have a valid lease, a place where you can take your livestock, that should be a valid fulfillment of the requirements. I think, to me, that's basically an agreement between two agencies without having to go through a whole rigmarole of federal updates. I don't know. This is, to me, we have two federal agencies that need to say, okay, for grazing purposes, you have valid grazing permit on trust land. It

should be good enough if you can apply for grazing in other areas, BLM or some other land. I don't know whether that's just an agreement between two agencies that can be done. Thank you.

Ralph Griffen: Yeah. Thank you. That's one of those issues that has been difficult for many years not just for tribes but other people. There are areas of the country, and I worked in one, where municipalities or other agencies basically bought up all the valley, so it's mostly leased lands. People there were having a hard time to be able to apply for permits because their leases, although may have been 100 years, it wasn't recognized. This is the issue with what's in the law and what's in the regulations and that the requirement for based property is in there.

I think - we are still trying to figure out some ways, especially with tribal members, in trying to meet that base property requirement. Sometimes I think in some places, we have worked with the council and ownership of the lands and describing it as such and looking at some of the members as lessees. There are may be other ways to do that. But right now, it's very hard to work through some of the legal issues and still be within regulations. Certainly, there are other people looking at what we're doing. They will challenge us on some of these if we are not living up to those conditions there. Again,

that's probably one of the most difficult issues we have to deal with right now.

Gilbert Harrison: Is it a federal statute or is it a regulation?

Ralph Griffen: This is based in, yes, in a federal law, the federal land. I know the acronym very well. The Federal Land Policy and Management, I just say FLPM because being in a federal agency, the acronyms come easy for me. It has to deal with both the Forest Service Lands and Bureau of Land Management lands, although, the Bureau of Land Management lands, there are organic acts that set them up. It's the Taylor Grazing Act that does some things different than what we had in the formation of the forest reserves. So you always have a little bit of a twist there. But in this case, base property for us is one thing in the law.

Base property for the BLM has a lot to do with water property, which we don't have in our law. Again, there are some differences. But those are the kinds of things we recognize. We'll have to bring forward as issues we'll have to deal with. It's not an easy one. That's for sure.

Mark Wadsworth: Sarah Vogel.

Sarah Vogel: I'm extremely sympathetic to the legal challenges that you face, the different laws, and I think there's Bankhead-Jones law in there too.

Ralph Griffen: Indeed, yes, with our national grasslands. Yes, indeed.

Sarah Vogel: Yeah. The Bankhead-Jones is probably fairly important. But I'll just tell you a little bit of my perspective. Over the years, I worked with a lot of Native American farmer and rancher groups. Generally, we were fighting against the BIA about the rates that the ranchers had to pay. People would be looking over the fence line, so to speak, and looking at the Forest Service land and say, gosh, if I can only get into that. That is so much cheaper and so on and so on. But the door is slammed shut on the Native Americans who are right there. Just right over the fence line, it's this other land. In part, it's because the Forest Service deals with grazing associations. Those grazing association themselves, you may as well call them the white ranchers' club. It's been that way for like 100 years. It's a club and it's closed. That's a big problem.

I think there are people in this council who would really love to dig in on this with you. I've certainly observed the grazing associations beat up on hard working civil servants from the Forest Service who are trying to manage grazing levels or anything like that. It's a very difficult thing, but I think we simply have to deal with it. I think around this table are probably a fair amount of people who would like to participate,

but perhaps not at the tail end and more at the beginning end. I mean a lot of it is local too. It might be one in Arizona and another issue in South Dakota. But if there was a way where we could really dig into this and work with you to resolve some of it. By the way, I've also represented some of those white ranchers' clubs.

Female Voice: [Indiscernible]

Sarah Vogel: What?

Mark Wadsworth: Whoever pays her the most.

Sarah Vogel: Well, they're good people. I mean there's nothing wrong with them. They've inherited it and they want to keep it.

Female Voice: [Indiscernible] keep it.

Sarah Vogel: Absolutely.

Ralph Griffen: Absolutely, that is because of the purchasing of lands. All the lands that either defaulted on or were part of the sell back to the government became all of these national grasslands. We picked them up in the early '60s after a couple of other agencies like the precursor to the FSA and the precursor for ACS and SCS managed these things. The purposes under the Bankhead-Jones Act were really kind of look at trying to recover that agricultural purpose there. They tried to do it through ways of collectively bringing together ranchers, farmers in these associations. We have inherited a system of grazing

associations and the whole way in which they were set up so that they would be set up under state sanctioning of these. It's a very unusual thing for us in the Forest Service. Although they're important lands, they aren't very large in the amount of land base as the natural forest system. We have had some difficulties there, and we certainly have been attempting to make some corrections.

The basis for, again, having permits there really lies in how base property or permitted livestock is obtained. That goes back into a long history of the laws and regulations that were set up to do that. That, again, many people want to get into it. I don't know if you can recall but in the early '90s, Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt had fast forward with what was called range reform. It was a major effort to get in to regulatory changes. It's extremely difficult when you're dealing with all the public lands because so many interests have so many ideas on how they want to do it. As soon as you do, especially in the West and Midwest, the politicians become immediately involved and it becomes quite a game of trying to move forward.

I don't want to sound like an apologist. I know there are issues. I know that inside the agency, we're trying to deal with some of those that I can't really speak of but we know there are issues. We're trying to figure out how to make or

bring in some equity to some of these. Hopefully, in a couple of cases, we've done that.

Mark Wadsworth: Yeah. Also, could you kind of give us I guess the battles that you faced. The situation that happened with the individual down in Nevada, is that being rectified?

Ralph Griffen: The person in Nevada was grazing on the public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. He's not unusual if you're talking about recently Cliven Bundy in Southeast Arizona. But that's not unusual in many places. I'm not saying that their beliefs shouldn't be there. But we find especially in the Great Basin and in many in the rural areas, and even in Northern New Mexico with the population there, even in North Dakota and South Dakota, you get very rural environments, there is certainly at times not a real good feeling about the government and the fact that the government is regulating lands that they think are theirs whether they are or not. The public lands, of course, belong to all the citizens of the U.S., and you hear this a lot. Probably, many of you in my age especially when you grow up, everything was a long ways away because the road systems were still graveled dirt. The major highways were the only thing that had pavement so everything felt a long ways away, and it was.

Here we are many years later and information flow and especially travel, these rural communities just aren't that

rural, yet they're very much that way in how they think of themselves and address themselves. So when you have more interest from outside groups, especially environmental groups, who are looking at activities like logging and now more so grazing, the controversy is extremely high. They're going to find every place they can to insert themselves. We have all the issues that any place has everywhere. We have significant lawsuits that have to deal with the ability to manage livestock grazing properly. We have lawsuits that have to do with eliminating livestock where we have threatened and endangered species. We are having issues where at times we feel that we need to continue good flows of water for purposes that meet the national forest needs and we get sued on that. In fact, we have ongoing cases, one in Nevada from 27 years ago. We have people who in fact claimed that much of the public lands certainly have historic grazing rights prior to any of the statutes.

Certainly, some of you, you're probably familiar, too, with the position of many folks in the Southwest that the U.S. government, when they took over much of the Southwest, those land were still grant lands to many of the people. There are certainly assertions that those lands need to go back to the people who had been living there for generations. So you have all kinds of things you have to deal with. Yet from our side is that, these are still federal lands. They have federal laws.

People everywhere are going to ask -- to use those things or use those like their parents, grandparents, and on back five to seven and sometimes ten generations. But it's just, this is a different world. The scrutiny on what we do is so high.

Mark Wadsworth: Yup, Mary Thompson.

Mary Thompson: Thank you. Well, I will be looking at you but really I'm talking to BIA, so Catherine. I have a little bit of understanding of statutes and all and regulations and how it trickles down to handbooks or manuals and on down to handbooks when it comes to policy. I guess whenever you're seeking input from the people, I hope you're really including both ends of the management spectrum. The lower level management that I, the farmer have to deal with out there when it comes to some of your policies and making sure that upper management and lower management are on the same page whenever they're administering these programs. I think that a lot of these policies have gotten lost in between D.C. and the range land farmer out there. The same applies with BIA as far as, well, enforcing but applying policy. Thank you.

Ralph Griffen: A very good comment and we've already identified people who are reviewing our policies. In fact, we've always tried to get those people who are at the ground level to be part of our review and rewriting on what we do. I was out there for a long time. I do things. I've been back

here a long time so I know things [indiscernible] the most important aspect somebody has to apply what we say to you folks at the field level or others at state level. They need to be part of this [indiscernible] so we do have the people that would be part of this whole effort and some of the core people.

Mary Thompson: I do hope it happens sooner than later.
Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you, Ralph, we sure appreciate that.

Mark Griffen: Oh, you're very welcome. Again, whenever you need to meet again and need some updates, I'm hoping, again, we can do something. In a month from now looms an election and things have a tendency to stop or wait with that occurrence.

Gilbert Harrison: Excuse me. Excuse me, Mark, but this is Gilbert from Navajo. This issue of what we talked about here, base property, that's still under consideration or it will one of those that will be up for revision when you guys do your updates?

Mark Griffen: The core of it would not be up for review and revision because it's in the regulations and statutes. However, there may be ways in which, especially in relation to tribal members or councils, we might be able to find a different way to manage. It might take a lot of work and I think that's a key thing for us to work on. That's one area I think that the council and maybe even some folks can help us with that. But we

really need to have people who can understand many different facets of the law, regulations and help us walk that path.

Gilbert Harrison: My last question for BI, is there a way within the regulations where trust lands can be identified and classified as base property if you have a valid grazing permit in an area that you have on the nation right now? Can that be, quote, classified as base property to fill their requirements?

Catherine Webber: I am not familiar with that one. I can check with our people.

Ralph Griffen: That's probably a question to me because I don't think she can answer it. It's really our regulations and statutes that might prevent bringing those forward and it being accepted by us, so we have to [cross-talking].

Gilbert Harrison: As I sit here, the basic thing is it's in the regulations base property but the definition. Now, if you live on trust land, you have a valid grazing permit from the BIA. To me, that's no different than any other base property. What I'm saying is why can't you guys consider that piece of paper as proof that you have base property if the law has been fulfilled.

Ralph Griffen: That's a very good comment. In fact, those are the kinds of things we need to look at, we need to address. We certainly will have to talk to our attorneys because they have probably the final say with a lot of things we do as we

delve into these things where we're splitting hairs between regulations and policy, but thank you.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you.

Ralph Griffen: Yes.

Mark Wadsworth: Sarah.

Sarah Vogel: I have a request. You talked about the law and the definitions on the base property. I suspect that's pretty close to the top of your stack of papers back in your desk. Would you mind sending what you consider to be the key laws and regulations regarding base property to John? Then he can forward it to all of us. That way we could -- I've looked at that but it's not close to the front of my brain. I think that way we could all take a look at that and then develop a more informed comment and feedback with you.

Ralph Griffen: Yup, I will do that.

Sarah Vogel: Thank you.

Ralph Griffen: Yeah.

Mark Wadsworth: All right.

Sarah Vogel: Good luck to you.

Ralph Griffen: Well, you know, if it takes too long as long as we did the last time, I'll be retired and doing something else, but thank you. Thanks again.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you. Should we just have a break and then we'll go in to other until 3:30 and then we'll just

move in to the other presentation. So 3:30, we'll start on time too.

[End of file]

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United States Department of Agriculture-
Council for Native American Farming and Ranching
September 25, 2014 - 3:30 PM

Mark Wadsworth: We'll kind of get started here as Vinnie is getting ready. Gilbert would like to make one more comment.

Gilbert Harrison: I'd like to request both Leslie and then John, if you could keep the council apprised of the status of the last presenter and what they're going to do about changing some of the ways they do that would be good because we don't always have time or we don't always get a chance to look in the Federal Register. If you would just email us and say it's coming up when we can look at some of the details of that, if you would do that for the council, I would appreciate that.

Thank you.

Vinnie Panizo: I'm Vinnie Panizo. I work at USDA in the 1994 Tribal Land-Grant Colleges and Universities Program. I'm going to tell you a little bit about some of the programs that I'm working on mainly the TCU/VISTA - the Tribal Colleges and Universities/Volunteers in Service through America program - and the TCU Exchange both of which fall under the Tribal College Land-Grant Development Initiative that we are working on. The

Tribal College and University Land-Grant Development Initiative represents a partnership between the federal entities committed to providing coordinated support to 1994 tribal colleges and universities. Right now these federal entities are USDA and the Department of the Interior who are partnering to do this TCU/VISTA program.

Through this partnership that we have with the Department of Interior, several positions are being funded through the Bureau of Indian Affairs as well as USDA agencies and are being programmatically managed through our office. Does anyone know what VISTA volunteers are? They're kind of like domestic Peace Corps volunteers. We actually started this project earlier this year, in 2014, and we have now recruited seven schools that are participating and we have six VISTA volunteers recruited to work on the project.

I'm going to tell you a little bit about those projects. They're right here on the PowerPoint we have, the different colleges: College of Menominee Nation in Green Bay, Wisconsin; Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico; United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, North Dakota; Leech Lake Tribal College in Cass Lake, Minnesota; Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College in Hayward, Wisconsin. In November we'll have a project starting at Iñiságvik Community

College in Barrow, Alaska; and next February or April we'll have a project at the Institute of American Indian Arts.

I'm going to tell you a little bit about the project at the College of Menominee Nation. I'll just go over a couple not in too much detail. What we asked the colleges to do is to put together a project that either fell under economic development, healthy futures, or environmental stewardship with a connection to either healthy futures or economic development. The College of Menominee Nation has participated in another program that our office runs which is a tribal fellowship program. What that is it's basically USDA invites faculty and staff from tribal colleges to come to the USDA and learn about programs that relate to their institutions or to their area of expertise. In 2013 we invited the land-grant directors of the tribal colleges, and the College of Menominee Nation is one of the colleges that attended.

We had a workshop. The week-long fellowship revolved around the theme of developing a land-grant plan, and we had a workshop for the colleges to do that. The College of Menominee Nation really took that exercise to task as do many of the other colleges. At that time maybe only two or three tribal colleges even had a land-grant plan, and what that is it's basically just a plan of what that department within the larger institution is going to do - what's their objective, what are they trying to

do, where do they want to go. Following that workshop, I think a few months went by where the plan just kind of got set aside and then it popped back up and they brought it to the faculty and started working on it.

Once they developed this plan that they shared with the faculty and kind of worked collaboratively, it really helped them to focus where they wanted to put their efforts and what kinds of monies they wanted to go after. Because before putting together a land-grant plan, if they had some time and something came up that looked interesting, they'd kind of go for it. But now they have a clearer vision of what they want to do. The plan can always change and evolve, but they know a little bit more about what they want to do and have more focus. As a result of developing a plan, they've been able to get more resources to actually accomplish what they want to do.

One of the exciting things is that they also agreed to get a TCU/VISTA volunteer that's being funded through DOI and USDA. They got Sarah Tuori. She attended Western Washington University. She recently graduated, but has ten years' experience working in ag. She started farmers' markets. She has had her own farm, all kinds of really neat things. And she's been at the College of Menominee Nation since April and in that time she helped to build and organize the building of 12 to 14 raised bed gardens across the campus and there hadn't been

any before that. They have actually started a farmers' market and I think she helped to organize it and then turned it over to the Sustainable Development Department and now they're maintaining it. So it's really great that we were able to help bring someone in that had some background and expertise to also work with the community to help them accomplish what it is that they want to accomplish and do it under the direction of their land-grant department.

So these are just some of their first quarter successes that they were able to do which we just talked about. Then one of our projects is starting in November. It's this project in Ilisagvik Community College melding contemporary and traditional food preparation and preservation techniques for healthy futures and obesity prevention. One of the things that we often hear from the schools is that it's very hard for them to recruit folks with the expertise to kind of go to some of the more remote areas. We've been working really hard because we knew that this was potentially going to be an issue. We've really worked hard to target a lot of institutions that will have hopefully someone with the background that they want to carry out their project.

First we went all over the place - American Indian Graduate Center, just anywhere. We really tried to recruit. We also learned that it's good to recruit for colder regions, in colder

climate states because otherwise it's very hard to get folks from New Mexico and Arizona to want to move to Wisconsin. So that's something we learned pretty quick after our first round of recruitment. But we found Charlotte Ambrozek who has graduated with the Bachelor of Science in International Agriculture and Rural Development, and she's going to be going to Ilisaġvik to help them coordinate resources. So she won't necessarily be teaching any kind of like traditional ways of hunting and fishing, but she'll be really coordinating the resources based on what the department wants to accomplish.

We also have another project at Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College. They are starting a Beginning Producer Program which is really cool. I don't know too much about what's been going on on the ground for this one, but what's really exciting is that their initial goal was to graduate 10 producers from the program. But what actually happened is that they have not just 10 producers but 10 families which means it's more along the lines of 50 to 60 folks because it's the children, it's the spouses, it's the grandparents. They all just go to the farm on the weekend or on a weekday, whenever they have the courses. At the same time they have classes for the kids, and then they have the raised bed gardens where they can do training for elders. It's really become this really cool family event.

These are just a few cumulative highlights for the first three projects in the first quarter of what these young folks were able to accomplish working with their institution. So acres of public and tribal lands that are cleaned or improved through the project facilitator or started by VISTA, 21; community gardens constructed and maintained through VISTA initiative, 13; the number of youths participating in food or gardening programs, 10. These are a few cumulative highlights of just three colleges that took place within the first two months of the projects, so just the first two months.

Now I'm going to tell you a little bit about the TCU Exchange. Basically what that is, is that's kind of an effort to get information from these tribal colleges because they're doing such amazing things but then it's kind of in their whole spot. The TCU Exchange is a collaborative effort to exchange information that supports TCUs in their pursuit to build minds, communities and values in Indian Country. The TCU Exchange includes resource guides in its online community. The resource guides are short publications that take a holistic approach to describe how a specific resource was developed at a tribal college or university.

So this is an example of the first resource guide, which I just finished yesterday. It took me two years to do. It's not that complicated, but it did take a while. Bay Mills Community

College has built a demonstration farm. One of the things that they did really well that when I went there and saw what they've done, it was how well they partnered with USDA to get things done and just the really great relationship that they had with their 1862 partner. I realized that's not always possible, but this institution just happens to have that.

Basically the land-grant director has a lot of great knowledge and I interviewed him and asked him to do a lot of presentations. We talked about how they built community support. I called the NRCS liaison that worked there back in 2002 and interviewed him, and talked to the RD folks to kind of put something together that would show a holistic approach to how they were able to get from point A of the few people in the community wanting to build some raised bed gardens to point D of having a demonstration farm with a garage and a conservation plan, and how they were actually able to get the tribe to provide lands to the college for this farm. There's a sample of the survey that they did. So just to kind of get folks thinking about how not necessarily that everyone needs to build a demonstration farm but just how they actually got something off the ground and accomplished all the different variables that went into it.

So it's the resource guide which is up there on the left, and then also an online community which I'm going to show you

really quick. It's basically tcuexchange.org. Basically, what this is, is it's a way where we can invite folks. So usually faculty from the tribal colleges to have authorship and are allowed to post, and also our VISTA volunteers in the field, we allow them to post as well. Anyone can go here. It's www.tcuexchange.org, and I post here a lot. I'm kind of the main one, but I'm hoping that other people will really take it over. Slowly but surely folks are starting to get on there and post things. So this is just an email that Suzette Agans, I don't know if anyone knows her, she works at Rural Development and she just happens to know about tons of funding resources and amazing resources out there. She sends an email every week so I post it on here. This is something that VISTA had found that she thought was worth sharing.

This is the VISTA at United Tribes Technical College. They celebrated the AmeriCorps' 20th year anniversary. The governor's first lady attended and they got a lot of great publicity for that in the state. This is the farmers' market that they just started at the College of Menominee Nation. We've got some pictures on here. So folks can kind of just really celebrate whatever it is that they're doing and maybe even invite folks to contact them and find out how they did whatever it is that they're doing. Then if you click here, you could see the different pictures.

This is the last thing and then I'll be done, different pictures that our VISTAs have put up. This was at SIPI. I'm not sure exactly what they're doing here. The food and gardening series, potluck that they've done. Here also at SIPI they had built a shade structure. The community really wanted one so they got people together and built the shade structure. Oh, this is the training that we recently did. Yeah, so it's basically it.

So these were just a few things that our office is doing to work with tribal colleges. If you know of a tribal college that you think could benefit from some of these, please let me know and we'll be happy to work with them because we will have new VISTA positions opening up and we are always trying to get more folks involved in the fellowships. Thank you. Do you have any questions?

Gilbert Harrison: Good afternoon. Thank you. This is Gilbert. One time we heard that in the Federal Register there's going to be a topic of a tribal USDA scholarship program. I wonder whatever happened to that? Did the Federal Register in consultation and all that took place? What is the status of that?

Vinnie Panizo: That is a great question. Lawrence Shorty, who is my boss, will respond.

Lawrence Shorty: One of the things that Vinnie and I have been talking about is how to incorporate internship opportunities to get more American students involved. The question actually ties very well with that. You're right, we had hoped to have the Federal Register notice out before our Office of Management and Budget number expired in December of 2012. We worked to have that done and made a request to have it expedited. We haven't been able to receive our OMB number yet. It had an effect of us being able to bring on board and recruit for scholarships. As of yet, the Federal Register notice has not yet been posted.

Gilbert Harrison: Any idea when that might be?

Lawrence Shorty: We will need to make another request to the people who will approve the Federal Register notice moving forward.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you.

Vinnie Panizo: Just really quick, I just want to tell you about the handouts. These are the team profiles. These are the six projects that we currently have. If you want to see what kinds of projects we have going on, they're right there. This is about the whole TCU Land-Grant Development Initiative. If you want to read about that or find out how to apply, a school can apply to get a VISTA.

Mark Wadsworth: I have a general question. There are a lot of tribes that do not have a tribal college, but they do have an extension program through the land-grant institutions within the state. Looking at your program and looking at the qualifications for the one exchange program that said you specifically have to have a tribal community college, is that correct?

Vinnie Panizo: Our office, the one that Lawrence and I work in, specifically serves 1994 federally recognized chartered tribal colleges.

Mark Wadsworth: Okay. Thank you.

Vinnie Panizo: You're welcome.

Leslie Wheelock: This is Leslie. I just have a quick response to Gilbert's question. If this is moving too slowly, this is something the council can recommend moving faster.

Mark Wadsworth: Another question I have. I'm always looking for equipment and I've seen that you became a provider for the excess property with the GSA. I can't remember where I highlighted that. Was that just off of the Internet?

Vinnie Panizo: I actually can give you information about that. If I take your card, I'll email you information. I don't know all of the details about it, but I can definitely put you in contact with someone who can help you do that. But that has been something that's been really great for the tribal colleges.

I think the tribes are eligible to access that equipment as well.

Leslie Wheelock: Yeah.

Vinnie Panizo: Yes. So I think that that's a great resource for anyone to really try to get in touch with. As you can see, Bay Mills Community College got a boat, all kinds of tractors, all kinds of equipment.

Mark Wadsworth: Finally, when you partnered with the USDA Rural Development for the infrastructure for a new building and then there was a matching fund requirement, how did that actually go through?

Vinnie Panizo: I don't know exactly how it went through. I just knew that to build this garage and the area that goes over, that they did that utilizing Rural Development and the facility's fund. So grants are typically not available to individuals, but they are often available to tribes, tribal colleges and the likes. It's definitely something worth exploring within your community.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you again.

Vinnie Panizo: You're welcome. You know, you can always give me a call and I'll try to connect you with people.

Mark Wadsworth: We have another question from Derrick.

Derrick Lente: Derrick Lente, Sandia Pueblo, New Mexico. Just a follow-up to your question on the dispersal of old

equipment, was that right? You talked about it being opened up to tribes. Does that also include tribal members? I think it's two different distinctions.

Vinnie Panizo: I think to individuals it's different, like you don't quite get -- I'm not sure exactly how it works for individuals, but I can definitely get that information to you. So if you want, I can send that to John and he can send that out to everyone if everyone is interested. But it is a great program.

Derrick Lente: Yes, ma'am. Thank you very much.

Vinnie Panizo: And there is no cost. You can get everything except for nuclear weapons. If you wanted to, there are probably other ways to do that. They just won't be free. So great, thank you so much.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you, Vinnie. We'll carry on to the next subject. The next topic will be NIFA's Organic Ag Research and Extension Initiative and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher and Development Program by Erin Daly.

Erin Daly: Good afternoon. You all have been here a long time today. I am here to talk about two of NIFA's grant programs. NIFA is the old CSREES for those of us who have been around a little while. We are the grant-making arm of the USDA. We support research extension and education programs primarily at the land-grant colleges. It was interesting to watch the

last presentation because most of our programs historically have really been opened to 1994 colleges and not a lot of other tribal groups. The two programs that I'm here to talk to about today are not as limited in their eligibility or in the people that they serve. There are two little pamphlets there that I'm hoping you'll take back with you.

The first program I'm going to talk about is the Organic Agricultural Research and Extension Initiative. You all are probably aware that the consumer demand for organic food has risen exponentially lately. As a result, farmers are looking for opportunities and ways to tap into that. The Organic Agriculture Research and Extensive Initiative, that's just a mouthful so we call it the OREI Program because we love acronyms and that's just easier to say. So I'm going to talk about it as the OREI Program which is a \$20 million a fiscal year program. It's funded '14 through '18, so it's not going to go away tomorrow. I'm going to tell you a little bit about the purpose of the program, who's eligible, and maybe some items about it that might pique folks' interest in taking this information back.

The purpose of the program is to support research, education and extension for organically grown and processed ag commodities. It's also to support the economic opportunities for communities that come out of organic farming. The

eligibility for the program is extremely broad. It actually does extend to individuals. It's a program that supports colleges and universities. It's not exclusive to four years so your community colleges will be able to apply. It also supports nonprofits and private organizations. The funds that are there are available broadly.

They're particularly interested in projects that emphasize whole farm planning and also delivering the practical research-based information to farmers. We know that over the years we have supported an increasing amount of research on organic farming. Now it's a matter of getting that research to the folks who are making choices about what they're growing, right? So this program is looking to increase that movement of research-based information to the farmers and also to the communities.

We're looking at putting a solicitation out in November for the 20 million that was made available for Fiscal Year 2015. We ask folks to keep an eye out for it. I will share with John and others when that solicitation comes out. I'll shoot an email so that we can make sure that you all are getting information about the funding opportunities at NIFA. But if you haven't already, if you go to our website you can subscribe. You could tell the site what type of organization you are and every time we post something that you're eligible for, you'll get an email. We

don't post that many. We post about 50 opportunities a year, so you might get a dozen emails for opportunities that are worth looking at.

One of the reasons it's important to catch that notice when it comes out is that they look for an intent to submit an application which is sometimes a hurdle for folks. If they don't pick up the solicitation when it comes out and send in an email saying that they intend to apply, a lot of programs won't let you submit an application unless you've done that. It allows us to figure out how many applications we're going to get but also gives us the basic information so that when we put our panel together to review those, we have all the right expertise to do the best job possible with that.

What types of proposals are we funding? We have integrated proposals that have two functions. They are either research and extension or research and education, and those are large awards up to \$2 million. But what may be more interesting to some of you folks is that we have a separate tier of grants that are up to \$750,000. In that group we are encouraging small to mid-sized minority-serving institutions and young scientists. So there is a research component to this that we're looking to support young scientists. Young. I don't think we're not allowed to even use that term anymore. I think it's early career scientists, right?

We also have a section of the program that looks for conference and analytical proposals. Those are \$50,000 awards. What you would be trying to do is identify a need in your community, an organic research extension or education need, and it's a one year \$50,000 input of funding, try to get out of that something useful for a future project.

It is important to note that there is a one-to-one match on these funds. That's mentioned in the solicitation, but we can waive it if the work that you're doing is applicable outside of your region. That means we can almost always waive it. No matter what you're working in, we can come up with some way that what you're doing might help someone outside your community.

That is kind of the highlights of the organic program. There is a section on NIFA's website and I think the information is there in the pamphlet that will provide you with more information if you're interested in learning more.

The other program I was going to talk about, if I can change gears for a minute, is one of the department's favorites at the moment, the Beginning Farmer and Rancher. Leslie?

Leslie Wheelock: Excuse me.

Erin Daley: Sure.

Leslie Wheelock: Can I ask a very quick question? The intent to file. We've had another program that rolled out this year and our tribes said, gee, we don't have time to get a

package put together and get a tribal resolution to get this in by the date that you've mentioned. We started talking around what does an intent to file mean and what does it contain. Is it a commitment? Is it so much information that it requires a tribal resolution or is it something that simply says if we can get our act together, we'll get our act together?

Erin Daley: It's the second thing there. It's an email that you're sending. I know that some of these intent to submits are like a mini proposal that require a lot of work. In the organic program, only 17 percent of our applications are funded so we know it's super competitive. As a result, we do not want people to put too terribly much effort early in the game because the payoff, again, statistically is 17 percent.

The email that we ask folks to send has like four or five major points in it, things like what's the title? What area are you working in? Are you working on organic lands? Because if it involves fieldwork, the fieldwork for this program has to be done either on organic certified land or land that's in transition to getting organically certified. So that's an important point as well. But, yeah, we would hope that that email requires very little effort. And certainly if it required a tribal resolution, I would think that that's too much, so we would want to know about that.

Leslie Wheelock: Thank you.

Erin Daly: So the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. Anybody heard of this one?

Leslie Wheelock: We had Lilia [phonetic] show the website earlier today.

Erin Daley: Oh, good. It's another really long name. I wish they would give us some easier to pronounce programs. This one you can't even really turn into an acronym. The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program has a \$20 million as well per fiscal year, so it is a sizable program. The reasons for this renewed interest in beginning farmers and ranchers are things that you all are probably aware of, the rising average age of farmers. There is an 8 percent projected decrease in the number of farmers and ranchers between 2008 and 2018, and there's really a growing recognition that the programs that we currently have are not enticing folks in one way or another to go into farming and ranching. So we're looking at the development of new programs and new approaches that are interesting and training folks to farm.

The eligibles for this program even before I go on, this program looks for collaborative applications: states, tribal groups, local or regionally-based networks, partnerships of public and private entities. So those are terms that are really loose. I'm not saying you have to have a 501(c)(3) certification. I'm not saying you have to be a 1994

institution. These kinds of loose networks and affiliations are the kinds of groups that this program looks to fund. It's a competitive program and it is looking to offer education, outreach, mentoring and technical assistance. Individual farmers and ranchers cannot apply. However, one of the reasons I think it's important for us to get the word out about this program is that you and I as taxpayers are pumping millions of dollars into the development of resources for beginning farmers and ranchers and if they don't know about it, then they're not going to be using it.

One of the things you'll find on that little pamphlet is the link to the website where most of the stuff we're financing through this program is posted. It's start2farm.gov with the number 2. Ninety-six percent of the information on that website is not USDA information. It's information that we together have financed to be developed by the communities in the communities to educate and mentor folks into this type of farming. There is a match of 25 percent required for these grants.

What else can I tell you that's interesting or important? We've made 145 awards totaling \$71.5 million out of this program. It's been around for a little while. A lot of our large programs were defunded for a year and refunded with the 2014 Farm Bill. This program was sort of born again in 2014,

and it was actually born again with a couple of interesting changes to it.

There are set-asides within that \$20 million. There's 5 percent that's available for the development -- remember this is for the development of educational outreach-type materials, as well as finding ways to transition research to function for limited resource beginning farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged farmers and workers, and farm workers who want to be farmers. So there's a 5 percent set aside out of the \$20 million each year, but it's just for support and services related to those groups.

In addition, the Farm Bill gave us another set-aside of 5 percent. This one is the more interesting of the two, I think. It is for the support and services of veterans desiring to become farmers, which is a new group that USDA, I think, is targeting specifically - folks who are interested, maybe unemployed or underemployed, having served the country. These support and services at that level we should be seeing a real difference in what's available. If it is a problem that research, education and extension can solve, I think we're going to get there pretty quickly with this kind of investment and movement in that direction.

So that was just last year that we got the language to allow us to fund those kinds of projects. It's interesting that

start2farm website will have the materials that are coming out of that grant. It's only been up and running less than a year so there won't be a ton of it right now, but in the coming year, I think we'll see the growth in those materials being available. What else might be interesting to you on this? I think I've picked the highlights for both these programs.

Leslie Wheelock: I've a very quick question. In the Farm Bill, some of the definitions were different for the veterans as well as for the other categories. So when you say veterans desiring to become farmers, can they have actually been farming for a period of time prior to coming in to this program or do they have to be brand new?

Erin Daley: I would have to look up the definition. But generally our beginning farmer and rancher, I think, is like three years or less. Yeah, it's not 10 years. It's less. The beginning farmer terminology differs and so does the veterans. I know there was talk about what type of service requirement before you can call someone a veteran. Yeah, it was complicated.

Mark Wadsworth: Was that service requirement a DD 214 with good conduct or discharge?

Erin Daley: We sort of dodged it. The way we dodged it is because we're not funding a veteran farmer. We are funding the support of services for veteran farmers so what they are doing

is applying and describing who they serve. It wouldn't require that level of document.

Gilbert Harrison: Good afternoon. This is Gilbert. I have a question on this Beginning Farmers and Ranchers. One of the things I noticed is that there's a lot of paperwork and academics involved in this. However there's no, quote, field work to actually get these young farmers and ranchers to actually do something in the farming. I noticed that all these community colleges that offer courses in farming and ag, is there a way that the two programs can coordinate so that there's sort of a residency program where students can actually go out there and get their hands dirty or actually helping community farms planting, harvesting and all of that so that they know what actually farming is all about? Because I think that part is lacking.

You can send a kid to college and teach him everything, but when he actually gets out there and starts it's a world of difference. So somewhere I'd like to see some sort of effort in this - I call it residency because I don't have any other term for it - on the job training or something to say, okay, if you're going to be a rancher, go out there and help this program and learn what it is to gather, to brand, to give cattle shots - all of that - and how you plant corn, how you plant alfalfa because that's where it really is. Like I said, all these

programs are nice, but how do you actually get people to do the actual work? Thank you.

Angela Peter: Gilbert, Tyonek calls them interns. This year we had trouble in Tyonek to get adults. It's been hard to generate the interest of farming in our villages. But this year instead of having an adult, we had three interns. And talk about excited, they were just excited about everything. It was just really neat. We had the program. The other thing is I think it just got to come from maybe sharing with other organizations.

Mark Wadsworth: So if I'm correctly hearing you, it's kind of like -- and I'll just share a part of my life, is that I did serve in the marines for four years. I came out. I also got my college degree in agriculture. I worked [indiscernible] Button Green Farm. Then I went to my local USDA office for assistance to get into agriculture development. At that time they told me, "Are you Native American?" "Yes." "Well, you need to go talk to your tribe." But that was a portion of why we're here today. I did not get a part of the Keepseagle settlement, and that's just another subject matter.

But I remember that specifically because I think that what Gilbert is saying is true to form, is that what I'm hearing from you within this program is that you're going to have that funding not actually go to that veteran but you're going to have

a group that's associated to that veteran coming out and saying, "Oh, okay, I can go talk to these people and they'll tell me where to go get my help at [sounds like]."¹ Is this what we're talking generally about?

Erin Daley: It is similar. I heard some very interesting conversations. As this language was being developed, there were some conversations between USDA and the veterans' community. I think we were really trying to get our hands around why aren't there more veterans doing this. A lot of what we were hearing was -- and there are folks who can tell me what this is called. But when you leave the military, there's a debriefing where they talk about what you want to do next, right?

Mark Wadsworth: Yes.

Erin Daley: Is there a name for that?

Mark Wadsworth: It's --

Erin Daley: Probably. Farming was not a big piece of that is what I was hearing and that if we were to invest not only in the development of materials, that doesn't do anything on its own, right? But if we were to invest in mentoring and if we were to invest in developing networks of folks who can help interest and also train people who are coming from the military back to -- and these are folks that are coming from agricultural communities where the job opportunities they're coming back to may not be as fabulous as they were 10 years ago or 15 years

ago. So I think it was both a realistic way of looking at the economy. It was looking at the needs of the country in terms of farmers, and also trying to figure out why aren't people doing this already. Is it a problem that can be solved this way? And I think we were hearing that there might be an opportunity during that transition period to give folks the right opportunities and the right information to allow them to do something that they already wanted to do.

Mark Wadsworth: I'll just say this. Tribes have a lot of things in common, and the majority is we respect our elders. For the most part, most every tribe I've ever went to - and I went through a lot dealing with outreach in this aspect - they always have a cattlemen or a farming group within the reservation. But also, most tribes have a veterans association within the reservations. I think that if we could open that door for those groups maybe to have access to these sorts of funding that can help maybe someone, one would be great.

Erin Daley: That sounds great. I know I've been invited to talk down at NAIC.

Leslie Wheelock: NCAI.

Erin Daley: Why do I always -- this one's NCAFR, correct?

Leslie Wheelock: National Congress of American Indians.

Erin Daley: I know, but I don't operate on the whole. I've been invited to come down to Atlanta. I believe there's a

veteran's committee down there, and I'm hoping to start talking with folks about the kind of thing that you're -- so it's very helpful. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: Well, thank you.

Erin Daly: Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: I appreciate it. It looks like we'll go on to our next one. It will be the status of the USDA Tribal Land-Grant College and University Program. Lawrence Shorty, director of the 1994 Tribal Program.

Lawrence Shorty: Hi everybody. I got a chance to thank [indiscernible] earlier. Vinnie and I work together. Our office got fully staffed around 2006, and we have a number of components. I work with Leslie and John quite closely with our USDA and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium Leadership Group. We try to meet twice yearly. There have been a number of issues that we've been working on to work to support tribal colleges with their land-grant development. The schools, tribal colleges and universities got land-grant status in 1994 hence the name. I like to often refer to our program as the department's land-grant development program because of the capacity-building work for which we're responsible.

When we were first established, our focus was to develop policy guidelines, the procedures, monetary evaluate and report on compliance with policy and executive orders to increase

participation of 1994 land-grant colleges and universities in USDA's programs and services. One of the ways we do that is through an annual White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities report. It's not combined with other reporting. We look at what agencies do, have done, then we start making recommendations for ways to improve compliance especially with this most recent Executive Order 13592 with a push through this Obama administration and are about to request agencies through the members of our leadership group to work with the schools to develop plans. This is per request of the tribal colleges and universities' presidents.

Our mission is to develop tribal colleges and universities through the land-grant capacities to benefit rural tribal economies and the U.S.'s food security. As you heard Vinnie mention earlier, there were only a couple of schools that we knew about after some fairly intensive polling that had a land-grant plan. Through time, since 1994, some of the schools - with staff changes and president changes - some of the schools and their faculty weren't aware that they were, in fact, land-grant universities or land-grant colleges and were unaware that they had land-grant status. So we have been working to remind them of that and to work within that framework because USDA has supported land-grant schools quite well since the year 1862.

We have four major areas. I mentioned the leadership group. We have a liaison program. We have a tribal scholars and internship program. That was one of the questions that Mr. Harrison had asked about. Then we have our Land-Grant Development Initiative which is compromised of two major areas. I'll be glad to share this presentation with you all too.

We have the memorandum of Agreement with AIHEC. It describes how we are to work with one another. But then what's becoming more and more important is what is that Minority Serving Institutions Report? It's formally the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities Report. We're able to see a cross sectional of how USDA supports other land-grant programs that are minority-focused, as well as other ethnic-focused initiatives and we're starting to mine that pretty extensively. We were done with the 2012 version. The 2013 report just came out and so we're starting to work on that currently.

One of the core elements of that report is a plan which is going to be a major vehicle for us to coordinate better with the schools, a better vehicle for us to do an inventory of what agencies are able to do based on what they've done with other land-grant programs and hopefully we'll be able to do something that ultimately supports the development of the 1994 land grants and hopefully, as you know, support Indian Country.

Currently our liaison program serves 34 1994 schools. From 2008 to 2011 we had two liaisons. Since 2012 we had one person resigned so we've had only one liaison situated at Sitting Bull College in Fort Yates. So currently we've got a new land-grant in 2014, but it meant we had one liaison for 33 schools. Here's a map of where the schools are located. You can see there's quite a number in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota, and New Mexico and the Great Lakes area. So we've proposed minimally to have at least six more liaisons to be able to provide some sort of support in geographical context.

On our scholars and internship program, we've had three TCU graduates from the National Resources Conservation Service. We've had a number of other graduates or people who are close to graduating. We just had two graduates this past year since we have made this presentation. We had a new authority called the Pathways Authority, and that's from a government-wide authority. It's limited initially how we could recruit students directly at the schools. But there's another authority that permits us to do that, and we've been exploiting how best to move on that.

The Land-Grant Development Initiative was covered by Vinnie. One of the things that is intriguing to know is we were able to by leveraging Department of Interior money and some of our money from USDA in order to be able to provide over \$810,000 worth of service over three years, and we're quite pleased with

that. But one of the things that we're looking at doing is trying to get more USDA support for this because largely this is a Department of Interior-funded activity. Our request for 2015 and 2016 is \$999,208. That would enable us to travel more, to have some additional liaisons. But as we understand, it's likely to have a 0.05 percent decrease and we'll be back at \$743,000 or roughly around there. This was our proposal, to increase the amounts that we could utilize.

Leslie Wheelock: I didn't know your budget was twice my budget.

Lawrence Shorty: That's what we're requesting. Our budget is only, yes, 50 percent greater than yours.

Leslie Wheelock: I don't know if we're partners on this initiative.

Lawrence Shorty: But relatedly, I think we're both Greenbook programs. Are we both Greenbook programs?

Leslie Wheelock: No.

Lawrence Shorty: Okay, we're a Greenbook program.

Leslie Wheelock: You better explain what that is.

Lawrence Shorty: Oh, the Greenbook program. Our program gets reimbursed from all USDA agencies and offices for a proposed scope of work. However, the reimbursable amount is limited so we can only get reimbursed up to, for this past fiscal year, \$743,000. There's no way that they'll let us

exceed that; however because we seem to always be somewhat waiting to fill the continuing resolutions to know what our actual amount would be, and so each agency puts a portion of money. I guess one of the more interesting nerdy facts about it is we give to the other Greenbook programs and they give money to us, but it's an interesting dynamic. It's a little difficult to understand how that works, but the basis is that - as I mentioned - agencies and offices agreed to reimburse our program up to a set amount of money per year.

What's interesting here is our proposal that we made to the Greenbook Committee, we utilized the president's statements on education and those school supports for native languages and cultural traditions and what the basic meaning is for Indian people, but then a lot of our work within the agencies too is to describe historically what the work means. I mean none of us were around in the year 1862; none of us were around in the year 1890. The 19th century is the big period and early 20th century for when land-grants where really doing their thing for the U.S. 1862, as you know, was a Civil War year; and 1890 is shortly thereafter the Civil War. Both 1890 and 1860 school land-grants helped the U.S. recover from the Civil War. It really became a major part of the economic engine. What's exciting thing about that was that --

Leslie Wheelock: Tell me what those two things [inaudible] about.

Lawrence Shorty: Yeah. So 1862 refers not only of the year that the USDA was established by President Lincoln, but it's the year that the land-grant system was established. The year 1890 is the year that the system for Historically Black Colleges and Universities was also established enabling the recently freed slaves to be able to get educated and to contribute to the U.S. economic system. So if you think about it, the mid to late 19th century, those two land-grants really helped the U.S. get on their feet following the Civil War.

So there's a tremendous amount of pride amongst the people who are descendants of individuals and communities that helped those to get established. So what I ask people in the department is to look at the 1994 as in exactly the same way for the tribal communities because when you do that you ensure the U.S.'s food security. When you do that, you ensure economic development happens on rural communities and you would do it collaboratively. You get buy-in and you get people who really want to do well for themselves and do well for the communities. If you recall, that's what our mission is. The rest of the information you can read about in the notes that you have, but I'll be glad to take on any questions that you have to help us keep on track.

Porter Holder: Thanks, Lawrence. I think Gilbert has a question.

Gilbert Harrison: Thank you very much for your information. But I'm wondering is there a -- it's a very vast area you're talking about and with a small budget. When you talk with and deal with these community colleges, is there any priority in the order of what you're trying to, on behalf of USDA, what fields you are trying to establish some footwork in? In other words is it, here is some money. Have a nice day. Or do you say, no, we need certain types of expertise at these local community levels. How do you work that?

Lawrence Shorty: That's a good point. To our leadership group, the tribal college presidents prioritize and make recommendations to the department for what the priorities should be. And this relates back to your initial question. When we had gotten our approval to do our tribal scholars' program, the immediate response from the - I think it's the chair of AIHEC at the time - their response was that's great, but what our schools really need are things that help us with our overall capacity development. We need additional funding for the infrastructure for the schools because if we don't have buildings, we can't hold classes. They had mentioned that we also need more information about the range of USDA programs that could help in that overall capacity building. That really influenced us, me,

around 2008 to 2009 to really try to focus on trying to make that happen. But it's influenced quite a bit by the tribal college presidents.

Gilbert Harrison: Yeah. Because we're talking for the last couple of years, three years that I've been on this council. One of the issues and one of the problems that face us is the next generation of farmers. The colleges somehow need to get involved in maybe developing curriculums that address the farming issues so that we graduate at the local level, the type of expertise we need in the area of agriculture; otherwise, we're always going to be facing this and spend a lot of money and time and we're still going to be shorthanded.

So that's why I ask what kind of priority do you have? It's nice to say, okay, the president's thinking to prioritize. But what is it they say? The guy with the money is in charge. You can say we need this expertise and encourage them to develop associate degrees in farming or bachelor's in farming. At Navajo Community College I've been asking what do you do in terms of encouraging the conservation of land, developing of land resources, but we don't have an accredited course in that field. So that's why my concern is how can we change that around? We have all these educational programs. How do we get some of that around to where we can point our younger generation in a direction? Thank you very much.

Lawrence Shorty: I hear you.

Sarah Vogel: Thank you very much for your presentation. I just love the tribal colleges. They are one of the best things I've ever seen out in the countryside, and I'm a huge fan of everything that they do. I know that the USDA link with these tribal colleges is so strong. I mean you go down to a campus and they're putting in a sewer system or an electrical system or building a road, and its real development. They have an ecology program and they're going out and doing projects suggested maybe by NRCS, and technical training and so on. It's very, very exciting to see, so hats off.

But when I listen to you and I listen to Leslie's program, the OTR, it seems like we've got two small specific tribal-oriented programs in USDA and they're working to contact so many of the same people. Like in North Dakota at least, I think in many of the tribal colleges the leadership is for the most part the Committee of the Tribal Council; or in the case of United Tribes Technical College, all five - I can't imagine - of the tribal chairman [sounds like] as their board of director.

So there's lots of information coming from OTR to the tribes and then the tribal colleges seem to be the place where things get digested, and then action begins in agriculture. Have you guys ever thought about -- so there you are. You get the rest now. It just occurred to me because we get these

newsletters with all these consultation things coming up. But certainly the tribal colleges, where they are at, and then maybe more support for more tribal colleges - the catalectic opportunities that could be available. That's just an idea.

Well, anyway.

Leslie Wheelock: It's more than an idea. Lawrence's team and our team work very closely together. I'm the co-chair for the 1994 Tribal College and University Leadership Committee out of USDA. We have a counterpart in Interior and we we're actually going to hold a joint meeting when we got snow-stormed out in the end of last year, but Lawrence and I have had this conversation ongoing. My predecessor also thought it was a good idea to try to pull the two together. Until the opposite tribal relations had a permanent establishment, it would have been kind of shaky. Now that they do we're hoping that we have support from our tribes, our tribal colleges and universities, for going back and asking again to see whether there's a reason not to put them together - which is I think how I should ask that question. Any support, of course, from the council would be much appreciated. I can lobby, can't I?

Lawrence Shorty: One of the discussions that tribal college persons have had too and our partner, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, is how can they be designated and should they be designated as people that should

engage in tribal consultation for higher education on behalf of their tribe? And so as that foments then I think that makes a whole lot more sense because I think that's something that's always been kind of intriguing, that always gets started out. That's always a show-stopper when I bring that up. It's like they say I'd like to be designated as the person to engage in tribal consultation about higher education, and it's a stumper. It's really kind of intriguing.

Sarah Vogel: It can't be a tribe and the tribal college person? I mean, wouldn't you want to have both at the table? You got OTR with the tribal consultation and you're with the tribal college, and so you could make sure that the tribal colleges are involved with everything or vice-versa.

Lawrence Shorty: That's very interesting, yeah.

Leslie Wheelock: To fill out the rest of the story, we have two other organizations that have a heavy interest in our tribal colleges and universities. One you mentioned is rural development. The other is NIFA which is NREE - and Dr. Ann Bartuska will be here tomorrow, right, which funds the other five programs that support the tribal colleges and universities out of the Department of Agriculture. So we have four little components scattered around, two of which are tribally-focused and one of which is educationally-focused and the other is focused on ensuring or trying to ensure that the schools do not

have mortgages for the properties that they build and the infrastructure that they need.

Sarah Vogel: Anyway, keep up the great work.

Lawrence Shorty: I appreciate that. It's the work, like in the Office of Tribal Relations, is always very high and trying to come up with a means for the barriers. Inadvertent and otherwise, it's always a challenge. It's worthwhile because no matter how you look at it, our work benefits tribal communities and have a very positive reflection on overall U.S.'s food security.

Mary Thompson: There's very skewed [sounds like] thinking about it. [Inaudible]

Sarah Vogel: Well, we have to have Mary draft some more resolutions. You're good at it, Mary.

Mary Thompson: I'll write it for you. You can look it up.

Lawrence Shorty: Are there any other questions? Because I'd like to help this group stay on time. Okay, thank you very much.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you, Lawrence. I appreciate it. Well, on the next working session, did we want to do that as a group? Everybody is welcome to stay if you want to, but I guess we'll just kind of go into a working session on the review of the last two years and the discussion of the goals of the new

term and council issues and topics today. Who is going to do the two-year review?

John Lowery: I know that in the past you guys have asked for time to have a discussion. My good friend, Gilbert Harrison, has been on me numerous times to include enough time for discussion among council members. So when drafting this we definitely wanted to give you guys a chance to just discuss where you've been over the past two years and to start to set the goals and priorities for where you want to go over the next two years. I saw this as a time for reflection upon your part and also an educational time for our new members and just discuss amongst yourself what you see you guys doing as we move forward.

So there is really no set strategy. There's really no organizational structure here for how to do this. I do know that in your binders there is a sheet there, a breakdown of prior recommendations that you guys have made. I think there are 22 altogether. So maybe just start by looking at those and just going down the line say, hey, this is where we started at back in 2013, and this is where we finished up in 2014, and then just move forward with the discussion. So I just want to give you guys, as council members, time to talk. I've also been smacked on the hand in the past for trying to direct you guys so

I just want to stand down and let you as council members talk and discuss your priorities for moving forward.

Mark Wadsworth: I guess, John, I'd just lead off what I observed at the past two years as being on the council. I think this will also help the new individuals coming from our aspect of the previous council members to speak quite frankly of what happened and what occurred. When we first were notified about this, we all received the same CFR. I put in my application and actually had my tribe do a letter of support or resolution.

Upon getting on the board, we had basically a three or four-day long meeting that went from USDA every single program you could probably think of from agriculture resource to SNAP to every other part of the agency. I often said this, is that the USDA's budget is second only to the -- well, third in the line. I guess, we have Defense, and then the benefit programs, and then basically then you have USDA. So it's quite a huge, huge agency with a lot of different departments inside of it trying to get a grasp along all these things that they do offer and are involved in. It takes a lot of, I guess, studying and just listening.

But when we first started here, we started with Janie Hipp who was a great asset at that time. Janie shortly, after we had our first meetings, retired. So then we were sitting there trying to talk amongst each other and trying to just basically

do the organizational structure of how we were going to work through the issues and present them and help make a difference, I guess, for Indian agriculture in the future. Then we had another in-term individual. Was it Joanna or was it Max Finberg?

Male Voice: Joanna and then Max.

Mark Wadsworth: Yeah. Joanna Stancil was then the intern for a while for DFO, and then we went to Max Finberg, and then we finally ended up with the best - Leslie Wheelock. I guess continuity wasn't there. We didn't have a reliable system of communication or who was doing what or what was going to happen. But upon going through those struggles, we developed basically this logo which has been approved for our council and used as our letterhead whenever we communicate with any other organizations outside of the USDA. That was quite an effort in itself to even get that done.

So amongst all those various situations, we tried to come up with our first four or five recommendations that we sent to the Secretary of Agriculture. I didn't see a copy of that first letter or the response letter from the USDA or from the secretary. Maybe we could just get those for the new members to have so that they can review that portion of it.

And then from that point on we started kind of getting more serious and had various other meetings throughout the time

period. We're always within this organization struggling with the budget's situations because it is not a truly annualized funded advisory group and we were always, well, we think we can have this meeting if we had the funding. It's one of those types of situations I think we'll probably continually work with as we get our information from Leslie and John. As a part of that, we finally got down to coming to setting up committees. Believe me, I'm skipping over a lot of other activities that everybody else can talk about - and came up with the current recommendations that we sent to the secretary of Ag that we'll go over tomorrow with.

But as I reapplied for the second term, one of the issues when I went to the council again was, well, what did you do for us? So I finally was able to bring to them the letter of our recommendations, of what we're looking at. I told them at this time I no longer am part of the council, I have to reapply, but this is what we did while I was sitting on the council. My tribe was quite impressed that an advisory group like ours has such an ability to access the people that are the decision makers within USDA and being able to work within that realm and hopefully make a difference. It's a learning process, and it was quite enjoyable for me. I guess I'd like to start going around the room. If you would like to, Angela, give us your two-year experience.

Angela Peter: Well, I guess myself coming from Alaska and I totally did not even know what Keepseagle was, I was way behind everybody as far as that went. But I put in my application. I didn't have no letters of nothing. In fact, I think I was the only one from Alaska. I just wrote to the secretary and told him I want to be on the council and the struggles we're having.

I was really impressed with the people that sit around the table and I agree that we had kind of a hard time getting going. When we got to the point of Leslie, I think Leslie really kick-started us. I really do. But when we got to the point of setting up committees, I think that was a good place to go. Because I've been on councils for a long time and I know that if you just all try to sit around doing everything, you're not going to get nothing done. So I think that was a good thing to do. I can't think of anything else.

Chris Beyerhelm: Just a little history for those of you that are new. Part of the Keepseagle Settlement Agreement, and Sarah knows as well as others, it wasn't all about the money. It was about programmatic relief. One of the things that came out of the settlement agreement was this council and a desire to try to change USDA programs. As a result of that, there are some permanent members of the council. I'm the deputy administrator of Farm Loans so my position, not necessarily me,

but my position is a permanent member. The administrator of FSA, Val Dolcini, whoever sits in his chair, is a permanent member. And then Dr. Joe Leonard who's the assistant secretary for Civil Rights, Reid Strong who was here earlier, are kind of USDA's permanent members of the committee, and of course Leslie. Yes. Or whoever's going to be after Leslie.

I've got to say that coming into it, this resulted from a lawsuit primarily about loans and discriminatory treatment. So obviously I was a little apprehensive about what was going to happen and what was going to be said. I have found that my life has been truly enriched by learning about Indian Country and Indian culture. The conversations I've had with folks around the table have taught me a lot, and I think it's helped shape our program in a positive way to not just help Indian Country but to help beginning farmers in all of our portfolios. I think as Mark and others have said, it was tedious at times but I think we're starting to make some progress. I'm looking forward to a continued growth of the committee.

Sarah Vogel: I thank everybody. Thank you for the summary. I'd sort of forgotten about some of those issues, the transitions and so on that we had. But I guess I would like to say that I feel really good about the creation of the council and the work that the council has done and the differences it has made. One observation I'd like to share was when all those

agencies came in at our first meeting. I think that was basically by design of Janie that this might have been the first time many of those agencies had ever been pressed to really think about what do we do with Indians and Native American farmers and ranchers. I think that's had ripple effects. I'm not 100 percent sure on this, but it seems now that most of the sub-agencies have a tribal liaison and I'm not sure that they had that say four or five years ago. I think maybe not. So I think that's a change and it's internalized. So I think that people are thinking about Native Americans more than they used to, which is excellent.

I'd also like to echo when we got the committees going and we needed to think about things quite a while before we knew what committees we wanted and how they're going to work, but I think that was a big development. I was the chair of the Credit Deserts Committee. When we reached out to get people to help us, the fact that we were from an advisory council to USDA on Native American farming and ranching I think made a big difference. We weren't just a bunch of people trying to learn about something in the abstract. We had a mission. We had a job. We were going to make things work.

The cooperation that we got from the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank, and economists, and lawyers, and people from rural development, other branches of USDA all of which weighed in and

did research and helped us - I was impressed. I think that would have been pretty hard to do without the structure of being a subcommittee of this council. And then of course BIA is here, which is good. So I'm just really happy. I think if we can keep on with the committees and keep working in between meetings, we'll be like sort of running with gas. It will be good.

Mark Wadsworth: Would you just like to hear from the council first and then have comments at the -- okay. Sarah?

Male Voice: No. I mean Mary.

Mark Wadsworth: Mary, I'm sorry about that. I had Sarah on my mind. I'm in trouble.

Mary Thompson: I was just sitting here trying to think about some of the things and like Sarah's touched on a lot of them. First off, I didn't realize just how many programs there are under USDA and how many acronyms there are under USDA. But I was impressed by the number of the higher-up officials that came and spoke with us - the secretary, deputy secretaries, assistant secretaries. And I do believe that ripple down effect did help with looking at the policies as it affects us on the ground level or at home. Like I said earlier, we all realized that statutes and law and everything starts to appear at upper management and trickles down to us. But I think it's had an effect.

A lot of times just as I look at statute and law and things that I get and the Farm Bill and a lot of things that apply to Indian Country, there's always clauses in there about consultation with Indian tribes and working with Indian tribes. Now, with the big initiative with farmers and ranchers and everything, to me it was just lip service. It was words that didn't mean anything. Now I think it's starting to mean a little bit more. I do realize that we have a lot of work ahead of us and most of it is going to lie within the policies and procedures of the programs. I think that's where we need to get to.

Where I'd like to see us get to or myself get to in the next two years is that we see some of those policies change and I guess a mutual understanding between the ground level folks at home and the upper level folks up here, that the policy is consistent and that the interpretation is not left open to where it would recreate or continue to accommodate the barriers that was there previously. That's what causing discrimination. Well, I see it there. And even with BIA. I realize that you're not as familiar with all of these and things like that. But within BIA there's still a lot of barriers there that hold people up, farmers and land issues and stuff like that. I'm realizing the Interior and USDA are two totally different programs. They're still supposed to be and I think should be

working together to provide services and resources to Indian people.

Whenever I see up here that they're not doing that and that we're not working together up here, hell, no wonder nobody works together at home because it's got that same trickledown effect. If we're not working together up here, they aren't going to be working together very well down there or at home or back from we're coming from who we're representing.

Sarah, you said something about all the folks that came in at our first meeting and how many people actually paid attention to this council. I'm impressed with that. I was like, dang, they really took us serious so now then I need to be a little bit more serious about realistically what can we accomplish. I so wanted to sit on this FRTEP and I think that the extension agents in Indian Country needed to be funded and everything, but as I really looked at it, funding is a statute. It's a law that Congress has to appropriate right, right? I don't think I'm quite to the level yet to get to Congress and have them fund programs the way I want to, but there's some policy and procedure things that maybe we could work on and that's where I'd like to go. Thank you.

Gilbert Harrison: This is Gilbert from Navajo. It's already getting late now, but we'll try to -- first of all, I wanted to thank USDA again for allowing me to serve on this

council. When I was reapplying, on my cover letter I put in there that we've done a lot of preliminary work. Now it's time to roll up our sleeve and get to work, and I really believe that. I'd like to, again, maybe address the issue of the life of the council. It's created for five years. We went through it two years. Now we're in the second two-year terms and one more year after that by agreement.

Female Voice: It's six.

Gilbert Harrison: Six? But the number of issues we have is going to continue. Somehow I think we ought to request that this council be here for a long time - not this particular group, but the work that has to be done - because some of the past issues have persisted for a long time and it's going to take quite a lot of our work to get those done. So permanency, I think, is one of the issues I'd like to see that we should start talking about that. It's going to be a long time to get some decisions.

I like for us to have up to at least four meetings a year because there's so many issues that come up. At the last session we had, we finally started getting to where we had two person-to-person meetings per year and we got to the issue of conference calls, but maybe we ought to do that on a little more consistent basis. I'd like to see that, and it's because of the work that we have to do.

Then I'd like for us, the council to consider maybe the top, and I say top ten [indiscernible], but I'd like for us to just pick a few important issues that we should address because there's many, many issues that have been surfacing. And I like to involve more public input and then decide, okay, which ones of those are very important and work on those because I think in the last couple of years we just sort of have been open and we had these tons of issues dumped on us. We sort of managed to go through a few, but I like to maybe put some priority on what we think we should be working on. I like to see some effort in that.

And the last thing is, Jerry is not here, but he'll pat me on the back with what I'm going to say. I think it's nice to talk about having all these programs present to us, but it takes a lot of time away from what we have been commissioned to do - and that is to work on barriers that prevent Native Americans from participation in programs. So maybe it's nice to have a couple of updates, but I think we should concentrate a lot on public input and solution to these problems. So those are some of the things that I like to see. And again, for the members that were here on their first term, it's good to see you all again and we'll work with you. And the new members, welcome and don't be afraid to jump in and give us your input. Thank you very much.

Porter Holder: Porter Holder, Choctaw Nation from Soper, Oklahoma. I've been I don't know if you're going to say fortunate or unfortunate to be a part of Keepseagle for 10 to 12 years now, but I will call it fortunate. I'm proud of the work that we've done here. I've said this before very rarely and after you get exactly what you want. I remember our negotiations talking about this council and I thought if this can be exactly what I want, this can be a very strong tool for the farmer and the rancher. I'm just a simple rancher in Oklahoma. That's me summed up. So to have this council, to have the secretary's ear and the strength of it, it's one of the most powerful tools that the farmer and the rancher can have with USDA. I've enjoyed being the vice-chairman. I'm sure I've made some of you mad, but I hope you got over it.

New members, I thank you all for applying. Thanks for being here. I think there was a misconception. On the first meeting or two we had some members thought maybe we were here for Keepseagle, but we were here because of Keepseagle to change what happened in the past, to help change the discrimination. I feel like the last year we've really kind of got a bite on it. We've really kind of moved forward with it. There's a lot of work to be done yet, but I think we're all moving in the same direction now. I just want to welcome the new members. Like

Gilbert said, anytime you feel like jumping in, we want your opinion too. We need your opinions. So thank you all.

Mark Wadsworth: Sorry John, I skipped over you.

John Berry: Oh, I'm the new guy. Oh, that one? Sorry. Go ahead. I don't want your role. I don't want your role.

John Lowery: First of all, welcome to the new members. Welcome. Thank you for applying. I forgot just how many applicants we had overall. That will be out of 11 tribal members, eight reapplied and three did not. The secretary thought it was good for us to have the continued presence of individuals who were already on the council so he reappointed everyone who had applied. For those three positions, we're glad to see you guys here. Just based off of your resume and your application, we've been told that you guys are solid picks. So the secretary did a good job there.

We started off kind of -- just like we said, last year we were brand new. We were a brand new council. I mean totally brand new. This thing was given birth in August of 2012 and we were just sort of brand new parents. We we're trying to figure out what to do with it. So I think we've come a long way. I love the fact that we established subcommittees. We got so much more done with our subcommittees than we could ever get done meeting two, three, four days out of the week as a full council,

so I'm glad we have the subcommittees. I'm glad that we're able to focus on particular issues in those subcommittees.

When we come together here, our job I feel like at the USDA is to bring people in front of you who can educate you on certain issues and certain progress within USDA and just sit back and listen. Today, even when there were people bringing in their reports - oh, we're going to do this, we're going to do that - you guys were saying, "Well, what about this? What about that? How can you do better outreach? How can you get better numbers? How can you get more participation?" So I think we can say that, well, we have all these people coming before us. But when you hear them talk this, when you start to realize, hmm, you guys can be doing a better job at A or B or C to get more tribal reps within your programs, I think that that is very important.

Thinking back, you guys have had the secretary himself come in here and sit down before you. You've had the deputy secretary to come before you. You've had numerous undersecretaries, numerous administrators and deputy administrators all come here and speak to you as council members. We have had the deputy assistant secretary for Indian Affairs come and speak to you. We've had his office designate someone to be here. A couple of your recommendations have been answered pretty much as far as they can be. Some of those

recommendations I want you guys to remember that we still are the federal government; we are a slow-moving train. So for some of the low hanging fruit, we can get it done just like that. But for some of these other areas regarding the recommendations, it's going to take time. But I think as long as we continue to push recommendations and to keep our eye on the job while pushing those recommendations, then we can continue to get a lot done.

I didn't know what to expect when this council first started. I did not expect to become a designated federal officer. But one, two things happened and next thing I knew I was given the ball and told to run with it and to not get tackled. So I've been running ever since and we're going to see.

Gilbert, money-wise or fund-wise we're always asking. We hope to have a for maintenance in the next fiscal year, we really do. We're going to push for that funding to get the job done. I feel like this administration, as they are starting to look at the last two years here, that they all want to do everything they can to institutionalize some of the things that they got going on. This is a council that, if everything holds true, will go into the next administration so whatever you guys are doing now will continue on. I think that we would definitely get the support that is needed to provide you guys

with the strength to move on forward regardless of who is president or who is secretary. But I appreciate you guys being patient with me, being patient with our office. We are a small staff. We deal with a lot of things across the entire USDA -- all seven mission areas, all 17 agencies so there is not too many days of just relaxing.

Anyway, I'm going to shut up and be quiet. But I think we made positive strides especially last year, and I think we can continue on. Once again, I just want to say with regard to the subcommittees, I think they were wonderful. All of you guys who participated, you guys really, really put a lot of hard work in that and I feel like we can continue to get good recommendations out of those subcommittees.

Mark Wadsworth: I think I'm just kind of do a segue into discussing the new goals in terms of the new appointees, solid ones. We would like you to give us an idea of what you're expecting and just hear your experience. Would you like to, Derrick?

Tawney Brunsch: Tawney Brunsch from Pine Ridge, representing the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. First of all, I just want to say thank you again for the opportunity to be able to represent Pine Ridge on this council. And then I want to say, thank you for the hard work that you've already done. I'm very impressed with the recommendations that you have

in place. I sense a certain level of frustration maybe that more hasn't been done, or maybe lack of beatings, or lack of funding or whatever the case may be.

But from what I can see, the part I've been thrilled about the most in seeing the recommendations is that you've included CDFIs in a lot of the recommendations. I think that's why I must be here because I'm clearly not an attorney. I'm not a tribal council. But coming from the Lakota Funds, and Lakota Funds was actually the first native CDFIs who were 28 years old. We have a lot of experience in providing what I hate to call technical assistance because it's basically establishing a relationship with the client and moving them from just being concerned about them as an individual to actually owning or growing a business and; therefore, establishing an economy on Pine Ridge.

And so with that, I see it's really important that we're including CDFIs in the discussion because I see that as the segue into moving the recommendations that you've created and put a lot of thought into to actually getting them moving towards implementation. You can use CDFIs like Lakota Funds because I'm happy to say that we're privileged to be in the trenches. We're the ones out there working with the individuals. As much as you want to use us, I could just think of different opportunities all day long and listening to the

different programs and gathering some of the numbers around the ag producers and stuff. If a person is uncomfortable completing a stack of paperwork or whatever that they get from the Census Bureau or whatever, they can come to Lakota Funds instead where they already know us and maybe they'll be more comfortable in sharing more of that information. If they have problems understanding that, I don't think they would be afraid to have us help them through it.

And then around credit, it's perfect. Lakota Funds also has Lakota Federal Credit Union where we get to experience firsthand the credit issues that our tribal members face. But not only do we witness them, we have solutions now. We have savings accounts. We have consumer loans now. We're NCUA insured. So it's just we have the experience that I think could really move your recommendations and the implementation, and please use me. Thank you.

Derrick Lente: Thank you Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for the warm welcome and for all of the information that was presented. For Mr. Lowery, everything that you've done for us so far I really appreciate it. To the other two new board members, I too welcome you as a new board member as well. I just want to say congratulations in all the work that's been done thus far on this committee as well. I echo the comments of Tawney and applaud all of you that have been sitting around this

table for the past two years, and especially for the logo. I like the logo a lot. But I understand that things take time to materialize and take time to really truly evolve into something that you once dreamt that it should be or it could be to a point where it's actually in working order.

When I applied for this position, it was back in May, and it was a friend of a friend that sent me the links saying, hey, you should submit your name. And I said, sure, I'll do that. That was back in May, and December came and went and I didn't hear anything from anybody. I didn't think anything of it. Perhaps the positions were filled and that was fine. But when I got the call from Mr. Lowery saying that we'd like you to join us, I was honored for one primarily because I feel like I have a unique perspective that I can bring to this council, a unique perspective that I can bring from the State of New Mexico.

Back in the middle of Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico where my people have lived forever just like a lot of our ancestors, we farm and we ranch. If there are opportunities out there that can help enhance that part of our livelihood, that part of who we are as a people, I'm more than willing and ready to take on that challenge. I don't tell anybody about what I do on a daily basis or what I do. When this came out in the paper, in the local journal, that there's this local guy that's going to go and help this council a lot to really promote and help farming

and ranching for Native Americans, my father asks me, "What are you doing now? What are you going to get out of it?" I said, "I don't know what I'm going to get out of it necessarily and I don't really know what to expect from it, but I'm doing this in essence in your honor as a farmer and rancher that you've left me with this knowledge that I've learned from your practices. I've learned not from a book, not from hearing people talk about how to farm or how to ranch but from you and me going out into the field."

Not only just that, but then also doing it for my peers who - unlike me - may not have had the opportunity to grow up with a father figure, grow up farming and ranching but have an interest because the land is there, the tribe is there and it's there just like it's mine. They have those opportunities, but they don't have the tools or the knowledge base to truly entrench themselves in the opportunity. I'm doing it for them as well. I'm doing it primarily for my daughter to make sure that she has an opportunity as well to take advantage and take over once my dad's gone, I'm gone, she's here and down the line because truly that's what's it for.

If there are opportunities out here for the USDA to help us out become a stronger society, to help us become a better educated or even just help us out financially, I'm all for that. If there's ways that I can bring an insight into being a younger

farmer from New Mexico, I'm all for it. At the end of the day, it's good to sit around a table and talk about policies and perspectives and programs that are out there.

But truly at the end of the day, my mind is on the guy out with a shovel slung over his back in the middle of his field that just wants to farm. That's all it's for. And so that being said, I appreciate the opportunity and I look forward to moving on your recommendations and also look forward to moving on them with a little bit of a different perspective that maybe I can bring into this committee. So I appreciate the opportunity. Thank you.

Mark Wadsworth: John Berry.

John Berry: Well, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I'm grateful for all the people that have done so much hard work. Really I just see the opportunity for me to bang the drum of equality and access, fairness and opportunity, and to promote self-determination for Indian people. The United States failed the Native American farmers and that's why we're here today. We need to remind Secretary Vilsack and the next secretary that native people need access. They need communication. They need a USDA representative in their homes and in their neighborhoods helping them understand and providing them with opportunity. The farming and ranching in this country is dying. It's a huge opportunity for native people because we still have a lot of

land. We need to take that land and turn it into an operational farming and agriculture. I want to just bang the drum that we need access. We need opportunity. We need the conversation.

I feel like a Judas, I don't want to send my kids to Indian colleges. I want them to go to the best colleges in the United States to learn agriculture or whatever they want to learn. I think my job is just to remind Secretary Vilsack and whoever will listen that my people need opportunities and they need some presence by the government to aid them in developing their capabilities to become farmers and ranchers and it's up to us to help with that, and it's my job to promote self-determination of Native Americans any time I get an opportunity.

Mark Wadsworth: Thank you, John. Well, I guess we're just going to swing this from the hip and also we can further discuss this because we have time again tomorrow in what we'd like to do in the future with the council. As John had mentioned, we did have the recommendations in a spreadsheet format that goes through 1 through 22. As I've been reading through here, I've been seeing the necessary follow-up and notes in reading through that scenario. I would encourage everybody on Tab 4 or Tab 5, to kind of read through those. To me, it seems that some of them we have actually already accomplished or no further action is needed.

But I guess, since we don't have a formal format, I'm just going to say that what I'm looking at as a future goal or issue is that I think that this council, what I would further want to see is a committee on looking at the impacts of climate change. I personally come from a reservation that had a 100-year event in which we had a storm system come in and within a matter of a half-an-hour to 45 minutes rained six inches and had a serious flood go down where the rocks were coming down onto the road and pretty much flooded the whole drainage system.

But I guess the success story of that is what I'd like to share, is that we as a tribe had previously put that drainage into the Conservation Reserve Program under the CCRP or Continuous. So that area that had been virtually overgrazed by domesticated cattle was fenced off and had recovered in a five-year period. When that drainage went through it actually withstood that amount of water going through it.

So I know from personal experience and in visually looking at that, some of these conservation programs that we're addressing for tribes to be able to utilize do work and they do work well. Just a suggestion, I would like to see something more in the climate change adaptation in the future. Anybody else has a subject or a concern they'd like to really address?

Leslie Wheelock: This is Leslie Wheelock. Just a couple of things. The kind of story, Mark, that you just related is

the kind of what I call five line success stories that we'd like to take and utilize. We use them for speeches. We built blogs out of them. We create the outreach stories that a lot of our tribal leaders have said you can give me all of the programmatic gobbledegook language that you want to, but when I can see an Indian doing that over there and I think I can do that or I need that, that really helps me. And Chris just left.

We started to pull this, what I've been calling five lines success stories. What's the program? What did the person or tribe do with it? What was the outcome of it? What's their recommendation for anybody else wanting to do it? You sometimes can get a quote and you sometimes can get just a general description that adds to what the program was, but they're short and they're sweet snippets. And then what we do with some of the long ones is we create the outreach blogs. So that's the use of our programs and success that we like.

I think that the climate change issue is very timely. We have over 40 years of tribal climate work in the Forest Service, and most people don't realize that. They have a website. It's up and running. We have the new climate hubs that we probably have to invite to the next meeting because they were established pretty quickly and don't have a significant tribal component yet but it's on the list of things that need to get done. They're still trying to figure out their footing. The Monday and

Tuesday I spent at the United Nations World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, and the side meetings that I went to are on climate change. The climate change meetings were talking about people in rural areas and food security among many other things, but those were two of the things.

Our tribes, we had an interesting discussion yesterday about climate and a number of other things affecting our tribes' traditional knowledge, intellectual property and maintaining access to our traditionals. I'm just kind of tossing things out. They're just kind of tossing ideas out. Santa Clara Pueblo I think had a 100-year event and continues having events that are tumbling on top of it in terms of a flood that they had in 2010 and having trouble recovering. So what's our disaster preparedness? How do we figure out what that is? Is that something that our conservation programs can help with?

Recognizing that a lot of our reservation space is equivalent to an island, our food is moving away. We're getting bugs that we've never had before. We're getting sea turtles in the Arctic and we, unlike most of the rest of the world, cannot move to a different place - a place that's warmer, or cooler, or less rainy, or less dry. And so our adaptation needs are far in excess of others and so I think it's a very timely concern to bring forth and discuss. I think that we can bring folks at the

next meeting who can tell us what's happening in USDA to work through some of these concerns.

In terms of the grid of recommendations, one of the reasons that this is a very useful tool - which is what I've mentioned when the former council was putting this list together before they started - was that the council members often raise concerns that we take back. The we is John, myself, our staff, Chris, Juan and now Val. We take it back to our offices and we work on them. We were not always bringing the results of that work back to this council and so this is a way of helping us all keep track of what we're doing and what we're working on. If you see things on here that aren't moving the way you want them to, let us know.

There are some things that are moving that are moving in regulations and we can't announce yet, which are very cool but we can't announce yet. When we do the final or the year-end report, I think that you'll see some very interesting results from this work because you have access to us. We have access to a lot of other people in USDA. The voices that we hear at this meeting and the voices that we hear when we travel around the country are the voices that we bring back into USDA and use to express the native voice within USDA. So on behalf of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, our tribes, our American-Indian and

Alaska Native citizens, I really want to thank you for your time and your work at this council. Thank you.

Porter Holder: I'd make a motion we adjourn the meeting.

Mark Wadsworth: I hear a second. Thank you. I guess, we'll see all, each other tomorrow at 8:30. Same place. Do we have to move?

John Lowery: No. Same place.

Mark Wadsworth: Same place?

[End of file]

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