

Heather Dawn Thompson It's a pleasure to be here with you today. I'm sorry I couldn't join you in person, but it's nice to see the band back together and see you guys all together today.

So thank you so much for inviting me. As was shared, I'm Heather Dawn Thompson and I'm the Director of the Office of Tribal Relations and the Office of the Secretary at USDA. I'm a citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota.

I did receive the list of questions that you had prepared related to tribal issues, and so I'm delighted to visit with you about those today. I thought I would sort of cover three arenas that I thought might help get to many of the questions that you had. The first was, I was going to talk about the new FACA, the Tribal Advisory Committee. The second, I was going to talk about the tribal barriers consultations that we're doing at USDA. And then third, I'll visit with you a little bit about the history of federal policies effect on native farmers or ranchers, and I really appreciated the presentation right before this regarding Black farmers. So this might help provide some additional context to another one of our communities, and I think it might answer many of the systemic questions that you sent out earlier. So if that is works with the chair, I'll go ahead and proceed.

Speaker 53: Please. Thank you.

Heather Dawn Th...: Great. So as I said, I'm just delighted to see this commission back together. Some of you may have known in the last Farm Bill, the Congress created another advisory committee for USDA called the Tribal Advisory Committee, and it was on hold for a while because there was a disagreement between then President Trump and Congress on whether or not it was structured appropriately. But that has now been cleared through all of the attorneys that it needs to be cleared through, and now we are in the process of implementing that tribal advisory FACA.

And so, I'll share with you a little bit about what it's going to look like and who can be on it and who nominates, so that we are hopeful that you guys will be very close, sister commissions, sister FACAs together and work closely together. Next slide please.

So Congress designed it as such. There are 11 members on it, and these are the entities that get to appoint the members. Three are appointed by the USDA, and two each from the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, two each from the Senate Agriculture Committee, and then four from the House Agriculture Committee. We hope to have this announced in the Federal Register in the next few months. We will be collecting all of the nominations, and then sharing them with all of the nominators, and they will be choosing who they will be putting forward as their nominations. Next.

The entities that are able to nominate per the statute are Indian tribes, tribal organizations and organizations with expertise in tribal agriculture. There are

not a lot of other requirements on the folks serving on the committee other than the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture is directed to make sure that there is diversity in regional representation and tribal representation and in expertise in the different agricultural fields.

Are there any questions about that? We are hoping, as I said, to get that federal register out in the next month or two. I'm always hesitant to predict anything in the federal government; it always seems to take longer. Our goal is to have those through the entire process nominated and formulated before the Tribal Nation summit that the president hosts in November.

Arnetta Cotton: Ms. Thompson, [inaudible 03:43:01].

Speaker 53: We have [inaudible 03:43:01] two questions.

Heather Dawn Th...: You bet.

Speaker 53: Three. Chairman and me.

Speaker 55: Ms. Thompson, does that apply to non-registered tribes or just recognized tribal groups or non-recognized tribal groups? Both? [inaudible 03:43:21].

Speaker 53: In order to serve on the commission, there is no requirement of tribal enrollment .in order to be a nominator, the definition of Indian tribe includes federally recognized tribes and Alaska native corporations.

Speaker 55: Thank you.

Heather Dawn Th...: You bet. Any other questions on that?

Okay, we'll go ahead and move to the next category. Tribal barriers consultation. Several of the questions that you sent up were very thoughtful about the barriers and the challenges that tribes have accessing USDA programs, and we agree. Many of them, like many of our communities, are systemic in nature. Some of the real challenges that tribal nations and tribal producers face that are slightly different than our other communities is the legal structure of their land ownership being held in trust with the federal government, and the legal structure of the tribal governmental entities. I'll go to the next slide.

And so for the last three years of this administration, or I should say the last two years of this administration, and then the next one is coming up next month in April, we've had tribal government consultations on barriers for tribes and native producers for accessing USDA. We have used that information like the recommendations from the equity commission, like the recommendations from your commission to try and one by one start to work through those barriers and eliminate them at USDA. And as I shared, some of them are similar to the

barriers that we experience in all of our communities that have been disenfranchised, but some of them are unique. And so, I put some of the ones that are a little bit different here.

The tribal lands definition is one of them. Most Native Americans and tribal governments own their land in what is called trust. So they're the beneficiary user of the land, but it's held in trust with the United States government at the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Our programs have historically had trouble categorizing this land ownership. Even though they do own it, it's not owned exactly the same way that most Americans own their land. We have incorrectly categorized that land as ineligible for many of our farming and ranching and conservation programs, which has caused, as you can imagine, great difficulty for a lot of our native farmers and ranchers.

Another example of a barrier that has been brought up many times in these consultations is tribal governmental ineligibility for our programs. As many of you know, tribal governments have all the same responsibilities as a state or county government, schools, roads, jails, but they don't have a tax base. For a whole variety of historical and legal reasons, they don't have income tax or property tax or sales tax, really, although that's a complicated answer. And so in order to create governmental revenue to fund their governmental responsibilities, their schools or roads or jails, they participate in the private marketplace. Little crazy, right? Can imagine Montana owning a bunch of hotels in order to pay for their jails. But that's what tribes have to do because they don't have a tax base. So that's why you see tribes with casinos and gas stations and grocery stores and golf courses; these are income revenue producers for their governmental revenue. It goes directly to the treasury for the tribal nation, and then the elected officials use it as their budget.

So this hybrid entity of a tribal corporation has been confusing to our programs. Some of our programs require you to be either governmental or a private corporation. Tribal owned arms and instrumentalities are both, they're neither and they're both. They're 100% wholly governmental-owned, but they participate in the private marketplace. And so the challenges that we have for quite some time just deemed them ineligible for all of our programs, which clearly was not Congress's intent, and so we have been working on fixing those definitions.

So those are two examples of unique challenges for tribal nations and Native Americans that we have been trying to address through administrative definitional changes and regulatory changes without having to go to Congress hopefully to fix those.

I'll pause there. Our next one is at the end of April, the last week in April, in which we'll report out to tribal nations the progress that we have made thus far on the barriers and get their input on additional things that we need to fix. Any questions on that section before we go to the next one?

Arnetta Cotton: Thank you. This is Arnetta Cotton. So what sort of advancements have you made? If you're making a report at the end of April, how's it looking?

Heather Dawn Th...: I am an appointee, so this is a new job for me, and I came in hot. I'm usually on your side of the table. I have to admit, I can't believe how much progress we have made in two years. It really is impressive to me, at least. And so, I think we have really good news to report on a lot of these. We have changed these definitions in several programs already. Still have work to do, but I think our report out is going to be very positive.

Arnetta Cotton: May I ask, are you going to address the other two bullets?

Heather Dawn Th...: The plants and the native language?

Arnetta Cotton: Yes.

Heather Dawn Th...: You bet.

Arnetta Cotton: That's why I'm asking. I'm from Oklahoma, which is why I'm asking.

Heather Dawn Th...: Yeah, you bet. The indigenous plants and animals, you can imagine, we heard from many tribal producers and Native American producers that the types of animals and the types of plants that USDA was investing in, and I made that broadly; what we were doing animal research on; what our loans were available to; what insurance was available to. We're largely western in nature and didn't incorporate well animals and plants that were important to indigenous communities; such as we invest very heavily in cattle, less so in bison, as one example; we invest very heavily in corn, less so in berries. And so, we have been rethinking our programs to be more inclusive of the types of plants and animals that are eligible for them.

And then on the last one on native language availability, there are, I apologize if I get the number wrong, I think seven languages that are covered by the Department of Justice for voting purposes that don't necessarily apply to all other federal agencies, but we want to be respectful of those needs in the communities where there are still high percentages of native language speakers and don't have easy access to English. And so, we are partnering with the Department of Interior to try and place a native language hub there so that other federal agencies can all go to one place to receive services for translation.

Speaker 58: Thank you.

Speaker 57: You bet. Any other questions on this section?

Speaker 59: I have one question. If I apply for a USDA grant as just a citizen of the country, I just apply for the grant, how about the Native American farmers? Do they have to go through the tribal government or do you deal directly with the individuals?

Speaker 57: For the most part, they go directly to USDA, and they use the same programs and processes as everybody else. There are only a handful of programs at USDA that are tribal government specific, but mostly they participate the same as any other farmer and rancher.

Speaker 59: As an independent nation, the national government doesn't have control over what the USDA does.

Speaker 57: A tribal government, you mean, doesn't have control over USDA? Is that your question, sir?

Speaker 59: That means that USDA does whatever it wants with independent farmers on tribal lands.

Speaker 57: Gotcha.

Speaker 59: It takes the tribal government out of the flow of funds coming into the community. That's what I'm...

Speaker 57: Gotcha. Yes-ish.

The programs have been historically defined by Congress to go directly to USDA, and then a handful of them through states. For those that work in the tribal space, you might be familiar with self-determination or 638 contracting, which is available at Department of Interior and Indian Health Service, where tribes take over federal programs, so that they can do exactly what you're saying, administer them on behalf of their citizens, particularly for tribes with large land bases. Congress has not yet widely applied that to USDA. The Native Farm Bell Coalition is the primary advocacy organization in this space, and that is one of their top three priorities that they are asking of Congress in this next farm bill, is to make more of USDA's programs programs that the tribe itself could take over and provide services for its citizens.

Speaker 59: As I understand it, a lot of the lands within tribal territories are farmed by outsiders, the people outside of the community. I'm just sort of concerned about how, if it's on tribal land, and somebody who is not part of the tribe can go forward with the support of USDA without having overall tribal approval or doing such a practice. I know that there are different ways of looking at it.

Speaker 57: Yeah, it's such a good question and we're going to delve really deeply into that into this next section of why that is the case on federal policy effects on tribal land in agriculture. To generally, broadly, answer your question, it's a little bit less of a problem in farming and ranching because individuals have more control and ownership over their individual parcels, but still a concern. For example, tribes still have regulatory authority over their water, but they might not have regulatory authority over a non-native farmer and rancher accessing that water. So, it causes pretty significant equity and jurisdiction issues. Different in

Oklahoma, for the member that's from Oklahoma. When we're talking about Wyoming, South Dakota and North Dakota with these large land-based tribes, Navajo, et cetera, that have very defined reservations, it comes up a lot at USDA within the rural development infrastructure context.

For example, historically, even though USDA has always required permits and rights of way in order to fund wastewater treatment, putting down water lines, putting down electrical lines, broadband, big infrastructure programs, we have not been clear historically that we mean also from the tribe. We have not historically enforced that rule regarding non-tribal owned projects being built on reservations, and tribes have been very vocal in their opposition to this US funding entities that don't have permission and rights of way to be within their jurisdiction. We have changed the rules in the last two years to be more clear, that when we say you have to show you have the rights of way and permits, we also mean the tribal government, not just the state government if you're going to be building on tribal land. Hopefully that answers your question a little bit and in this next section we'll do more, I think.

Speaker 59: But anyway, yes. I won't belay you because we have to move on, anyway. Mr. Reed has a question.

Speaker 57: You bet.

Speaker 60: Miss Thompson, about this being a sovereign nation, benefits the Native Americans?

Speaker 57: I'm sorry, can you repeat that?

Speaker 60: ...benefit Native Americans in agriculture. Being a sovereign nation.

Speaker 58: How does being a sovereign nation benefit

Speaker 57: The Native Americans?

Speaker 59: Native Americans in agriculture?

Speaker 57: In agriculture? Thank you. Sorry, it was cutting out, and I could only hear half the question. Thank you for repeating it. I think tribes would answer, over anything else, having local governments have more control is beneficial to local people, right? Because they know their community better, they can provide more consistency across the board, and that is not necessarily the case right now. It's very disjointed on Indian reservations. The jurisdiction for agriculture, the land ownership for agriculture, is very disjointed and that has led to a very challenging environment, for not just Native American farmers on their tribal lands, but also non-native farmers and ranchers on tribal lands, because of the multiple jurisdictions and confusion. Tribes have been very clear that they

would like to get more of that jurisdiction back and more continuity so that they can better support the local farmers and ranchers on tribal lands.

Speaker 59: The US government has treaties with the Native American nations, so they recognize that they are independent nations in a way, but it seems like the way we are treating the independent nations as if they are irrelevant in terms of USDA policy and it's like building the pipelines across their property.

Speaker 57: The United States has a very checkered and challenging history with tribal nations for sure. So, let's talk about it. Let me show you those slides. [inaudible 03:59:43] Let's go to the next one.

I'll pause as we talk about this, because I think it goes to exactly your question. Because the federal government has created this problem, it has created the challenge for native farmers and ranchers on tribal lands, and non-native farmers and ranchers on tribal lands. Next slide. Go ahead.

Many of us are very familiar with the loss of indigenous lands to the United States. Next slide. What's in blue is original Indian homelands, and you'll see... It should go naturally, but if you could go to the next slide. To what we see today, the reservations that are left, The land that is no longer an Indian ownership or tribal ownership. Next slide. Tribes have very complex relationships with and much of that land is under Forest Service control. Next slide, until the end of the maps. Yeah, thank you. They still have treaty rights to a lot of Forest Service land. They still have sacred sites and burial sites on a lot of Forest Service land. People are very familiar, I think, with this portion of the federal policy and the challenge that these land takings have caused for Native Americans. But, I think people are less familiar with the policies that affected the lands that are left. There was still a number of federal policies on the yellow lands that have made it very difficult for native farmers and ranchers. Next slide.

The United States has been very inconsistent, no surprise, in its policies towards Native Americans. What many Americans learn is just like the first era of policy, we see Westerns where people are making war and we're signing treaties, and a lot of folks' education about Native Americans and tribes sort of ends there. There's another a hundred years of federal policy that is wildly vacillating. After the United States was unsuccessful in eradicating Native Americans through war, they decided to try and assimilate Native Americans, and make them more Western so that they were not a problem to westward expansion. This is the time period in which native children were taken from their family's homes and sent to boarding schools for about a hundred years, against their will. There's actually a food component to this that we'll talk about in that survival food and rations were withheld from these families if they did not turn over their children, which is how we used food to control them.

Then, that was not that successful. In fact, the boarding schools were incredibly problematic and very detrimental to the Native community. As early as the fifties, we tried another way to remove the Indian problem, if you will, which is

what it was called. That was tribal termination. The United States Senate terminated or extinguished tribal governments, many of them throughout the United States, and much of the land that they seized in that statutory termination, they turned over to the US Forest Service, which creates additional complications in our relationship with tribes.

In the 1970s, President Nixon, surprising to many people, finally said, "Enough is enough." We have tried everything. We tried assimilation, we tried war, we tried termination. One, Native Americans aren't going anywhere, the tribes are still here, and two, these policies have been wildly unsuccessful. We have not helped the native communities, we have not helped the tribal nations. In fact, we've harmed them greatly, and they're much worse off than when we arrived, not better. Let's stop, and let's defer to tribal nations, and let them be the decision makers, let them be the determinators of their own destiny. That has been the policy of the United States since the 1970s, to devolve and turn over as many of the decisions and as many of the federal programs and monies directly to the tribal nations as the better decision makers for their own nations. Next slide.

What happened is, during these efforts to try and control and force and remove tribes, in addition to the huge land loss, it had very significant policy implications and impacts on food and agriculture, which is obviously very important to USDA. Sorry, I'm running out of time. I'll try to speed up here. One was, during the wartime period, like many wars, we purposely destroyed food waste in order to try and control the indigenous populations. Second was, we then forced Western farming onto the tribal communities. I'll go through each of these. Three, even though we forced Western farming, and we didn't actually provide the resources to teach or to empower the Western farming techniques. Then four, we punished the tribes and the indigenous communities for not being successful farmers. Farming was a huge part of the United States' policy when they removed tribes and when they signed the treaties, there were very specific provisions in most treaties that essentially said, "You're going to become a farmer. We're removing you here to become a Western farmer." Next slide.

Speaker 58: Okay, let's go back. Well, start from the back all the way through on the allotments. Okay, now we'll go to the front.

Speaker 57: Can you repeat the question?

Speaker 61: Okay, I haven't said it yet. The Homestead Act that ended back in 1970 something.

Speaker 57: The which act?

Speaker 61: Homestead. Homestead.



Speaker 57: 1800s yes, and the early 1900s, there were a couple of them.

Speaker 61: Yes. How much land do you think was lost under the Homestead Act?

Speaker 57: I couldn't even imagine. All of it.

Speaker 61: All of it. Okay. That's what we wanted to know. Okay. It worked both ways. I know the black farmers were told back in 1933 to stop growing cotton. They were going to allot. They were going to give them some money, whatever. That never happens. What was there in that agreement with the allotment with Native Americans?

Speaker 57: They had treaties that allocated very specific reservations. Oklahoma's different, the entire state of Oklahoma was statutorily set aside for Native Americans, and then that was violated and opened up to homesteaders. Other tribes, rather than specific parcels, other tribes were given an entire reservation. I'll show you a map actually of my own reservation and the allotment of lands of that reservation after the reservation was set aside.

Speaker 61: Really, I think everything in the book has been done to try to eliminate tribal self-government and what have you, from day one up to now. This is 2023. [inaudible 04:07:51] I would say tricks are things they going do to try to do some things to so many tribal groups.

Speaker 57: It's a heavy burden to try and reverse the efforts over the last 200 years, for sure.

Speaker 61: We need to find out what barriers are there that this committee can really look at to try to make recommendations in regards to identifying those things, and bring it to everybody's attention.

Speaker 57: Yep, you bet. I think this presentation will help frame the conversation about those barriers and on the third one we'll get into the land ownership really specifically.

Speaker 61: All right, thank you.

Speaker 57: You bet. The first was during war, was the destruction of indigenous food waste, which is not surprising, right? It's a very common act of war, to remove your enemy's independent food sources. Next slide. I'm going to tell the perspective from where I'm from, from South Dakota, because we have so many tribes. Where I'm from in South Dakota in the Great Plains, this meant the destruction of the buffalo that was the primary food source for most of the Great Plains tribes. The United States Army took on a very active policy of destroying the buffalo so that tribes didn't have independent food, and had to be forced into submission and move onto the reservation. This is one of the reasons, talking about barriers, sir, why the United States is so committed to restoration of

those indigenous animals that the United States government purposely destroyed in order to remove those food sources. They did the same with salmon access, criminalizing salmon access. We did the same in the Pacific Northwest, as two examples. Next slide.

So once we moved tribes to reservations in order to move them out of the way of Westward expansion, we put in the treaties, okay, you're going to become Western farmers. Next slide. This was very different to most tribes, even the indigenous farming tribes farm differently than western farming. Most were hunter-gatherers, still the one in the middle where you see Cheyenne River, Sioux, Dupree, that's my reservation. We're going to talk about that one, just as one example. Next slide.

This is the treaty that moved the tribes out of what's called the Black Hills, where gold was found. Many of you heard Black Hills gold, and onto the reservations that I just showed you. I'm showing you the specific treaty language, because a lot of folks have never read a treaty to see that it says, "In the work of civilization," which at that time was agriculture, western agriculture, and then in return the United States is going to instruct in mechanical and agricultural art. This was the deal. You give us all your land, we're going to reserve this land for you, you're going to become a western farmer and we're going to provide all the resources that are necessary to ensure your success. Next page.

This one says, this is in the treaty, "You become a farmer and we will purchase your food. We will purchase your food and we will hire your people for the services on the reservation." Next page. Then, the United States didn't provide all of the tools that were necessary to be successful with these requirements. Next page. After moving to the reservation and saying, okay, this square that's left, you saw my pink square over Cheyenne River, this left is yours, just like with Oklahoma, right? The state of Oklahoma, what's left is yours. What you saw in Oklahoma with the opening up to the land rush to non-native tribal members is the same thing that happened to individual reservations. The land that was not being utilized immediately by a native family was auctioned off to non-tribal members. Next. Here you can see South Dakota, North Dakota where I live, where I'm from, my reservation listed on here. Next. My reservation. Next.

Okay, so this is a map of what you just saw, that pink, this is my reservation, the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation. Without me telling you where the water sources are, or where the best agricultural land is, everything in gray is tribally owned, or Native American owned. All of the parcels in white are outside of tribal hands, are non-native fee lands, most of them that were auctioned off during this time period. You can guess where the water is, you can guess where the best agricultural lands are, the most arable lands. Immediately after already moving tribes to an area that they were not accustomed to being living in, keeping them in that space, not having been Western style farmers, we then took away the best farming land and sold that off to non-tribal farmers, who remained for the large part on the reservation lands and still own these best

farming and ranching lands. Next. Then when the tribal members did not perform, we punished them. Next.

Speaker 61: One question.

Speaker 57: You bet.

Speaker 61: Okay, go back to the two previous slides. If they can go back. Okay, stop right there. What you just said in regard to how this land was lost and land was given to white folks and what have you, it seems that the practice is not stopping Native Americans and also those whites that are farming as well, even though that was land was by Native Americans, you have black farmers who have land that they purchased using funds. I know 8% used the fund from the USDA. Others got it from other places, but the [inaudible 04:13:51] that had land previously under the USDA from the agreement that they're going to give them this money, loan them this money to buy this land, and if they missed two or three payments they went to foreclosure. After x amount of days, their land's taken away from them, given also to the white owners that were there. It's seeming that this whole thing parallels one another.

Speaker 57: Yeah, definitely lots of parallels.

Speaker 61: I have another question for you.

Speaker 57: You bet.

Speaker 61: Who created the system? Are they dead now or are they still alive?

[inaudible 04:14:52]

Speaker 57: I assume that's a rhetorical question.

Speaker 62: As long as grass grows and water flows.

Speaker 58: Yeah. [inaudible 04:15:06]

Speaker 59: ...case a year or so ago brought by the Navajo Nation that dealt with some of the treaties and the language in the treaty. Did that resolve anything? I don't know if it...

Speaker 57: I think it's still in litigation.

Speaker 59: Still in litigation.

Speaker 57: Yeah.

Speaker 59: Please, go ahead.

Speaker 57: Any other questions on this slide? We have just one section left and then it'll be done.

Speaker 59: Please, move on.

Speaker 61: Move on.

Speaker 57: Okay, go ahead and go forward.

Speaker 59: Yes, please.

Speaker 57: Okay, here's again the treaty that talks about the rations, that was part of the deal. You go on here and we'll feed you because we've killed your food source, right? We've removed your food source, we've moved you to a place where you don't know how to grow your own food, or collect your own food, and we've prohibited you from leaving the reservation to go get food sources anywhere else. We, the United States, will provide you with this amount of food, beef, flour, corn, sugar.

This is incredibly important from USDA's perspective because we have shifted the indigenous diet completely at this point in time. They're no longer eating indigenous food. This is one of the reasons why diabetes shot through the roof in Native communities. Then we said, in there, if you do not send your children to the boarding schools that we are forcing you to send them to, you don't get the food that we're going to give to you, even though you have no way to leave or go get your food on your own. This has created a great deal of hostility and difficulty in the federal nutrition food space within USDA.

Next, this is the ration ticket to go get your rations, your foods. Next. This is the boarding school. This is the famous picture of the Carlisle Indian Boarding School. The theme of Native American boarding school was to kill the Indian and save the man. They were incredibly brutal, very high rates of sexual and physical abuse, and very high death rates. Next. This is a before and after picture that the United States government took great pride in. Next. Okay, where does that bring us today? Next.

Indigenous food sovereignty. This is where the United States is focusing at USDA, right now, under this administration, per your request, what do we do about it? What are the policies? Next. How do we re-empower the tribal nations to bring back their own food systems, to bring back their bison, bring back the salmon, bring back the wild rice that we destroyed. Purposely, in many cases. How do we empower the indigenous foods, the indigenous traditional farming techniques that we removed? How do we make those ration food packages that contain corn, and lard, and flour? How do we reincorporate those indigenous foods, the blue corn, the bison, the salmon, the berries into those food packages that we're providing? All of the different historical decisions that we just walked through together the United States made, that impacted food and

agriculture on Indian reservations, we have to reverse. We now have the obligation to fix that and that means all sorts of policy changes in all of the different programs at USDA.

In our nutrition program, in that first square dipper is the food distribution on Indian reservations. Those are the food boxes, the commodities that go to reservations. We've got to change the content of the food in that box to be indigenous foods. At the US Forest Service, we have to honor the treaties that are still attached to those lands and make sure that the tribes still have their hunting and fishing rights, and their foraging rights and access rights to those lands.

At our marketing services, mobile meat processing, very popular right now. Big movement on that. Tribes are like, "We don't want to process pigs. It's not our animal. We want to process reindeer and seafood and bison." That requires a whole different set of rules that make it very challenging from a food safety perspective, from what's eligible. Many of them want to process in the field where they feel it's much more respectful to the animal. They don't want to bring them to a bricks and mortar facility. That requires rule changes. Within the farming and ranching space, this means changing the animals that we fund and the plants that we fund, making sure that bison are eligible for things, making sure that berries are eligible for things. Next slide, and we'll just go to the end. I'm running out of time. Okay.

Sorry, that was a lot, but I wanted to share the framing and the history so that as a team we can have this conversation about how those barriers make more sense and work together to remove them. Thank you so much for your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

Speaker 59: I had one quick question. You mentioned Forest Service. There's an issue with them cutting down trees on Native American lands. Who controls that at this point? Is it the Forest Service or is it the Native American reservation?

Speaker 57: If it is a tribal reservation, then the tribe has jurisdiction for those decisions. If it is land under the US Forest Service, so it's a US forest, even though that land is treaty land and the tribes have rights to it, right now, they don't have a lot of say in the timber reduction. That is largely a Forest Service decision. We are trying to do a better job honoring the treaty rights, and bringing tribal nations to the decision making table.

Speaker 58: I have a question. This is [inaudible 04:21:14] if an individual was applying for USDA programming funds and the land that they're applying for is a tribal land, but they're not a tribe, will they get tribal benefits if the land itself is tribal?

Speaker 57: I am not aware of any tribal benefits available through USDA for any tribal land.

Speaker 58: Okay.

- Speaker 57: Whether you're a tribal member or not. I don't know if that answers your question.
- Speaker 59: One more question.
- Speaker 61: Ms. Thompson, you sat on this side of the table at one time. Is there anything that you left behind that has not been taken care of that we can look at?
- Speaker 57: Oh, you bet. I can send you a whole list. Yes. We are getting ready to prepare what are called framing papers for that upcoming tribal consultation on barriers. Those are intended to outline what we've made progress on and what we have not made progress on. I would love to send that to you for your consideration.
- Speaker 59: Excellent. That was a great question. [inaudible 04:22:33]
- Speaker 58: Thanks for your time. We do understand the urgency of all of these problems for both the Native American communities and for black farmers. Thank you very much. Please send us the documents, and you've given us a lot to chew on for our deliberation over the next couple of days.
- Speaker 57: You bet. Thank you so much for having me. Have a good rest of your meeting.