

Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council
Webinar
December 11, 2012

MINUTES

Agenda

Farm Bill and budget update – Roylene
WACD meeting follow-up – Tribal participants and Roylene
Local work group/Tribal work group via WATCAC – Jackie, Tribes, Jeff Harlow
Easements – Jeff Harlow
Riparian buffer and Nutrient management practices and standards update – Bonda
January meeting update and draft agenda – Robin
Forestry presentation – Carrie Gaines
Aquaculture program update – Robin
Consultation - Rebecca
Other topics

Participants

Colville Confederated Tribes – Jackie Richter
Lower Elwah – Arlene Wheeler
Quinault – Mike Stamon
Samish – Christine Woodward
Snoqualmie – Cindy Spiry
Suquamish – Paul Williams
Yakama – Joanne Cornwall
NRCS – Roylene Rides at the Door, Peter Bautista, Jeff Harlow, Harold Crose, Rick Noble, Rebecca Stuart, Robin Slate, Bonda Habets, Karla Ware, Will Keller, Kathy Kilcoyne, Patrice Beckwith, Amanda Ettestad, Carrie Gaines

NOTE: Highlighted items require action from the WATCAC.

NOTE: Highlighted items require action from the NRCS.

Introduction, Farm Bill and budget update – Roylene Rides at the Door, State Conservationist

Roylene greeted the group and provided an update on the Farm Bill and NRCS budget:

- Farm bill action during lame duck session is not moving as planned; there had been hope but nothing has happened.
- After 1/1/13 if farm bill isn't passed, they will need to start over with a new Congress, which will put a lot of NRCS programs on hold.
 - The existing farm bill has been partially extended thru 2014 – EQIP, WHIP and FRPP are authorized but none of the other programs have been (WRP, GRP and Stewardship programs). So no WRP or GRP signups.
 - WA-NRCS is moving forward with EQIP and related initiatives in FY13.
 - Working Lands for Wildlife (WHIP) – need to request for additional funding; contingent on species approved.

- Budget allocations have been received for FY13 and looks reasonable with minor cuts/limits
 - Budget looks ok
 - April 1 is the deadline to obligate at least 90% of allocations; unobligated funds will be swept nationwide
 - WA-NRCS will request Puget Sound funds in April from the swept funds
 - July 1 is the second obligation deadline
 - July 15 is when unobligated allocations are swept nationwide
 - Agency has approval to proceed on Agreements (ex. CR services working with Tribes)

Roylene also mentioned the January face-to-face WATCAC meeting. She emphasized that we need to have Tribal participants at the meeting for priorities, funding and program recommendations for FY14 programs. January to June is the period for Rebecca and Robin to work out FY14 programs with input from WATCAC.

WACD meeting follow-up – Mike Stamon (Quinault); Jackie Richter (Colville Reservation Conservation District (CRCDD)); and Roylene

The Washington Association of Conservation Districts (WACD) is a state association of 46 Conservation Districts. Their annual meeting was held in Cle Elum, and stressed building tribal relations and working with WACD. Funding from the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) supported five WATCAC members to attend the WACD meeting - Mike Stamon, Jonalee Squeochs, Sharon Red Thunder, Jackie Richter, and Jim Peters.

These WATCAC representatives met with the President and Executive Director of NACD, and discussed opportunities to work together. The tribal reps suggested education on the Farm bill process, how conservation districts (CDs) work, and how might established CDs might provide support to tribes, such as a mentor program, capacity building, and CD supervisor training. There also were informal discussions on basic issues such as contacts, roles, and Local Work Group (LWG) meeting invitations – the CDs asked for contact information so that LWG invitations could be sent to the tribes.

- Mike Stamon’s report:
 - It was a good group to meet with; these are all volunteers who are really interested in conservation; the meeting was an eye-opener on activities on non-tribal lands.
 - It’s a perfect partnership to work with; they are looking to build tribal relationships, and are interested in partnerships and meetings; we expressed interest in consulting on projects more than going to meetings; there was discussion on activities both ways, and data-driven alignment with tribes; we were glad to see interest from the CDs in working with tribes.
 - We recommended future attendance and would like to determine ways for funding travel sponsorships.
- Jackie Richter’s report:
 - There was genuine support and offers of training opportunities.
 - We need a CD map so we can see which CDs go with which tribes.
 - It was a productive meeting.
 - We offered NACD a letter of support regarding the Farm bill.
 - The breakout sessions were good; dealt with programs, and such.
 - WACD and the CDs have 70 years of experience playing this game; what an opportunity to work with them.

NACD will work on funds to support tribal travel/participation in their 2014 annual meeting, which will be in San Antonio in January. NACD can provide legislative and farm bill information that

Roylene cannot. The WATCAC should prepare for WACD's 2013 meeting starting with the September WATCAC meeting.

Local work groups/Tribal work group via WATCAC – Jackie Richter, CRCDC; Tribes; Jeff Harlow, Asst. State Conservationist – Programs

Discussion on LWGs addressed the possibility of a Tribal Work Group (TWG). It might make more sense to have East and West TWGs if a statewide TWG is too problematic. This proposal needs considerable thought. LWGs are tied to NRCS Teams (NRCS will resend Service Center map with Teams and LWGs), which include Field Offices and Conservation Districts in two to five counties. The LWGs provide information on resource concerns and treatment areas (as the WATCAC did for the TRA). Robin and Rebecca have from January through May to get tribal data for the Tribal EQIP FY14, which will help the agency develop its budget for FY14. Robin suggested sending the templates to the WATCAC so that they can work on getting the appropriate folks together to work on this.

Easements – Jeff Harlow

Jeff Harlow noted that the agency will hold work sessions with the LWGs using templates to collect the necessary information. He anticipates expanding these to identify resource concerns for easement programs.

Riparian buffer and Nutrient management practices and standards update – Bonda Habets, State Resource Conservationist

Bonda told the group that the agency is in a transition period, and that the Nutrient Management practice standard (590) probably won't be out until May. We will use the old version for FY13. The agency is working with a committee that includes tribal representation, and with neighboring states for a regional perspective. The main issues are the phosphorus index, fertilizer guide, and concurrence from DOE.

The agency just received guidance from the National Office on the riparian forest buffer practice standard. We used a NOAA table (version 2) for the Puget Sound Partnership (PSSRP). The table doesn't cover all operations in the state, such as field ditches. We can share the NOAA table with the WATCAC. The NRCS fish biologist is working with NOAA on the table. For now the 35' setback will stand. The agency would rather maintain consistency while waiting for science from other agencies on which to base changes. These agencies include DOE, EPA, WSDA, and others. They are working together on the updated standard. If they cannot agree, then we will need a state law that sets the setback standard.

Relative to forest practices, NOAA interpretation is stricter than that on public lands. Forest practices for private lands have a biological opinion. There are differences in conservation practices and what buffers are on cropland and forest land. The landuse criteria vary; there is a need for discussion.

Some interim practices were discussed as well: Fish structures (734) and Feed Management (592). We are seeking input on how to use and implement these practices. Please provide input directly to Bonda. The 592 is in support of nutrient management.

January meeting update and draft agenda – Robin Slate, West Area Tribal Liaison

Robin shared the draft agenda, and let the group know that NRCS had received approval for the meeting, a requirement of new travel restrictions. Jackie is working on confirming the Emerald Queen

Casino Hotel in Fife, WA (Exit 137). There will be one travel sponsorship available per tribe; if requested that assistance, WATCAC representatives should provide their information to Jackie.

Other USDA agencies will participate. Representatives from the Olympic National Forest, Snoqualmie Forest, Colville National Forest, Rural Development, and Farm Services Agency have been invited. The new BLM Regional Director, Jerry Pierce, will also attend.

Paul Williams voiced concerns about too much agency presence, too many priorities and information on the agenda. He asked how locked into the agenda we were, and requested NRCS send a summary and condensed information from the agencies ahead of time.

NRCS will try to arrange for a room after hours to discuss the Treaty Rights at Risk paper. Robin also is trying to arrange for a Puyallup elder to talk about the tribe's compact with the state to co-manage land.

Forestry presentation – Carrie Gaines, NRCS Forester

Carrie provided a powerpoint presentation on an Integrated Forestry Management Plan. This presentation was provided as FYI, and **will be available on an NRCS website.**

Aquaculture program update – Robin Slate; Rick Noble, West Area Resource Conservationist

Robin let the group know that the agency is in the process of rolling out the aquaculture program. A flyer is being prepared and will be sent out. There are \$75,000 in the funding pool, and we estimate spending \$1800/acre to treat 50 acres through a multi-year effort.

Rick noted that a lot of agencies and non-governmental organizations are concerned about this program, so the agency decided to focus on the oyster drill as a starting point, to proceed cautiously. We need to show funds being spent on environmental benefit, not production.

Paul Williams asked opportunities for Olympia oyster restoration in Liberty Bay. Rick suggested a Conservation Innovation Grant through NRCS. Paul also inquired about the tribal aquaculture process. Robin is putting together a list of tribal fisheries managers to address tribal shellfish issues. **Rebecca will get East side information to Robin.** Paul also asked about ocean acidification and climate change. Rick replied that this is the first year of the program, and in keeping with a cautious approach, we'll focus on the oyster drill for FY13.

Tribal Consultation - Rebecca Stuart, East Area Tribal Liaison

Rebecca explained that Roylene had requested she and Robin work with their tribes to develop consultation agreements. While the agency has guidance/sideboards for such agreements, we haven't formed a strategy.

The reason for bringing it up to the WATCAC is twofold. One, to seek their advice on pursuing these agreements. Two, there is new energy at the department level (USDA) to revisit/develop consultation policies at the agency level. NRCS has such a policy but will be expected to review it, and make revisions if necessary.

Paul cautioned that consultation agreements can actually end consultation. He added that NRCS already does a pretty good job of consultation.

The group asked whether the WATCAC was a direct result of this requirement. It could be perceived that way, and supports government-to-government consultation, but it is not a substitute for formal consultation. The agency would like the WATCAC's guidance on how to proceed, and would like to work on this during FY13. **The next opportunity we have to discuss this is the February meeting.**

Other topics

No other topics were discussed.

Acronyms:

EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
FRPP	Farm & Ranch Protection Program
GRP	Grasslands Reserve Program
LWG	Local Work Groups
NACD	National Association of Conservation Districts
TRA	Tribal Resource Assessment
TWG	Tribal Work Group
WACD	Washington Association of Conservation Districts
WHIP	Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
WRP	Wetland Reserve Program

DON'T FORGET YOUR WATCAC RESOLUTIONS !!!!

TRIBES WITH WATCAC RESOLUTIONS:

- Coeur D'Alene
- Colville
- Kalispel
- Makah
- Quinault
- Samish
- Shoalwater Bay
- Snoqualmie
- Spokane
- Squaxin
- Stillaguamish
- Suquamish
- Yakama