

WTAC Meeting January 12, 2012

In attendance: Christine Woodward, Frank Bob, John Abraham, Rick Noble, John Kendig, Mike Shellenberger, Jonalee Squeochs, Jim Anderson, Dee Williams, Paul Williams, James McCuen, Jim Peters, Pat Stevenson, Larry Wasserman, Jim Weber, Todd Bolster, Cindy Spiry, John Konovsky, Mike Stauon, Daryl Williams, James Sellers, Debbie Kay, Rebecca Toupal, Peter Bautista, Terri Parr, Robin Slate, Roylene Rides at the Door

Welcome and Introductions

Robin welcomed and thanked everyone for attending. If you are looking for lodging reimbursement please contact Terri Parr while you are on site and she can take care of.

Rebecca gave overview of the NRCS Tribal conservation advisory council.

Terri Parr updated group on the relationship with the tribes, ATNI and NRCS, very pleased that NRCS is working the Tribes.

Strategic Plan

Peter Bautista gave update on his background and overview of the day's agenda including the Tribal Program Strategic Plan which is in your packets for your review and comments you will have the opportunity to submit written feedback. The mission statement currently is only for the advisory council and NRCS at this time. NRCS is a voluntary agency we don't regulate anything – as we are implementing conservation on the land we make sure we are in state compliance. The plan is to personalize how we can serve tribes. Does everyone realize the tribal priorities are unique? Discussion on how many people can be on the council is there a cap on the number of members – the preference is one council person and one technical staff from each of the 26 federally recognized tribes in Washington. Please continue to give NRCS feedback to make sure we are heading in the right direction. This council has not identified by-laws, the goal is to do that so that tribes and NRCS are on the same page. Provide input to us to help shape the farm bill. The Tribes have the science to back up potential changes – when standards come up for review every 5 years. Please submit to NRCS your comments on the strategic plan additions, edits, issues and if you support it and sign it, it's not a binding MOU. It will be sent in Word format to the council for individual edits.

Make sure this council moves in a positive direction. NRCS standards on fish passage and water quality don't just focus on eco we focus on everything. If Roylene could say when she goes to these big meetings she can say "I have 26 resolutions from tribes, etc"....NRCS know the tribes are very powerful in Washington.

Shellfish Aquaculture

Discussion on the importance of shell fish in the state WA – culturally important to tribes, important food resource for a variety of terrestrial and aquatic organisms, pacific county is the biggest employer for shellfish, Reason WA state is the lead, Bush and Callow Acts 1895 allowed sale of tidelands for shellfish.

Roylene has been doing outreach with the tribal shellfish growers and tribes. NRCS staff has also been working with shellfish growers PCSGA, STATE DNR and Dept of Health to try and understand the issues that growers are facing.

Would like to sit down with the tribes and identify resource concerns. We would like to start working with the tribes that are interested. Discussion on the practice standards in the PowerPoint – how can we help you? What are the parameters? The tribe that has control of the land we will write a conservation contract on a voluntary basis – we have not worked with shellfish growers so we are trying to expand the audience that uses the NRCS programs. Suggestion to have a tribal specific funding to the tribes and not creating competition between the mainstream industries – that way NRCS also addresses their trust responsibility. Contact information will be sent to the council.

National Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative 2012

PowerPoint presentation

Would the tribes be interested in using the “high tunnels”? Requirements are they must be used to grow food and it has to be planted in the ground.

This is exciting and excellent news for our tribe how competitive is the grant process? We think it's going to be a random selection. This would be a contract on its own. There has been lots of interest from organic farmers; this might be a fit for tribes not only for food but for traditional plants. NRCS doesn't know what the interest will be. This is a good opportunity for tribes. NRCS will email the information to the council members. There are three application periods ending February 3, 2012, March 30, 2012 and June 1, 2012.

State Resource Assessment/Tribal Resource Assessment Working Session

Peter Bautista started discussion on the state assessment and process. The history of State resource assessment in 2011 the USDA NRCS conducted a statewide assessment to identify natural resources in Washington that might be impacted by agriculture, grazing and private forestry operations. The assessment addressed natural resources: soil, water, air, plants animals, and energy. Natural resources of greatest concern were identified and prioritized based on: data gathered, local and regional stakeholder and shareholder. The SRA helps NRCS focus attention and funding. Roylene said this year we will start this process and it will go into our budget next year.

Top priority concerns these are not in ranking order: Soil erosion; water quality degradation – sediment and nutrients; degraded plant condition; inefficient use of irrigation; inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife; degraded plant condition; water quality degradation; water quality degradation; degraded plant condition; energy.

For the first time, NRCS-WA was asked to submit a budget proposal based on treating priority resource concerns in Washington State. FY 2012 is a transitional year; By FY2013 NRCS-WA will be expected to meet all goals set by the state resource assessment. We are at least one year behind with the tribes the good thing is we now have a plan. Copies were distributed to the council members.

Top Five Resource Concerns for the WTAC from the east side tribes and west side tribes.

Discussion on the local working groups don't always include the tribes, the council has the opportunity to provide the voice and opportunity to build on these relationships if they are talking about your ceded lands. One of the things we are looking at is how do we increase participation in these groups. When looking at the assessment if anything isn't included please add it and NRCS will follow up. Can we set up the committees and hold a follow-up meeting at the ATNI Winter conference to flush out more of the assessment.

Peter Bautista continued the discussion and planning for the assessment, where we left off yesterday was what the assessment priorities will be used for. From the tribal perspective there are two things we are asking for are you ok with these? Do they address your resource concerns the other thing is to help narrow it down if that is what we need to do. The one thing we can't lose sight of "what is it going to take for us to focus our funds to make an effect how do we narrow it down"

Tribal WATAC Resource Assessment

1. Identify resource process
2. Prioritize top 5-10 resource priorities

FY 13

July 2012 – WA NRCS submits to national a budget

June 2012 – WATAC submit top priorities and needed requirements (programs)

May 2012 – WATAC completes final SRA

April – Jan 2012 – committees work on SRA priorities

WA-NRCS State Resource Assessment – use as a baseline to start from – we will break into committees one east side one west side and start putting down your priorities and then decide the order and number of them you will bring forward, we will take it make the maps and determine the next steps. The next face to face could be the June meeting were we can narrow even further if we need to. The NRCS tribal liaisons will help each committee and facilitate.

It was pointed out that one thing that is not on the list of ten – is water temperature.

Farm Bill 2012 Update – Roylene Rides at the Door

1990 farm bill tribes are mentioned in one sentence. 1996 farm bill tribes were mentioned 33 times so we have made progress. The farm bill tells the legislation ok here is where you are spending your money. Law = agencies write policies – that's why I am excited about this group, Tribes could help write the policies. Week of February 14 will be the first debate on the farm bill.

CAPS – Conservation activity plans – will be shared with the council at the next meeting.

Nominations for Regional Tribal Conservation Advisory Committee

Roylene gave some background to this appointment – we couldn't do a national – so can we have three regional committees – see the NRCS RTCAC compared to USDA council for notes... the nominees listed only two are from the Westside – so the deadline has been extended to February 28th.

Agenda items for February teleconference

CAPS

590 nutrient standard

Incorporate comments into strategic plan

SRA comments

Meeting Adjourned