

June 2011

THE tribal CONNECTION

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State Conservationist, Roylene Rides at the Door

Update from Roylene

A message from Washington State Conservationist Roylene Rides at the Door.

Greetings and welcome to the second edition of the *Tribal Connection*. I am so thrilled that summer is just around the corner. I'd like to update you on what's been going on in the last few months regarding the Washington State Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and tribes throughout our beautiful state.

At the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians' (ATNI) 2011 annual meeting in Spokane, Jerry Thompson made a presentation on the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WTCAC). In response, the Coeur d'Alene and Colville Tribes expressed interest in forming the Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WATCAC). Washington NRCS partnered with ATNI to help the tribes get started.

WATCAC is an independent group, not a subcommittee of the ATNI nor of NRCS. In addition to the 29 federally recognized Washington tribes, the WATCAC is open to the three ceded lands tribes: Coeur d'Alene, Nez Perce, and Umatilla. Other ATNI tribes who are interested in being part of the WATCAC can do

so by contacting the NRCS state office at 509-323-2900.

Additionally, during the months of April and May, Rick Noble, western Washington Area Conservationist, Shiraz Vira, Assistant State Conservationist, Robin Slate, Western Washington Tribal Liaison, and myself met with eleven tribes in western Washington, including Chehalis, Cowlitz, Hoh, Jamestown S'Klallam, Port Gamble S'Klallam, Quileute, field trip at Quinalt, Samish, Sauk Suiattle, Snoqualmie, Suquamish, Swinomish.

The purpose of these meetings was to share information about NRCS and converse about the formation of the WATCAC.

NRCS staff also encouraged tribes to provide input and comment on the upcoming Farm Bill renewal. Tribes are encouraged to assist Washington NRCS in developing the aquaculture program to be inclusive of tribal aquaculture needs.

Currently, there are five tribes in western Washington we have not met with. Our goal is to schedule those meetings in the next couple of months.

Important Dates to Remember

June 30, 2011
CIG WA State Component
deadline for proposals

August 13, 2011
Fiscal Year 2011 cut-off
date for applications

Reminder!

NRCS accepts applications for all programs on a continuous basis. Contact your local NRCS field office or Tribal Liaison for more info.

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Restoring Native Lands

Spokane Tribe of Indians Uses Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Programs to Restore and Enhance Over 2,000 Acres

“The Spokane Tribe has utilized both the EQIP and WHIP programs to treat over 2,000 acres of tribal lands for upland and riparian wildlife habitat, water quality and forest health. They have blended these programs into their long-term goals for restoring native habitats very successfully.”

**—Dave Kreft
District Conservationist
Colville, WA**



The Spokane Tribe of Indians continues to work with the NRCS to restore and enhance over 2,000 acres of land on, and adjacent to, the Spokane Tribe’s reservation in southern Stevens County, Washington. Since the year 2000, the Tribe has entered into 10 cost-sharing contracts to improve forest health and restore wildlife habitat on rangeland, old cropland and forest lands.

The Spokane Tribe wildlife department has developed seven of these contracts—six Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and one Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)—to restore aging cropland and grazing land to upland wildlife habitat. NRCS funds were matched with Bonneville Power Administration wildlife habitat mitigation funds to complete the projects. The projects involved reseeding native grasses on old crop fields and establishing native trees and shrubs in field borders and draws. Eroding stream channels were also stabilized and re-vegetated.

The Tribe’s forestry department is using the EQIP for three contracts that focus on forest health. Overstocked forest stands are being thinned, and the resulting slash treated to



Top: Restoring sharp-tail grouse habitat on the Spokane Tribe reservation through WHIP.

Middle: Understory thinning and slash disposal to reduce wildfire risk on Spokane Tribe reservation.

Bottom: Canada geese on McCoy Lake, Spokane Tribe reservation. Water quality and quantity improved through EQIP cost-sharing contracts.

improve tree vigor, reduce wildfire risk and improve resistance to bark beetle damage. This is helping the Tribe implement overall plan for protecting their forest resources and reducing risks to the homes and businesses of Spokane tribal members.

Quinault Indian Nation Moses Prairie Road Project



image: www.baniler.us

Moses Prairie has long been culturally significant to the Quinault Indian Nation (QIN) because it has been a gathering place for wildlife such as deer, elk and bear. Moses Prairie and the Whale Creek watershed stay very wet, even during the dry summer months on the coast, and therefore, wildlife utilize these lush forage areas when other food sources start drying up. The QIN took advantage of this wet prairie to hunt and gather food stuffs, basket making material and medicinal plants during the summer months. Whale Creek and its tributaries also offer valuable rearing habitat for juvenile Coho and cutthroat trout as well as other resident fish species. The fish and wildlife habitat along with the unique wetland prairie complex makes Moses Prairie a valuable natural resource to the QIN.

This project was identified for restoration by the QIN because logging roads, built in the area over 50 years ago for timber extraction, eliminated fish passage and altered the natural hydrology of the watershed. This resulted in much higher water levels upstream of the roads, which flooded out forage areas for deer, elk, and bear. Culverts were put in place at

*Above Left: Water flowing out of a “corduroy road.”
Above Right: Overflow box culvert.*

the time of timber extraction to let water pass through the road. The amounts of debris and water often surpassed what the culverts could accommodate and water would overtop the road. Western Red Cedar was the main tree species logged from the area and residual debris often times blocked up culverts during high water events.

The purpose of this restoration was to provide fish passage for residential and anadromous species while maintaining the water level of the upstream wetland and providing additional flow capacity for the watershed. Undersized culverts were removed and put in their place was a 35’ steel bridge and a 4’ by 6’ concrete box culvert. These new structures will allow water and debris to more easily flow through the system while making fish passage possible once again.

Several construction challenges were faced with this road construction: dewatering of the site and foundation conditions being the most daunting. There was not only water in

Eastern Washington is home to several varieties of balsamroot, including Arrowleaf, Carey’s and Hooker’s.

Spotlight on: Balsamroot

Balsamroot was used by many tribes for food, medicine, ceremonial, and utility purposes. While all parts of the balsamroot are edible, the leaves, roots, and seeds were prepared for specific medicinal purposes. Food preparation included drying or roasting, and grinding the seeds; consuming young shoots raw or steamed; and mixing prepared seed or roots with other foods. Medicinal uses included—a dermatological aid, a burn dressing, a diaphoretic (to induce sweating), an antidiarrheal, an analgesic, and a sedative. The leaves were used ceremonially and for utility purposes including—tobacco, containers for cleaned and washed salmon, and wraps on boys’ feet to teach them to walk silently and carefully. The roots were used as a trade item by some tribes.

(Coville 1897; Hart 1992; Perry 1952; Ray 1932; Steedman 1928; Teit 1928; Turner et al. 1980; Turner et al. 1990)

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One of the many topics discussed at the Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council meeting is the diversity of natural resources throughout the state.

Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council Update

The Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WATCAC) met via a video teleconference on May 10, 2011. Ten tribes participated, including Hoh, Kalispel, Makah, Port Gamble S'Klallam, Quinault, Samish, Shoalwater Bay, Snoqualmie, Stillaguamish, and Swinomish, along with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ANTI). Agenda items included by-laws, NRCS's State Resource Assessment (SRA), NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) ranking criteria for tribal applications, review of conservation practices, and aquaculture.

The WATCAC decided that they needed to establish goals and possibly a work plan before drafting by-laws. The SRA, which provides a basis for NRCS funding requests, needs better incorporation of tribal resource concerns, so the WATCAC asked for a more detailed discussion of the SRA to help them address

this issue. While the EQIP ranking criteria for tribal applications were determined with tribal input, WATCAC felt that some changes might be needed to better address tribal resource concerns. Further discussion was proposed before taking action. Conservation practices are reviewed periodically, and three opportunities for tribal input were identified - at the initial consideration of drafting/review, through the federal register process, and with NRCS State Office technical staff. The WATCAC is considering an aquaculture subcommittee to address tribal needs across the state. The group determined that this resource concern is not limited to the coastal tribes, and that there are other entities with whom they should partner to address this effort. The next WATCAC video teleconference will be June 14, 2011 from 9:30 to noon.

For additional information contact Rebecca Toupal, NRCS Tribal Liaison, Spokane at rebecca.toupal@wa.usda.gov.

Get Involved

Do you have a success story, traditional-use plant, or suggestion to share?

Send submissions/suggestions to: rebecca.toupal@wa.usda.gov

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Quinault Indian Nation Moses Prairie Road Project (cont.)

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the adjacent stream channel and wetland, but water was also encountered flowing through the road fill. When the 4600 Road was built, it was standard practice to take cut trees and lay them on the wet ground surface then place gravel on top to provide a driving surface. What was created was a "corduroy road." These roads were passable by vehicles but water was also moving through the logs making up the road profile. Working on this "corduroy road" proved challenging while preparing the foundation for the box culvert and bridge abutments. The geotechnical report referred to the foundation material as "soft to medium stiff silt with occasional sand and gravel" - not ideal for building foundations. In order to meet foundation compaction requirements, the contractor had to dewater the site, lay geotextile fabric and bring in 6-inch



New bridge and downstream channel.

lifts of approved foundation material. Density testing was performed on every six inches of compacted material.

Although this project faced challenges throughout the construction phase, implementation of the new bridge and culvert was completed in August, 2010. The QIN is hoping that in the future, wildlife will return to the area in the summer to forage and juvenile salmon and trout utilize the reestablished rearing habitat.