NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

Helping People Help the Land

Partnering With Tribes to Conserve Natural Resources in Washington

Funding Obligated to Tribes by County (2012)

County	Sum of $ Obligated
Clallam	$48,285.00
Ferry	$176,652.00
Grays Harbor	$195,592.00
Okanogan	$159,660.00
Snohomish	$60,617.00
Stevens	$139,815.00
Whatcom	$84,532.00
Yakima	$404,763.00
Grand Total	**$1,269,916.00**

Source: IDEAMapIt Data Extract and ProTracts, Dec. 28,2012

Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WATCAC)

The Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WATCAC) is comprised of representatives from participating tribes and members of NRCS State Leadership. WATCAC serves in an advisory role to NRCS regarding programs, practice standards and tribal resource priorities. In FY12, NRCS entered into an agreement with the Colville Tribal Conservation District to assist with coordinating WATCAC teleconferences and organize the yearly face-to-face meeting.

All tribes are welcome to participate in the monthly WATCAC meetings/teleconferences. Tribes who submit resolutions declaring participation in and appointing representatives to the WATCAC have voting privileges. If your tribe is considering participation and/or a resolution, please contact your NRCS tribal liaison.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Washington NRCS

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New watering facility installed in 2012.

Townsend Project on the Colville Confederated Tribes Reservation

Dan and Tamara Townsend operate a custom irrigated hay/beef operation on the banks of the Columbia River in Southern Ferry County. They contacted NRCS for conservation assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) on their crop and range land. This project was completed in 2012.

Concerns on the range land included uneven distribution of livestock grazing, lack of serviceable cross fence, inadequate livestock water, water quality issues, inadequate wildlife forage, and noxious weed infestation due to overgrazing. Over the course of the project, 6.5 miles of cross fence, 8 spring developments and watering facilities, as well as riparian and wetland protection have been installed. In addition, the Townsends have implemented a prescribed grazing rotational plan.

Resource concerns on crop land included an inefficient irrigation system and cropland adjacent to the Columbia River posed water quality concerns. In order to combat these issues, the irrigation pump was replaced. The Townsends implemented an irrigation water management plan for irrigation efficiency, a nutrient management plan, and a pest management plan to battle noxious weed infestation and to protect water quality.

Restoring Potato Hill on the Yakama Nation Reservation

The Yakama people have been gathering huckleberries in the Potato Hill area for as long as people can remember. Today the huckleberry fields are being shaded out by conifers.

With EQIP funding in 2012, the Yakama Nation Tribal Forestry removed conifers from 94 acres of previously treated and untreated areas. Phases 2 and 3 will be done next year. Crews will return to Potato Hill and pile the slash created from the 2012 saw work. In the fall, after huckleberry season, crews will burn the slash piles on the site, starting the huckleberry renewal process all over again. The desired resource condition is improved vigor among huckleberry plants in the treated area, resulting in greater huckleberry yields over the next fifteen years.

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The Makah utilized EQIP funding to establish high quality forage habitat for elk on the reservation.

Enhancing Elk Habitat on the Makah Indian Reservation

The Makah Indian Reservation is located on the northwestern tip of the Olympic Peninsula in Washington. In this remote area, many Makah families rely heavily on subsistence harvesting of terrestrial and marine resources for both household economics and community values.

Roosevelt elk are prized species for subsistence harvesting by the Makah due to their large body size. Elk provide meat to 64 percent of Makah households. Thus, management of elk populations is a high priority to the Makah Tribe. Tribal management has focused on improving elk populations for subsistence harvest through habitat enhancement and harvest management.

The Makah utilized EQIP to enhance elk habitat on the reservation through the establishment of high quality forage habitat on recent clear cuts. Research has shown that the availability of high-energy forage such as grasses and forbs can increase pregnancy rates in cow elk and are important for calf growth and winter survival.

The EQIP project, which was begun in 2009, included invasive species control, amending the clear-cut soils with lime and fertilizer, and seeding the open areas with grass and clover species. A tribal youth employment program provided the labor for manual weed control, spreading of soil amendments and seeding. A total of 33 acres of forage were established through the EQIP program in 2009. These plots were fertilized again in 2010 and 2011, and another 6 acres of forage has been created under a Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) contract in 2011.

Rob McCoy, wildlife biologist with the Makah, has noticed positive outcomes from the EQIP project. "Twelve years ago," he says, "when I first started as a biologist with the Tribe, it was rare to see elk on the reservation." Since the establishment of the forage plots, he regularly sees signs of elk in the project areas, including tracks, droppings and trampled vegetation.

Jim Poffel, resource conservationist in the Port Angeles Field Office says "It's exciting to see such positive results over a short time frame. Partnering on a project that benefits the tribal community is rewarding."

Tribal Resource Assessment

In 2012 the tribes were asked through WATCAC to identify priority resource concerns on their tribal lands for five designated landuses: Crop, Forest, Range, Pasture and Other Associated Ag lands. The tribes identified eleven priority resource concerns. NRCS provided baseline information to each tribe to help in the determination of their priority treatment areas and acres. Some of the tribes decided to use the NRCS baseline data, while other tribes provided their own information.

In the coming year, tribes will have an opportunity to review and update information for 2013. The Tribal Resource Assessment (TRA) will be used as a multi-year assessment for fiscal years 2013-2015. The NRCS Washington Tribal Strategic Plan identified the TRA as an integral goal and prerequisite for a meaningful and technical basis to assist NRCS program delivery to tribes in the state. The TRA will be used for future year planning regarding, goals setting; funding and budget requests; and tailoring appropriate program delivery and technical assistance relative to what the tribes in the state set as resource-based priorities.

Tribal Resource Concerns Identified in the TRA

1. **SOIL EROSION:** Sheet, rill, and wind erosion
2. **SOIL EROSION:** Excessive bank erosion from streams, shorelines, or water conveyance channels, alsofrom forest roads
3. **EXCESS/INSUFFICIENT WATER:** Inefficient use of irrigation Water
4. **WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION:** Excess nutrients in surface and groundwater
5. **WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION:** Excess pathogens and chemicals from manure, biosolids or compost applications
6. **WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION:** Excessive sediment in surface waters
7. **WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION:** Elevated water temperature
8. **DEGRADED PLANT CONDITION:** Excessive plant pest pressure
9. **DEGRADED PLANT CONDITION:** Undesirable plant productivity and health
10. **DEGRADED PLANT CONDITION:** Wildfire hazard, excessive biomass accumulation
11. **INADEQUATE HABITAT FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE:** Habitat Degradation