

Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council
Webinar
October 9, 2012

MINUTES

Agenda

Welcome and Introduction – Roylene Rides at the Door
Tribal Statewide Resource Assessment Potential At-Risk Map Boundaries and Acres – Pete Bautista/Dave Brower
 Update of TRA Process and Completion
 Presentation of draft TRA report
Tribal FY13 Programs Discussion – Jeff Harlow
Closing Remarks – Roylene Rides at the Door

Participants

Colville Confederated Tribes – James McCuen
Squaxin Island – Jim Peters
Yakama – Jonalee Squeochs, Stuart Crane
NRCS – Roylene Rides at the Door, Rebecca Stuart, Robin Slate, Peter Bautista, Dave Brower, Jeff Harlow, Gina Kerzman, Bonda Habets, Martin Bales, Kathy Kilcoyne, Paul Rogers, Nick Vira

NOTE: Highlighted items require action from the WATCAC.

Welcome and Introduction – Roylene Rides at the Door, State Conservationist

Roylene provided an update on NRCS functions related to the budget and Farm Bill. The agency has a continuing resolution through March 27, 2013, and we expect a budget allocation letter by the end of the month. The Farm Bill, however, expired without being replaced on September 30, 2012. Most of the agency's programs were not reauthorized. The WRP and GRP are on hold.

The agency has been authorized to work on existing contracts under three programs – EQIP, FRPP, and WHIP – but cannot work on new applications. Despite this, we need to try to get the Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) programs laid out, such as ranking criteria, etc.

Roylene has been meeting with tribes about the Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Initiative. The agency has developed a suite of tools to target efforts under this initiative.

Tribal Statewide Resource Assessment Potential At-Risk Map Boundaries and Acres – Peter Bautista, Asst. State Conservationist – Operations; Dave Brower, GIS Specialist

Peter and Dave provided an update of Tribal Resource Assessment (TRA) process and completion, and discussed the draft TRA report. Dave thanked everyone for their hard work and participation. He received new information from the west side this morning, and needs to review and incorporate it before presenting a draft for review and comment. He derived Other Ag lands on the west side from his landuse datasets overlaid with reservation boundaries. This was done to cover those tribes who weren't able to get information to us by the deadline. That mapping and the acreages are not set in stone but are a way to ensure tribes can participate in our programs. Dave reminded the group that the TRA is statewide tribal so the maps show all crop, pasture, range, forestry, and other ag lands acres for all tribes.

Roylene reiterated that this information is very important. When she submits a budget proposal, she has to identify the areas that the agency will focus on, so that's where the tribal acres will be used.

Peter clarified that within the mapped areas reflect the tribal resource concerns that the group identified in June. The maps essentially show the boundaries of those resource concerns. The Acres Needing Treatment, and the Priority Treatment Areas are separate and will be tabulated in the TRA document.

Dave noted that the TRA won't show individual acres by tribe, and the figures will be inclusive as well, i.e. statewide tribal acres. The draft TRA will be sent out for review before finalizing.

Roylene reminded the group that this is a living document that we will revisit as needed. She appreciates everyone's help with it.

Peter described the TRA as baseline information for a lot of things. In addition to informing the agency's budget, it will provide guidance to agency staff for working with tribes on contracts and agreements. It also is integral to our Tribal Strategic Plan.

Tribal FY13 Programs Discussion – Jeff Harlow, Asst. State Conservationist – Programs

Jeff Harlow asked Rebecca and Robin to discuss the East and West side FY13 information they had gathered. Robin had received a question about lifespan and a request to increase the Access Road (560) holddown from \$100,000 to \$125,000. One of the West side tribes said they had no comments on ranking criteria since their proposed projects were not eligible for NRCS programs.

James McCuen noted that this information also is a living document – if it something doesn't work, we can tweak it next year.

Rebecca explained that the original ranking questions she and Robin worked with were developed by former Asst. State Conservationist for Programs, Dave Brown, and several of the tribes including some on the West side, so it already reflects tribal concerns from both sides of the Cascades. The red items in the document are the contributions from the East side tribes this summer, and simply expand the criteria to include freshwater and wildlife habitat concerns on the East side. She noted that her discussions with the East side tribes included concerns about statewide needs. She said that during the discussions, the question came up again about species lists and protecting sensitive information; after consulting with several individuals in the NRCS State Office, she understands that such lists, as part of an application package, can be protected from FOIA requests.

Peter suggested the WATCAC accept the East side version of the ranking criteria with the red items for statewide tribal ranking; these questions will be unique to the tribal funding pool.

Roylene reminded everyone that the funding pools have to be by landuse now. The percentages set by the WATCAC at the June meeting will replace the previous practice of selecting each tribe's first choice.

Martin asked if the funding would be biased toward the larger reservations. The situation is uncertain but Peter reminded everyone of the landuse percentages agreed to in June: range 30%, crop 15%, pasture 10%, forest 35%, and other ag lands 10%. Roylene said that if any of the funds assigned to a particular landuse weren't used, those could be rolled over to another landuse where applications exceeded the funds. Peter believes that landuse, not the larger reservations, will influence where the money goes. Holddown rates will also influence fund distribution.

Robin asked if there were a pre-commercial thinning holddown. Rebecca said there was not. She noted that the Access Road holddown in the document Peter projected to the group had a typo – it showed a holddown of \$175,000 but should have been \$100,000. The earlier discussion, however, had raised it to \$125,000.

Jeff reminded the group of some questions Jeff Kuhlmann, East Area Resource Conservationist, had noted at the last meeting. During the East side meetings with the tribes, Jeff K. and Rebecca were

asked whether changes could be made to the State level ranking questions for non-tribal EQIP applications. The two questions are:

- 1 - Do the practices treat a tribal resource concern?
- 2 - Are the practices on land adjacent to tribal lands, or in a shared watershed? If so, are the practices compatible with activities on the tribal lands?

Robin noted that these questions cover the agency with issues brought up recently at a Department of Justice meeting. Peter said the questions could be added to the State level section of non-tribal EQIP ranking criteria for all funding pools in state.

Jeff H. asked if a holddown was needed for pre-commercial thinning. Paul Rogers noted that most of the time this practice is applied on the West side where acres aren't that great, and the cost runs around \$40,000 to \$50,000. Kathy Kilcoyne agreed. Jeff clarified the situation as one where acres tend to hold down cost in the past. Roylene suggested we not set a holddown for this practice but see what happens in FY13. We can add a holddown for FY14 if the need arises.

Jeff H. clarified that the only holddown for FY13 is for Access Road (560) and that is \$125,000. We have our tribal ranking criteria for FY13. Do we want East and West funding pools, or one statewide tribal funding pool? We need this decision made before ranking applications. It was decided that we would have one funding pool for tribal with funds distributed based on the agreed to landuse percentages that were determined in June.

Roylene said to send all the FY13 information to the tribes so they know what we're doing for FY13, and that we will review how it works and make adjustments for FY14 if needed. The group agreed.

Other Items

Bonda noted that the agency is holding off on forming a riparian buffer subcommittee while WDFW builds the science for it.

November WATCAC Meeting

The November meeting will be a teleconference/webinar. Connection information will be provided prior to the meeting. Roylene asked the WATCAC to send agenda items. A draft agenda will sent out for comments and suggestions to finalize it.

Robin will work with Jackie Richter to set up the January face-to-face meeting on the West side. We need agenda items for that meeting as well.

Requested Items

Acronyms:

EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
FRPP	Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program
WHIP	Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
WRP	Wetlands Reserve Program
CSP	Conservation Stewardship Program
TRA	Tribal Resource Assessment
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
WDFW	WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife

DON'T FORGET YOUR WATCAC RESOLUTIONS !!!!