

**November 2011**

# THE tribal CONNECTION

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## **Important Dates to Remember**

**December 2, 2011**

Sign up deadline for Washington's general EQIP funding

**December 5 - 9, 2011**

Intertribal Agricultural Council 2011 Symposium in Las Vegas, NV

**December 13, 2011**

Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council teleconference

**January 12 - 13, 2011**

Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council face-to-face meeting on Squaxin Island

### **Reminder!**

NRCS accepts applications for all programs on a continuous basis.

Contact your local NRCS field office or tribal liaison for more info.

**Rebecca Toupal**

*(Tribal Liaison, East Area)*  
509.343.2274

**Robin Slate**

*(Tribal Liaison, West Area)*  
360.704.7780

## **Update from Roylene**

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

**T**he leaves are quickly changing to a golden hue, days are getting shorter and cooler, and it's certainly beginning to feel like fall. What a perfect time to reflect on the fiscal year and our many accomplishments.

Yet again, NRCS in Washington succeeded in the face of adversity! As I told Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack a few weeks ago, "We don't just keep a person or family in business. We change people's lives." That was very clear in the projects and producers I met with. This kind of work would not be possible without passion of our tribal partners, field staff, the support from area and state office staff - both technical and financial - and the visionary leadership from tribes, partners and the state.

Some of our 2011 accomplishments include:

- Washington was one of the few states to pass the financial audit.
- This year we developed an outreach plan focused on Hispanic producers and worked with partners to start implementation.



*State Conservationist, Roylene Rides at the Door*

- We entered into over 30 agreements with multiple partners to help with our workload.
- A team of field office and state office staff developed a Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) Action Plan to address issues and provide a plan to better execute this program in Washington.

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# Yakama Nation Works with NRCS to Restore Forest Stands



Example of a pre-treatment area in the Yakama Forest with dense stocking levels and undesirable tree species mixed in with Ponderosa Pine.



Natural, open condition of an old growth ponderosa pine stand – similar to the historical condition of the Yakama Forest.

**“We are always looking for new ways to get projects done.**

**By participating in EQIP, NRCS and Yakama Nation are both able to meet their goals of natural resource conservation.”**

**—Jack Riggin  
Yakama Nation Forester**

The Yakama Reservation, located in south-central Washington, is home to the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, descendants of the 14 tribes and bands that are federally recognized under the Treaty of 1855. There are over 9,800 enrolled members of the Yakama Nation who depend on their natural resources to support their cultural values and traditions. The Nation develops and manages its natural resources in a manner that is in harmony with nature while fostering economic development.

Of the Yakama Reservation’s 1,130,000 acres, about 600,000 are timbered land. The Yakama Forest is a spiritual area that provides a place for hunting, fishing, and traditional plant gathering by the Yakama people. Unfortunately, the health of the forest has declined over the last century due primarily to the suppression of the natural cycle of burning, which in turn affected the species composition of the forest.

Recent pest problems have occurred in the forest as well, further impacting the health of desirable species. A forest that was mostly comprised of healthy, large ponderosa pine stands reverted to a dense, mixed conifer stand that was more susceptible to pest pressures. As the health of the forest declined, the natural balance of nature became unstable, increasing the risk for catastrophic fires and loss of valuable natural resources.

Recognizing the decline in the health of their forest land, the Yakama Nation developed a Forest Management Plan, which provides strategies to restore the forest health. The Yakama Nation’s goal for sustainable forest management is to meet its present needs and values without compromising the management options of future generations.

In 2009, the Yakama Nation contacted John George, NRCS Tribal Resource Conservationist,

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*Contracted area that has received thinning – on its way to being restored to historical condition.*

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to inquire about technical and cost-share assistance for 199 acres of forest that was heavily infested with pine mistletoe, and 14.7 acres of hardwood stands that were being displaced by conifers. Being aware of other tribes' use of NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), the tribe sought to develop a plan and contract with NRCS for pre-commercial thinning to improve the forest health, and restoration of the hardwood stands to a more natural state. These practices would contribute to restoring portions of the forest to more sustainable historic species composition.

Steve Andringa, Program Manager for Tribal Forestry of the Yakama Nation, worked with John George to develop the plan and apply for EQIP cost share assistance. The application was approved for funding and the Yakama Nation began implementing the practices in August 2010.

The pre-commercial thinning in the EQIP contract was completed the summer of 2011. Hardwood stand restoration was started in 2011 and will be completed in 2012.

Corey Bensen, NRCS Resource Conservationist, and Erin Kreutz, NRCS Soil Conservationist, accompanied Jack Riggan, Yakama Nation Forester, on a site visit in October 2011.

In the areas that had received pre-commercial thinning, they observed significant suppression of the mistletoe and improved conditions in the understory. The hardwood stands also showed signs of improvement; work will continue in those areas this year.

While the treated area is on its way to being restored, the technical and financial assistance provided by NRCS is just a small part of a comprehensive management plan. "We are always looking for new ways to get projects done" Riggan says. "Our goals fit in well with the EQIP program. By participating in EQIP, NRCS and Yakama Nation are both able to meet their goals of natural resource conservation." The success of this project has led the Yakama Nation to continue working with NRCS and maintain their partnership.



*White pine, a traditional use species, is more sensitive to bark harvesting than some other tree species.*

## Spotlight on: Culturally Modified Trees

The Kalispel Cultural Resources Management Program worked with NRCS staff in the east area to discuss culturally modified trees (CMTs), including their characteristics and occurrence in northeast Washington. The history of industrial harvesting and fire suppression were noted as contributors to the limited number of known CMTs in the area. It was recommended to NRCS that when considering CMTs, field and area staff should consider the types or species of trees that were used traditionally, why those species were used, and how they were used.

Bark uses were significant in the formation of CMTs, but not all species survived the harvesting. White pine (*Pinus monticola*), for example, tended to be sensitive to bark harvesting, while cedar (*Thuja plicata*) could withstand several harvests. In western Washington, forest conditions support much more extensive harvesting as well as larger populations of species that could be harvested repeatedly. CMTs, consequently, are more common on the west side of the state.

The CMTs that reflect bark or wood harvest can be identified by physical characteristics, but some CMTs are known only to the tribes who created them. These CMTs reflect traditional knowledge or beliefs that are held only by the tribe with which they are associated, and retain a significant role in the associated culture.

# Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council Update



If you're interested in receiving technical and financial assistance, contact your local NRCS field office.

## Programs Update: Next EQIP deadline set for Dec 2, 2011

**A**gricultural producers and tribes have until December 2, 2011 to apply for financial and technical assistance through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) most popular conservation program. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary, technical and financial assistance program designed to help agricultural producers and tribes improve irrigation efficiency, manage nutrient run-off and/or animal waste, improve the health of native plant communities, and reduce soil loss. In most instances, producers who participate in the program pay for roughly half of the costs of the conservation measures or practices.

The December 2nd signup deadline is for Washington's general EQIP funding, although there will be additional ranking deadlines later in the year for some of the EQIP special initiatives.

Acting Assistant State Conservationist Lacey Gaw said, "that while NRCS programs operate on a year-round signup basis, and producers can file applications at any time, periodic ranking deadlines are established so applications on file at that time can be evaluated for the next available funding allocation." Interested agricultural producers are encouraged to contact their local USDA service center office or check the agency's web site at [www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov) for more information.

**I**n September 2011, members of the WATCAC toured a dairy operation on the west side of the state. The dairy operator discussed a variety of practices that he has implemented to protect the stream that runs through his property. Water quality monitoring is done where the stream flows into the property and where it leaves the property. Since testing began, the outgoing water has been cleaner than the incoming water.

At the October 2011 meeting, Roylene Rides at the Door, WA NRCS State Conservationist, informed the WATCAC that a notice will be coming out in the Federal Register concerning Regional Tribal Conservation Advisory Councils (RTCAC). A critical question to address will be how tribal members will be selected for the RTCACs. Robin Slate, NRCS West Area Tribal Liaison, is working on a strategic plan for WA-NRCS's Tribal Program with the assistance of WATCAC members. The WATCAC provided comments to NRCS concerning conservation practices Stream Habitat Improvement & Management (395) and Aquatic Organism Passage (396). These comments were incorporated into the draft practice standards being developed.

All tribes are welcome to participate in the monthly WATCAC meetings/teleconferences. Those tribes who submit resolutions declaring participation in and appointing representatives to the WATCAC will have voting privileges.

*If your tribe is considering participation and/or a resolution, please contact your NRCS tribal liaison:*

*East of Cascades – Rebecca Toupal  
[rebecca.toupal@wa.usda.gov](mailto:rebecca.toupal@wa.usda.gov)*

*West of Cascades – Robin Slate  
[robin.slate@wa.usda.gov](mailto:robin.slate@wa.usda.gov)*



At a dairy near the Tulalip Reservation.

## December WATCAC Teleconference/Webinar

December 13, 2011 @ 9:30am

Call: 1-888-790-1867

Passcode: 5686045

### Agenda Items

- Review of draft of NRCS-WA Proposed Tribal Strategic Plan
- NRCS training opportunities
- Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) update (webinar)
- Tribal/cultural plant list for EQIP ranking
- Prescribed burning

## January WATCAC Meeting January 12-13, 2012 @ Squaxin Island, WA

### Agenda Items

- Tribal input on Farm Bill 2012 to take to ATNI's February meeting
- Tribal resolutions, participation and representation in the WATCAC
- Review draft strategic plan for NRCS-tribal activities
- SRA/TRA working session: how to collect tribal resource assessment data; need tribes to bring data and/or resource plans

## Upcoming WATCAC Meetings

**Feb. 14, 2012:** Teleconference

**March 13, 2012:** Teleconference

**April 10, 2012:** Teleconference

**May 8, 2012:** Teleconference

**June 12, 2012:** Teleconference

**July 10, 2012:** Teleconference

**Aug. 14, 2012:** Teleconference or face-to-face

**Sept. 11, 2012:** Teleconference or face-to-face

**Oct. 9, 2012:** Teleconference

**Nov. 13, 2012:** Teleconference

**Dec. 11, 2012:** Teleconference

# Student Trainee Opportunities Available for Summer 2012

**A**re you a high school or college student who enjoys interacting with people and working outdoors? Then a career with the Natural Resources Conservation Service might be the job for you! The NRCS is part of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that works with landowners to conserve natural resources on private lands, providing both technical and financial assistance.

Student trainee positions under the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) are available in a variety of job areas. Here are a few examples:

## Soil Conservationist

Provides technical advice on installing conservation practices such as stock water and irrigation systems, and planting of grass, trees or wildlife cover. Provides advice to landowners and government agencies in the development of their natural resources.

## Civil or Ag Engineer

Assists in engineering design of dams, water projects, and irrigation systems. Makes on-site inspections, computes quantity and most of materials, and gathers basic planning data for these structures.

## Soil Scientist

Makes sample drillings in the field to identify and classify soils, gathers information for soil surveys such as land use and crop data, and is generally responsible for soil surveys.

## Rangeland Management Specialist

Helps ranchers develop good grazing systems by developing a conservation plan, gives advice on the best grasses to grow and ways to improve and protect rangeland.

In order to be eligible for the SCEP program, you need to be a high school or college student who plans to earn a bachelor's degree with a major in natural resources, engineering, or another agricultural area. Students work full-



*SCEP student trainees work on a variety of field-related projects*

time typically during summer vacation, with the student receiving guidance from trained NRCS employees. Depending on the job area and location of the office, SCEP students experience a wide variety of field and office experience. SCEP students can be eligible for noncompetitive conversion to a career-conditional appointment upon completion of their college education requirements and minimum work hours.

If you would like to learn more about careers that are available with the NRCS, you can check out the following webpage: [www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov/about/recruitment/index.html](http://www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov/about/recruitment/index.html)

***See our job announcement, which will be available on the USAJOBS website at [www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov) beginning December 15, 2011 for all details.***

## The Earth Team Needs YOU!



*Earth Team volunteers collecting snow data measurements.*

*Have you ever been interested in giving back to your community? Would you like to volunteer in an outdoor environment?*

Then being an Earth Team Volunteer with the Natural Resources Conservation Service might be the thing for you! The Earth Team is the volunteer workforce of the NRCS, which is part of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The NRCS provides technical assistance in regards to natural resource conservation on private lands. Earth Team volunteers play an important role in helping the NRCS provide assistance to local farmers, ranchers, landowners, organizations, and tribes.

The Earth Team Volunteer program is an excellent way to learn about what the NRCS does, and the volunteer experience can be a great addition to resumes and scholarship applications! In order to become an Earth Team volunteer, you must be 14 years of age or older, and you can work part-time or fulltime.

If you would like to learn more about becoming an Earth Team volunteer, you can check out the Washington NRCS' Earth Team Volunteer page at [www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov/earth\\_team](http://www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov/earth_team). You can also stop in at your local NRCS field office!

As an Earth Team volunteer, you can provide a wide array of services such as:

- Help field office staff do engineering surveys, lay-outs, and designs
- Planning, planting, and monitoring of Plant Materials Center trials
- Help put on educational workshops
- Clerical services such as filing, office organization, answering phones
- Complete range inventories
- And numerous other duties!



The NRCS is working to develop an aquaculture program that will be rolled out by Fiscal Year 2013.

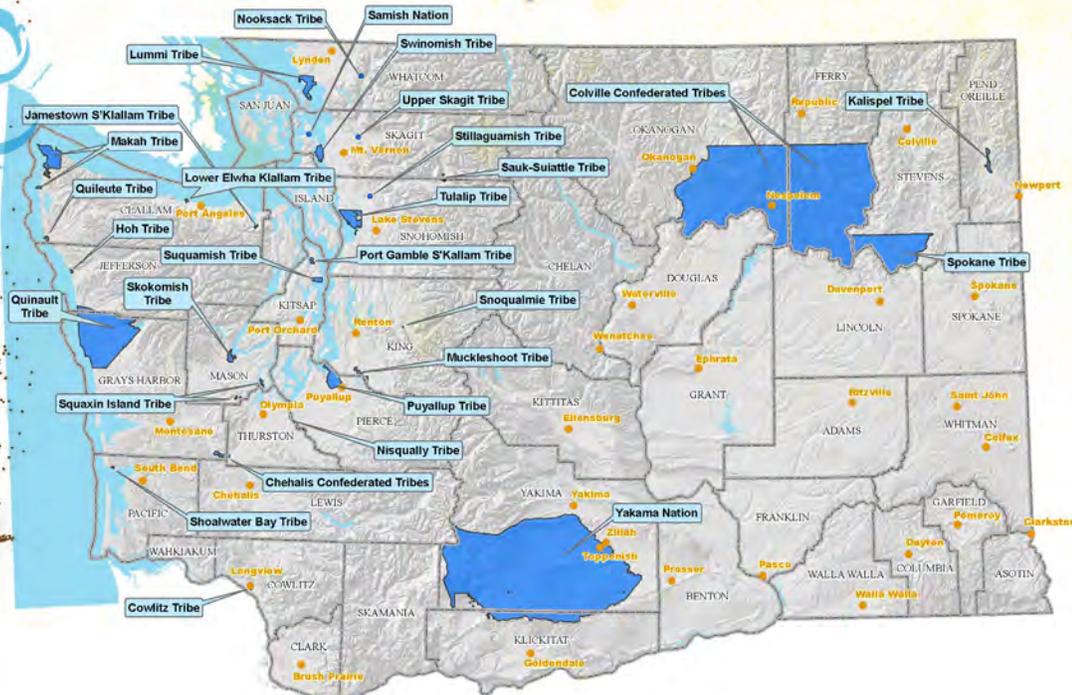
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NRCS expects to implement in Fiscal Year 2012:

- We should have funds, payment schedules, and ranking criteria by early November.
- Energy Program - to be rolled out state-wide and will include a landscape tool.
- Development of an aquaculture program to be rolled out by Fiscal Year 2013.
- Implementation of the first state-requested budget focusing on resource concerns.
- Implementation of a Hispanic Outreach Plan to increase producer participation.
- We'll work to increase field staff time in field and direct service to clients overall.
- Implementation of WRP Action Plan.

With so many accomplishments this year, I hope that I can count on your continued support for an even better year in Fiscal Year 2012.

## Tribal Field Office Directory



### Get Involved

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

Send submissions/suggestions to: [rebecca.toupal@wa.usda.gov](mailto:rebecca.toupal@wa.usda.gov)

[www.wa.nrcs.gov](http://www.wa.nrcs.gov)



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### Yakama Tribal Office

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