

August 2011

THE tribal CONNECTION

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Important Dates to Remember

August 23, 2011

Washington Tribal Conservation
Advisory Council video teleconference

September 21, 2011

Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians
58th annual conference in Tulalip, WA

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

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Update from Roylene

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

It seems like summer just began, and fall is already just around the corner! With only two months left in our fiscal year, staff is working feverishly to finish obligation of funds and implementation of practices. Partners and tribes have again stepped up to assist us with taking on additional task orders to get all of our work done and deliver conservation practices in the field.

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.

A few months ago, I mentioned that the NRCS, in partnership with the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) helped the tribes of Washington State form the Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WATCAC). I am very excited about the formation of this council and appreciate the effort of the tribes to ensure NRCS programs and practice standards meet the tribes' needs on and off the reservation.

The WATCAC, which is a council made up of leaders from tribal nations, meets via video teleconference the second Tuesday of

each month except for twice a year when it meets face-to-face. So far, the group has addressed several major aspects of the NRCS including program ranking criteria, practice standards, and the State Resource Assessment (SRA). The NRCS has provided information about Conservation Innovation Grants, tribal conservation districts, and the requirements and process for tribes becoming Technical Service Providers. Current active topics include developing an aquaculture program, how to adopt a prescribed burning practice, and how to develop a tribal resource assessment for inclusion in the SRA. An in-depth update on the WATCAC is included in this newsletter on page 4.

The WATCAC will be holding its second face-to-face meeting during the ATNI 58th annual conference, September 19-22 at the Tulalip Casino, in Tulalip, Washington. I'd like to invite you all to come to the conference and participate in a tour of the area, highlighting how agriculture and fishing can live together, Wednesday the 21st from 1-4 p.m. ATNI will assist with travel for the meeting. Currently, only 13 of the 29 tribes

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Enhancing Elk Habitat on the Makah Indian Reservation

Makah Tribe Uses Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Programs to enhance elk habitat.

“It’s exciting to see such positive results over a short time-frame. Partnering on a project that benefits the tribal community is rewarding. We are all looking forward to duplicating the results in other areas of the North Olympic Peninsula.”

*—Jim Poffel
Resource Conservationist
Port Angeles, WA*



Elk foraging on the Makah Indian Reservation.

The Makah Indian Reservation is located on the northwestern tip of the Olympic Peninsula in Washington. Many Makah families in this remote area rely heavily on subsistence harvesting of terrestrial and marine resources for household economics and community values. The Roosevelt elk is a prized species for subsistence use by the Makah due to their large body size. Since elk meat supports at least 64 percent of Makah households, management of the 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 Tribe has utilized NRCS’s Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to enhance elk habitat on the reservation by establishing 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.

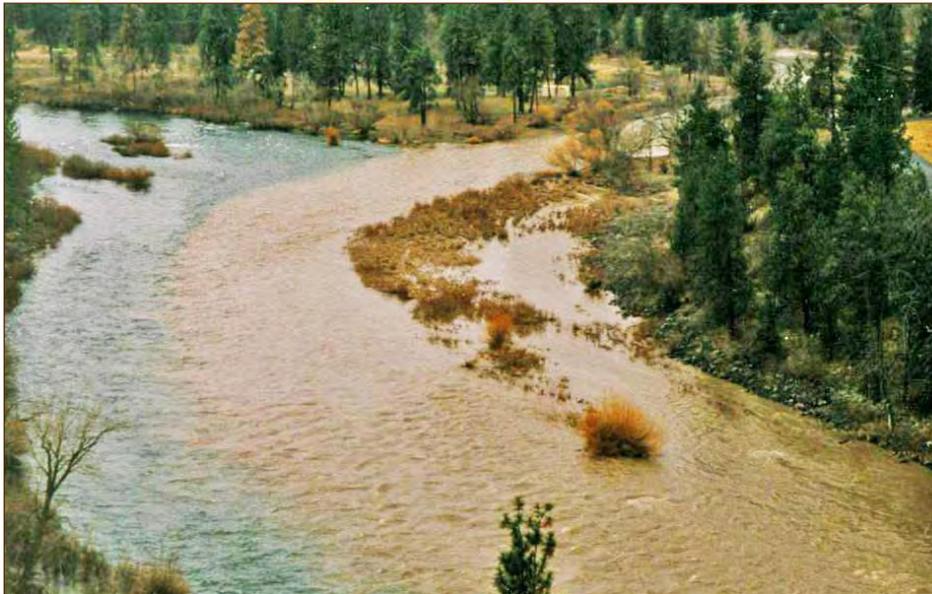
The EQIP project, which began in 2009, included invasive species control, amending clear-cut soils with lime and fertilizer, and seeding the open areas with grass and clover species. A tribal youth employment program provided the labor for manual weed control, spreading of soil amendments, and seeding.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

Rob McCoy, wildlife biologist with the Makah, has noticed positive outcomes from the EQIP project. “Twelve years ago 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 (tracks, droppings, and trampled vegetation) of elk in the project area. This year the Makah received a grant from the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission to radio collar elk utilizing the forage plots. This will allow McCoy and the Makah Wildlife Division to assess

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Coeur d'Alene Tribe partners in Hangman Creek project

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe uses Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Programs to address water quality issues in Hangman Creek.



The Coeur d'Alene Tribe is a supporting partner on the Hangman Agricultural Watershed Enhancement Program (AWEP) project, and assists with setting annual AWEP signup and contract criteria. The program was funded for three years – 2010 through 2012. Hangman Creek Watershed comprises 689 square miles in Washington and Idaho, including the Coeur d'Alene Tribal Reservation. An excess of fecal coliform and sediment typically occurs in Hangman Creek and its tributaries during the high flow months of winter and spring. The summer months see water temperature too high for cold-water fish.

The Hangman AWEP project involves four conservation districts, two state agencies, a federal agency, and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe to address their common water quality problems. An advantage of the AWEP is its watershed approach, which allows funding across state lines. The partners submitted a proposal to NRCS for AWEP funding over three years. To date, seven contracts, five in Washington and two in Idaho, have been funded with \$285,412. The focus to date has been on the direct



Top: fecal coliform and sediment in Hangman Creek. Bottom: Direct seeding practice results in little runoff and erosion.

seed practice, which is a low soil disturbance planting practice where the new season's crop is planted directly into the stubble of the previous crop resulting in very little runoff and erosion. Streambank stabilization is needed as well to further enhance this water quality improvement effort. NRCS hopes to accomplish this with vegetative buffers and livestock management near streams in 2012. The results of contract implementation include at least one conservation practice applied to approximately 2,570 acres, and an estimated soil savings of nearly 18,000 tons.



image: www.wikipedia.com

The huckleberry is not only a good source of Vitamin C, but also boasts a medicinal affect.

Spotlight on: Huckleberry

Ethnographic research has documented the importance of the huckleberry to the Plateau Indians of the Columbia River Gorge, the Skallam, Lummi, Makah, Nespelem, Nez Perce, Okanagan-Colville, Quileute, Quinault, Sanpoil, Skagit, Skokomish, Snohomish, Spokane, Swinomish, Kootenay, and Flathead people. Huckleberry feasts are held in July or August, which coincides with the first berry harvest. The fruits were eaten fresh, or cooked, mashed, and dried in the sun as cakes. Sometimes the berries were mixed with meat or salmon roe. The berries were often mixed with other berries, such as salal. Surplus berries were dried over a smoldering log, which preserved much of their Vitamin C content.

In addition to the fruits providing a food, the branches were used for fuel. The berries were used as well for a lavender or purple dye, while the leaves were used as part of a smoking mixture. The leaves were used fresh or dried to make a tea. Huckleberry leaves and finely chopped stems have been shown to have medicinal benefits relative to gout and blood sugar levels. The leaves are thought to stimulate appetite, and have astringent and antiseptic qualities that are useful in urinary disorders. The bark was boiled for a tea for colds.

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

Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council Update

The Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WATCAC) is an independent group, not a subcommittee of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (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 should the NRCS state office at 509-323-2900.

The WATCAC met via video teleconference on June 14th and July 12th. Participating tribes included: Colville, Kalispel, Port Gamble S'Klallam, Quileute, Quinault, Shoalwater Bay, Skokomish, Snoqualmie, Squaxin Island, Stillaguamish, Suquamish, Swinomish, Tulalip, and Yakama Nation.

The June agenda included NRCS's State Resource Assessment (SRA), and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) ranking criteria for tribal applications, review of conservation practices, and tribal conservation districts. The group had proposed discussing goals and a work plan but decided to wait until more tribes are participating in the WATCAC.

A more detailed discussion of the SRA was provided by NRCS. The WATCAC noted that Usual and Accustomed areas need to be considered as part of their resource concerns. In the meantime, they will work with the SRA as a starting point in identifying their resource concerns and acres. NRCS noted that the tribes can customize the SRA as they need to.

During the discussion on EQIP ranking criteria, the WATCAC asked for a criterion addressing the creation/improvement of native food sources in programs such as EQIP and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP). The group would like to see NRCS address wildlife habitat that is connected to lands other than agricultural.

The WATCAC provided comments on the Stream Crossing (578) practice, which were

forwarded to the national contact, and will be addressed at the state level. NRCS noted that two other practice standards have passed the draft phase at the national level and are ready for states to adopt. NRCS has a year to finalize these so comments can still be submitted to the agency. The two practices are Aquatic Organism Passage (396) and Bivalve Aquaculture Gear and Biofouling Control (400).

Tribal conservation districts (TCDs) were discussed briefly. Nationwide, there are 36 TCDs. These are being formed because TCDs fit NRCS's structure, and they tend to get more funding from the agency. No states are known, however, to have both Tribal Conservation Advisory Councils (TCACs) and TCDs. Multi-tribe TCDs are possible but none have been formed. Washington's only TCD is on the Colville Reservation.



The Washington Tribal Conservation Advisory Council discussed aquaculture practices at their most recent meeting.

The July agenda included discussions on Conservation Innovation Grants (CIGs), aquaculture practices, prescribed burning, finalizing the EQIP ranking criteria for tribal applications, tribes as Technical Service Providers (TSPs), and NRCS's SRA.

NRCS explained that CIGs are not for research projects. The program is intended to help improve NRCS's conservation practices list, and to establish demonstration projects that can be used under the EQIP program.

There are two CIG components—national and state levels. The national level is for larger

projects that are reviewed at the national level. The state level component is designed to be as broad as possible to accommodate a variety of projects. If tribes are submitting applications to the national level, Washington NRCS would like to see those so the agency can provide a letter of support. The agency also would like to involve WATCAC members in the state-level review of applications.

The State Resource Assessment was discussed relative to its role in the NRCS annual budget. NRCS has an August 5th deadline to submit its FY12 budget proposal. An extra WATCAC video teleconference was proposed and scheduled for July 26th to provide the WATCAC an opportunity to comment.

The WATCAC approved two changes to the EQIP practices list and ranking criteria. The group agreed to an increase in the hold down for the fish passage practice from \$75,000 to \$100,000. They also agreed with a new ranking question, #23 "Will culturally important plants be restored?," which has been assigned a value of 100 points. This question includes a note that each tribe should have an approved plant list. The group had concerns with regard to protecting traditional knowledge and intellectual property. NRCS suggested addressing this issue in August and the group agreed.

To become a TSP, a tribe needs to go through a general certification and application process. This begins with a visit to the local service center to get set up, which is followed by the application which is reviewed and approved by the NRCS state office. The process is cumbersome and requires persistence and patience, but once completed, it allows the tribe a more active role in conservation application.

The WATCAC reviewed the two aquaculture practice standards: Aquatic Organism Passage (396) and Bivalve Aquaculture Gear and Biofouling Control (400). Washington NRCS will facilitate scoping meetings with the tribes and other partners to discuss the aquaculture program and the practice standards.

The agency needs to determine the program structure, and to develop payment scenarios for the practices.

Confederated Tribes of Colville Receive Conservation Grant

Confederated Tribes of Colville uses Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) grant to demonstrate effective greenhouse gas mitigation strategies.



The Conservation Innovation Grant will adapt and implement approved forest carbon methodologies and protocols.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recently awarded the Confederated Tribes of Colville with \$1.26 million in Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) funds in an effort to demonstrate effective greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation strategies on tribal lands.

CIG, which is administered by the NRCS, invests in innovative, on-the-ground conservation technologies and approaches, with the eventual goal of wide-scale adoption to address water quality and quantity, air quality, energy conservation, and environmental markets, among other natural resource issues.

"These national-level grants provide a great opportunity to address natural resource issues right here in Washington," said Assistant State Conservationist Dave Brown.

"The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation is an ideal recipient of the CIG funding because they boast some of the highest forest-cover of any tribe in the contiguous United States. With an already established forestry management plan, the tribes on the Colville Reservation are strategically positioned to manage forest carbon stocks and quantify greenhouse gas emissions to the benefit of

the environment as well as the tribe's financial security," says Brown.

According to Brown, the project aims to overcome a variety of market-based barriers to entry for American Indians and Alaska Natives in the agriculture, forestry and other land uses sector. The project model has two components: it will adapt and implement approved forest carbon methodologies and protocols (e.g. afforestation, reforestation, improved forest management, and avoided conversion) to address issues involving tribal sovereignty; and it will create a streamlined system where adapted carbon methodologies can be applied with participation of tribes to determine baseline values of carbon sequestration, verify the implementation and maintenance of GHG benefitting practices, and determine GHG benefits (additionally) to successfully register these benefits in a commonly recognized carbon.

NRCS administers CIG as part of the agency's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Grants are awarded to state and local governments, federally-recognized Indian tribes, non-governmental organizations and individuals.

NOTICE TO HISPANIC AND/OR WOMEN FARMERS OR RANCHERS

COMPENSATION FOR CLAIMS OF DISCRIMINATION

If you believe that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) improperly denied farm loan benefits to you between 1981 and 2000 because you are Hispanic, or because you are female, you may be eligible to apply for compensation.

To register your name to receive a claims packet, call the Farmer and Rancher Call Center at 1-888-508-4429 or visit: www.farmerclaims.gov

The claims package will have detailed information about the eligibility and claims process.



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Programs Update

The Natural Resources Conservation Service accepts applications for our conservation programs on a continuous basis. We also set cut-off dates, after which we complete a ranking and selection process with the applications on file at that time. Available funding is committed to the highest ranking applications. In previous years, we have set a cut-off date of August 15th for our Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).

For Fiscal Year 2012 EQIP funding, that cut-off date will be set later in the year. NRCS is taking a new regional approach to the development of our EQIP payment schedule, and the establishment of a cut-off date will be delayed until a new payment schedule is complete and ready for public release.

Application cut-off dates for our other programs also will be announced at a later date including the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). If you have interest in any of these programs, please contact your local NRCS field office.

Update from Roylene (cont.)

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in Washington State are participating in the WATCAC. I am hoping to see more and more participation, with the goal of at least one member from every tribe on the WATCAC. If you are interested in attending, please contact Rebecca Toupal, Tribal Liaison, in Spokane at (509) 343-2274.

Additionally, I have met with other Federal agencies, like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to develop a plan on how to better work together in delivering a variety of programs. We'd like our programs to compliment each other's so producers and tribes will have more options for conservation practices on their land.

I'd also like to report that a site visit by KPMG, the NRCS financial auditors, was conducted the week of July 11 and it went incredibly well! Washington achieved several "firsts," including first state to have no problems with accuracy of PROP (property inventory) data, first state to have no exceptions related to real property records (we had copies of deeds for the Plant Material Center from 1937), and first state to have no exception in procurement (all categories). Washington was acknowledged by the auditors as one of the strongest states reviewed in four years. During the July 21st Deputy Chief for Management/ State Administrative Officer teleconference, Washington was named as a model state for financial management. After four years of state

reviews we join Indiana (2010 review) with this coveted recognition. This means that the NRCS can focus on putting conservation practices on the ground as efficiently and effectively as possible – making working together with partners and tribes that much more effective.

A lot of big things have happened in Washington State in the past few months, and I am so pleased to be a part of the fantastic work that is going on throughout the state.

Enhancing Elk Habitat (cont.)

Continued from page 2

the success of the habitat improvements and identify other areas of the reservation which could benefit from similar treatments. The project will provide valuable information on the use of these forage areas which will not only assist the Makah in resource planning, but also help the NRCS plan for similar projects in the future. Jim Poffel, resource conservationist in the Port Angeles NRCS field office, said, "It's exciting to see such positive results over a short time-frame. Partnering on a project that benefits the tribal community is rewarding. I greatly appreciate the assistance of Marty Chaney and Rachel Maggi of the west area staff to get this project up and running. We are all looking forward to duplicating the results in other areas of the North Olympic Peninsula."

WATCAC Update (cont.)

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The question was raised whether the 400 practice could apply to more than bivalves since tribes see the need to clean up rivers, bays, and harbors. NRCS pointed out that the practice standard notes "other waste" so this is possible.

A brief WATCAC video teleconference was held July 26th to discuss NRCS's budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2012. The August WATCAC video teleconference has been moved to August 23rd from 9:30 to noon. The WATCAC will have its second face-to-face meeting in Tulalip as part of the ATNI meeting on Wednesday, September 21st.

For additional information contact Rebecca Toupal, NRCS Tribal Liaison, 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

www.wa.nrcs.gov



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