



Nevada Interagency Civil Rights
Advisory Committee

USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service
and
USDA Farm Service Agency

Civil Rights are for Everyone!

Minutes of July 18, 2012 Meeting

NICRAC Website: http://www.nv.nrcs.usda.gov/about/NV_CR.html

I. Call to Order and Introduction

The meeting was called to order at 10:11 a.m. Chair Jarrod Edmunds took roll call.

Present in Reno:

Bruce Petersen, DEEOO, NRCS
Bill Elder, NRCS Advisor/DEPM
Cassie Storms, NRCS Advisor
Liz Warner, AAPIEPM
Mike Odegard, AIANEPM
Levi Steptoe, BEPM
Eric Eldredge, Secretary

Present by teleconference:

Jarrod Edmunds, Chair
Tracey Jean Wolfe, FWPM
Ed Sturges, VEPM
Bill Conlin, LGBTEPM
Clint Koble, DEEOO, Director, FSA

Could not attend:

Brien Park, Vice-Chair
Dan Rybicky, FSA Advisor
Carmella Apodaca Irwin, HEPM

II. Review of Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of April 18, 2012 were reviewed and approved, as posted on the NICRAC web page at: <http://www.nv.nrcs.usda.gov/about/nicrc.html>

III. Program Reports

A. Special Emphasis Program Manager Reports:

American Indian/Alaskan Native Program: Mike, nothing to report.

Asian American /Pacific Islander Program: Liz produced and distributed the Asian Pacific Islander Organization's newsletter in May to celebrate Asian American Heritage Month. She is still serving as APIO communications chair and is sending Nevada vacancy announcements out to her API.

National Outreach Effort Report

Liz said NRCS Nevada is currently participating in two national outreach initiatives, USDA StrikeForce and Hispanic/Women Farmer/Rancher Claims Process. I am sharing this information with the Committee to increase your awareness of these activities, encourage you and your staffs to conduct outreach activities, and to request reports on these efforts.

Nevada StrikeForce

In December 2011, Nevada was selected, along with Texas, Georgia, Arkansas, Mississippi, and New Mexico, to take part in the Secretary's StrikeForce Initiative targeting areas of persistent poverty and underserved constituencies. Three Nevada counties were identified as having the highest percentages of students receiving free lunches, Mineral, Pershing and Esmeralda. However, the Service Center Agencies, FSA, RD and NRCS, are working together, extending our outreach efforts statewide and focusing on our largest minority group, Native Americans.

NRCS StrikeForce Accomplishments

- March 14 to 15, 2012 – NRCS State Conservationist Bruce Petersen, along with FSA, RD, other USDA and state agencies attended and made presentations at the Tribal Conservation Advisory Council Training in Reno. Twenty-three participants from nine Tribes in Nevada, California, and New Mexico attended. The meeting was conducted by the Indian Nations Conservation Alliance and Wisconsin Tribal Advisory Council.
- May 3, 2012 -- Conducted public outreach meeting in Round Mountain. Tribal members from the Duck Valley Indian Reservation attended. State Conservationist Bruce Petersen attended.
- May 4, 2012 -- Staff participated in a high tunnel workshop conducted by the Western Nevada College to increase awareness of USDA programs and services.
- May 16, 2012 – The Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe and Chairman Alvin Moyle facilitated a meeting with USDA agencies and other partners. Staff from Senator Reid's office, Senator Heller's office, and Congressman Amodei's office attended as well as representatives from Churchill County Economic Development, American Ag Credit, Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, Dairy Farmers of America, and local conservation districts.
- May 30 to 31, 2012 – Staff participated at a riparian management workshop in Elko County conducted by the University of Nevada, Reno. Twenty ranchers attended.
- June 4, 2012 – Staff conducted a meeting with the Shoshone Paiute Tribe. Approximately 12 Tribal producers/members attended.
- June 5, 2012 – Conducted public outreach meeting in Ely. State Conservationist Bruce Petersen attended.

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- June 6 to 7, 2012 Staff attended and set up an exhibit at the Eastern Nevada Landscape Coalition Meeting in Ely.
- June 29, 2012 -- Conducted outreach meeting with Te Moak Bands of Western Shoshone (Battle Mountain, Wells, Elko, South Fork) in Elko. Twenty-three individuals attended, including Tribal Chairman Bryan Cassadore; Elko Band Chairman Gerald TeMoke, representatives from three of the four Bands, producers, tribal members, and staff from NRCS, FSA, APHIS, and UNCE Nevada Indian Country Extension Program.

In addition, State Conservationist Bruce Petersen and staff attended several conservation district board meetings and encouraged their outreach to historically underserved producers.

- June 26, 2012 -- Dayton Valley Conservation District
- June 26, 2012 -- Smith Valley Conservation District
- June 26, 2012 -- Mason Valley Conservation District
- July 16, 2012 -- Southern Nye Conservation District

Hispanic/Womens Farmer/Rancher Claims Process (HWCP)

The United States Government is establishing a claims process to make \$1.33 billion or more available to farmers who alleged discrimination by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) based on being female, or based on being Hispanic, in making or servicing farm loans during certain periods between 1981 and 2000. Barring unforeseen delay, the claims period is likely to open on or about August 27. NRCS is working with FSA and RD to create a single statewide outreach plan for Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers. The plan is due to NHQ on July 24. Many of the action items are already included in our StrikeForce plan, however, we will need to conduct media outreach as well when the claims window opens.

An article in the April online edition of *Hispanically Speaking News* contains an in-depth article about the lawsuit: <http://www.hispanicallyspeakingnews.com/hsn-network/details/still-seeking-justice-for-hispanic-farmers-and-ranchers/15465/>.

StrikeForce and HWCP Guidance and Documentation

Guidance from USDA and NRCS, reports, plans and documentation are posted on the Nevada SharePoint site: <https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/west/nv/usdasettlements/default.aspx>.

Nevada Outreach Documentation Forms

On June 4, guidance was sent to all Nevada employees to submit reports on outreach events they conduct or participate in:

<https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/west/nv/pas/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2fwest%2fnv%2fpas%2fShared%20Documents%2fOutreach%20Forms&FolderCTID=&View=%7bE752FB69%2dF01A%2d47FF%2dB022%2d26D897E8CABE%7d>

I have received seven forms so far and have found them to be very helpful in documenting and quantifying outreach efforts.

Black Program: Levi reported that he continues to send out many job announcements for positions nationwide. He completed the quarterly report and sent it to headquarters. There is a civil rights training event scheduled for December in Mississippi.

Disability: Bill reported the quarterly report was sent out, and he continues to send out position announcements. He reported there is a new full-time staff for disability positions at the national level. He is also maintaining liaison with UNR. There is a program for more robust staffing to increase from 1.5% to 3%, and Bill is working with other DSEPMs on that, leading a barrier analysis that should begin in the next month or so.

Federal Women's Program: Tracey Jean reported she has been getting information, filtering and processing it to pass along to the women in Nevada. There is a new organization, WIN (for Women In Nevada), that is being set up to:

1. Advocate for a gender diverse workforce and leadership,
2. Identify and resolve barriers to employment, leadership development, and retention of female employees,
3. Serve as a liaison to promote greater female participation in NRCS programs and services, thereby shaping the future of natural resource management, and
4. Advocate for a more diverse workforce and leadership.

Hispanic: No report.

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender: Bill is working on developing definitions of the terms and sending them out. He reported that June was Pride Month, and gave us some of the history of the 1969 Greenwich Village riots. Bill will focus on the work environment. He had a teleconference with Sharon Nance, National LGBT Emphasis Program Manager, Fresno, and has also consulted Teri Knight, and thanks her for her help. Bill has checked other resources and plans to provide data on the NRCS workforce. National SEPM training programs are scheduled for Las Vegas December 10, another in Beltsville, and one in Jackson MS in November. Jarrod mentioned that rainbow bracelets are available from rainbowdelegation.org to wear to show support.

Veterans: Ed reported he is still working on a Certificate of Appreciation for all NRCS employees in Nevada who are military veterans but is still waiting to hear back from Washington D.C.

B. NICRAC Officers and Advisors Reports

1. **NRCS DEEOO:** Bruce reported the Winnemucca position has been re-advertised government wide at GS-12. Other vacancies are developing. Nevada NRCS has a projected 5FTE reduction to be made. The Nevada NRCS workforce dropped 13 percent in four months this year, and the first two positions did not get any applications, so we need to do anything we can to get applicants to build diversity. There is another career fair in Las Vegas in October.
2. **FSA DEEOO:** Clint reported the StrikeForce meetings were excellent and productive with communication resources brought to the sites to explain the agency activities. Fernley and Hawthorn have requested meetings. NRCS and RD have been very effective, and RMA and APHIS have attended. Clint hopes to have a couple more StrikeForce meetings before the end of the fiscal year.

3. **Chair:** Jarrod reminded the committee that mentoring is considered part of civil rights. He reported that the mentoring training he attended, as one of the instructors, in Davis, CA last week was attended by three mentors and four protégés from Nevada.
4. **Vice-Chair:** No report.
5. **Secretary:** Eric will send the minutes of this meeting for review, and requested a quick response because he will be out of the office Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday of next week.
6. **NRCS Advisor Report:** Cassie, nothing to report. Bill, reported he has received a memo for clearance of civil rights review for 2011. The Yerington review is next Wednesday, and Bill and Tracey Jean can participate. Offices are reviewed on a five year rotation.
7. **FSA Advisor Report:** No report.

IV. Old Business

1. **Business Plan:** Jarrod thanked the committee for updating their sections of the business plan. It is posted on the sharepoint site.
2. **Nevada Bulletins:** Jarrod reported four bulletins were sent out: civil rights compliance and delivery, the "...and Justice for All" posters, use of the non-discrimination statement, and outreach to underserved communities. He reminded the committee that equal rights opportunity instructions go in the red folder in each field office.
3. **Web Update:** Liz will add LGBT Pride Month to the website.

V. New Business

1. **Position vacancies:** Nevada has been quite active. Recently ?name?? Pennington was hired for Winnemucca field office. Tim Viel and Bob Smith have accepted positions in CA. Four more vacancies will need to be filled in the near future. Jarrod said that separation of duties and reassignments this fall may create additional positions.
2. **Bi-annual Civil Rights Report:** The Chief's report of SNODA data for program participants as of July 6 (updated from February) was good on percentage of contracts approved except Hispanic was 22.2 percent while all other categories were in the 30 percentages. We need to try to diversify our workforce profile. Bill mentioned the February and July reports are on sharepoint and in November an employee roster of RSNOD data will need to be updated for FY12. The spreadsheet is online but the data needs to be compiled for each state.
3. **Receipt for Service:** Was in the 2008 Farm Bill. Instructions were sent out and a copy is in each field office. All columns must be filled out before giving it to the person who requested it.
4. **AD-3027:** A bulletin was issued; the form is on the civil rights website. It is used to collect data for filing a complaint, but the information can be presented in other ways if the person desires.

5. **Outreach documentation:** Liz and Brien sent out the bulletin in June. They have received some documentation and it is very helpful in staying current. Jarrod reminded us we need to document any time we are talking with any minority.
6. **Outreach Efforts/Recommendations:** Liz mentioned the Conservation District meetings are also outreach, whenever we encourage underserved producers to apply for programs, and Jarrod said we need to combine outreach activities with other agencies.
7. **Upcoming Career Fairs/Recruitment events:** Was covered in previous SEPM reports.
8. **Selecting a new NRCS Advisor:** This topic was tabled by the Chair, to be placed on the next agenda.
9. **Meeting dates for FY13:** After some discussion it was decided that to accommodate schedules the NICRAC meetings would be moved from the third Wednesday to the third Tuesday. The resulting quarterly meeting dates are: October 16, 2011, January 15, April 16, and July 16, 2013.

VI. Open Comment:

It would be desirable to put out a bulletin in early August for a state civil rights award, and hope to get a nomination. If someone is selected it should be for a spot award and a certificate.

Bill Elder commended Tracey Jean for leading the tour of the bi-state population sage-grouse habitat last Friday. It was an excellent tour and there were many interested people.

Tracey Jean mentioned the need to fill out the forms for outreach.

Jarrod said that we are wrapping up the working lands for wildlife programs, and that the NRCS office in Alturas had contracted some high dollar contracts in northern Washoe County.

VII. Meeting Adjourned: at 11:09 a.m.