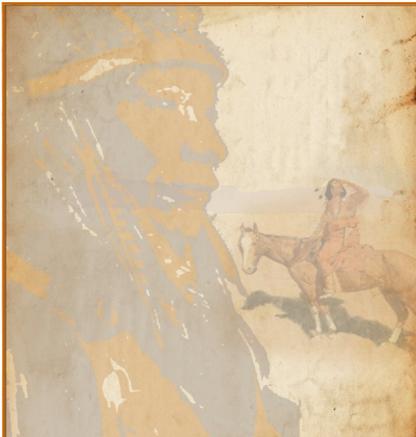


Stay True to the Goal; Stay the Course; Learn, Adapt as You Go



Outreach materials, including posters, newsletter announcements, and other printed materials were united through use of graphic images designed by NRCS engineering technician Tom Share.

Effective outreach is based on good planning and results-focused actions implemented over a period of time. Some timelines are relatively short – perhaps spanning a few days or weeks, whereas others might be comparatively lengthy – with implementation activities taking place over months or even years. Course changes are less likely in short-term outreach efforts, yet are to be expected for longer-term efforts.

An example of how outreach efforts are adapted and modified over time, even when the overall goal remains the same, is provided by the **Bishop Field Office** and its USDA partners who serve several Inyo and Mono County tribes.

Note: Although this example reflects outreach to tribes, concepts presented here are basically the same for any group.

Outreach Goal Stays Steady

The long-term goal of *insuring that Tribal Nations are aware of and have full access to NRCS programs and services* is expected to remain steady. However, each tribes' or individual's awareness of these programs and readiness to apply for or participate in them will change over time due to various factors. Outreach and support efforts must adapt and change according to the tribes' needs, interests, capabilities and willingness to manage or interact with natural resources differently in order to conserve or enhance their functions.

Starting several years ago, Bishop **District Conservationist Rob Pearce** and the Area 4 NRCS Tribal Liaison at the time set out to ensure that local tribes were aware of NRCS and its programs and to help identify which programs might be appropriate tools for tribal land management and conservation strategies. The Bishop Field Office staff serve five tribes: Fort Independence Indian Reservation, Lone Pine Paiute Shoshone Reservation, Big Pine Paiute Tribe of Owens

Valley, Bishop Paiute Tribe, and Benton Paiute Reservation. Outreach activities originally consisted of insuring tribes received program announcements and, occasionally, a personal call or visit. Each USDA agency serving the area did its own independent outreach activities.

Partnership building with the tribes really got amped up, however, when *Rob* spearheaded the first multi-partner workshop eight years ago that included tribes, USDA agencies, and key partners. The most recent workshop, held last month at the Bishop Tribe Community Center and the Owens Valley Paiute-Shoshone Cultural Center, has evolved into a two-day event that featured several learning sessions, networking activities, cultural presentations and activities, and, of course, delicious food shared by all. The success of the workshop, according to *Rob*, had much to do with the opportunities participants had to get to know one another, share information, listen and learn, and build community.



Nancy Medina and youth dancers from the Big Pine Paiute Tribe welcome and share a dance with workshop participants. Sharing cultural traditions helps build community and strengthens relationships.

Building Confidence

Establishing a relationship based on mutual respect is key to leveraging NRCS' technical resources in ways that meet the needs of tribes and their members, whether those needs include customized processes, culturally appropriate conservation methods, or partnering with others to bring technical or other resources to the table. In Bishop, *Rob* has used his familiarity and friendships with some tribal members (he grew up in Bishop and went to local schools with several tribal members) as a foundation for trust.

Rob knows that following through with "his side of the bargain" strengthens NRCS' ability to provide meaningful services to the tribes, and also helps with leveraging the resources of others when challenging opportunities needing multiple partners present themselves.



Client Input is Critical to Success

This year's workshop hit the mark in part because the planning committee, besides *Rob*, included Bishop Paiute Tribe Environmental Director Brian Adkins and **NRCS Tribal Liaison Reina Rogers**. Brian's knowledge of local tribal resource issues and related needs helped shape the workshop topics and helped inform USDA agencies (NRCS, FSA, RD, RMA, FS) about the types of information that would be most useful to workshop participants. *Reina* explained that what worked so well this year was beginning the planning process well in advance and making sure there was plenty of time to conduct outreach activities. Tribal representatives were contacted early which helped them get information out to their members. Posters and flyers were placed prominently throughout the community, and tribal newsletters and website postings created interest in the event. *Reina* used her extensive resources to also get the word out to those tribes outside the immediate Inyo and Mono Counties area. "Everyone was invited," she said.

Using a Proven Approach

A main focus of the workshop was to "offer a forum to bring people together, share experiences, start conversations, and build future projects," according to *Rob*. This proven approach has been used and taught at the highly successful NRCS workshops called "**Working Effectively with American Indians**" where NRCS employees and tribe members build respect, confidence, and working relationships through better understanding of one another. Formal workshop presentations were complemented by dance, song, and food, including a few 'round dances' in which all participations were invited to take part as a way to express friendship.

Local Issues and Concerns

Farming for irrigated pasture, hay and alfalfa are a few of the ways local tribes use some of their land and water resources. Additionally, many individuals tend garden plots. Although relatively small in project size, some of the tribes have participated in the EQIP program, mainly to conserve water through more efficient irrigation systems and improved water management strategies. Over the years, feedback from

Effective outreach reflects a variety of skills including good communications, cultural, economic and social awareness and sensitivity, knowledge of program policies and requirements, and willingness to be flexible, creative, and innovative within the context of agency policies and program rules.

tribes has resulted in changes to some required program processes. One example, which *Rob* says has made a difference, is the change that now requires just one tribal representative to sign a contract, rather than previously when all tribal members were asked to sign.

To help facilitate tribes' participation in NRCS program development and delivery, *Reina* presented a strategy at the workshop to establish a statewide tribal advisory council to serve as a means to bring tribal resource conservation issues and needs to the State Conservationist. "NRCS is establishing regional (multi-state) tribal conservation advisory councils around the nation, and now is interested in the development of statewide tribal conservation advisory councils," explained

Reina.

Moving Ahead & Staying in Touch

Staying in touch with tribes' needs and interests is important to *Rob*. "It's not what *we* want, rather, it's what the *tribes* want," he says. "The purpose of these workshops is to look at the big picture; to try and find ways the different USDA agency programs can enhance one another, and then work together to bring USDA resources to the tribes," he added. A representative from the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley was pleased with the event because he was able use a bit of time to work with two agencies on proposed projects. And one representative from the Fort Independence Indian Reservation praised the workshop by saying, "This is another exciting NRCS event. You guys rock!"



Two young tribal members participate in the two-day workshop.

Outreach Ideas and Resources

USDA and NRCS are committed to carrying out their federal tribal responsibilities. USDA recently created the Office of Tribal Relations to help ensure that working relationships among tribes and USDA agencies are effective. Additionally, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) describes a working partnership among Bureau of Indian Affairs, NRCS and FSA for managing and conserving natural resources on Indian lands.

To learn more about outreach strategies, see April 2011 Issue of Inside-Outreach at www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/about/outreach/index.html

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