

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC)

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 28th 2021; 9:00am -12:00 pm

Virtual Meeting

Meeting minutes and other information about the TAC is available on the TAC webpage:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ca/about/outreach/tribal/?cid=nrcseprd1465058>

Attendees:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ORGANIZATION</u>
Adam Canter	Wiyot Tribe
Arlene Dutschke	Ione Band of Miwok
Arlene Kato	The Cultural Conservancy
Brenda Tomaras	Lytton Rancheria
Briana Merino	Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians
Cherilyn Ashmead	United Auburn Indian Community
Cheryl Madrigal	Rincon Band of Luiseno Indians
David Newman	Pechanga Band of Luiseno Mission Indians
David Thompson	Manzanita Band of Diegueno Mission Indians of the Manzanita Reservation
Lisa Haws	Manzanita Band of Diegueno Mission Indians of the Manzanita Reservation
Trisha Frank	Manzanita Band of Diegueno Mission Indians of the Manzanita Reservation
Debie Rasmussen	Estom Yumeka Maidu Tribe of the Enterprise Rancheria
Diana Beasley	Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians
Don Collier	Cedarville Rancheria
Evie Ferreira	Yoeme Native Foodways Cultural Conservancy
Frank Dowd	Resighini Rancheria
Tylor Jones	Resighini Rancheria
Gaurav Rajen	Augustine Band of Cahuilla Indians
James Gatzke	Washoe
Javier Silva	Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians
Jeremy Zagarella	Pala band of Luiseno and Cupeno Indians
Jerry BigEagle	Susanville Indian Rancheria
Kanyon Sayers-Roods	Indian Canyon Mutsun Band of Costanoan & Kanyon Consulting LLC

Kimberly Miller
Kimberly Petree
Kristina Kreter
Krystal Moreno
Mary Raigosa
Michael Raigosa
Matthew Smith Jr
Mary Camp
Maya Jamal
Natalie Forrest-Perez
Pam Cubbler
Ryan Macintosh
Terre Logsdon
Tim Campbell
Tim Hayden
Valentin Lopez

FACILITATOR

Keir Johnson-Reyes
Natalie Solares
Ellen Sanders-Raigosa

GUEST SPEAKER

Jeremy Pinto

NRCS STAFF

Carlos Suarez
Gayle Barry
Hue Dang
Chris Zimny
RaeAnn Dubay
Greg Norris
John Drumm
Jolene Lau
Margaret Smither-
Kopperl
Kagat McQuillen
Pedro Torres
Tony Sunseri
Kay Joy Barge
Tony Rolfes

Curtis Tarver
Alan Forkey
Jae Lee
Jenny Johnson
Cody Leslie

Morongo Band of Mission Indians
El Dorado & Tume'lay Nissanan Miwok
Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians
Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians
Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians
Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians
Redwood Valley Rancheria of Pomo
Redwood Valley Rancheria of Pomo
Bishop Paiute
Pit River Nation
Colfax Todds Valley Consolidated Tribe
Santa Rosa Indian Community of the Santa Rosa Rancheria
Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians of California
Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria
Yurok Tribe
Amah Mutsun Tribal Band

ORGANIZATION

Intertribal Agricultural Council
Intertribal Agricultural Council
Intertribal Agricultural Council

ORGANIZATION

USDA Forest Service

POSITION

State Conservationist
Deputy State Conservationist
Acting State Resource Conservationist
State Forester
Assistant State Conservationist for Programs
State Engineer
Assistant State Conservationist for Management and Strategy
State Public Affairs Specialist
Plant Materials Center Manager

Tribal Liaison - Northern CA
Tribal Liaison - Southern CA
Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations - Area 1
Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations - Area 2
Acting Assist. State Conservationist for Field Operations - Area
3
Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations - Area 4
Resource Conservationist
Acting Program Specialist
Tribal Planner- Area 3
Tribal Planner - Area 4

**Keir K. Johnson-Reyes, Intertribal Agriculture Council, Pacific Regional Technical Assistance Specialist-
Invocation**

Carlos Suarez, NRCS, California State Conservationist- Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Welcomed tribes to the Fall 2021 Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC).
- Welcomed new participants and thanked those who have participated in the past who have provided valuable input.
- The work with tribes is important to NRCS.
- We respect your cultural values and cherish how you care for the land.
- Please tell NRCS how we can better serve you.
- Thanked Keir Johnson-Reyes and recognized the work that he has done with Intertribal Agricultural Council (IAC).
- Welcomed Natalie Solares to the IAC- NRCS team.
- The role of the TAC is a subset of the State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC).
- NRCS programs include financial and technical assistance.
- Some Programs where tribes have participated:
 - Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP);
 - Conservation Security Program (CSP);
 - Regional Conservation Partnership Program and Easements (RCPP).
 - Conservation Incentive Contacts (CIC):
 - New program authorized as part of EQIP.
- In 2021 NRCS in California provided over \$1.5M to tribes through EQIP.
- Carlos recognized the work of our NRCS tribal team for California led by Gayle Barry.
 - The team includes
 - Pedro Torres and Kagat McQuillen the Tribal Liaisons.
 - Jenny Johnson in Central Valley/Sierras and Cody Leslie in Southern CA are the Tribal Conservation Planners in the field.
 - An additional Tribal Conservation Planner on the North coast will start with NRCS soon.
- Thank you to our speakers
 - Jeremy Pinto, Tribal Nursery Specialist at USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station for sharing about the tribal nursery program and
 - Jeremy Zagarella, Pala Band of Luiseno and Cupeno Indians for sharing a project on the NRCS Emergency Watershed Program (EWP).
- NRCS looks forward to working with you in this NRCS fiscal year (FY) 2022 which started Oct 1st 2021.

“CA is an example of when we put our thoughts and efforts together with our Tribal partners and landowners to make it happen.”

-Carlos Suarez, NRCS, State Conservationist

Tribal Representatives- Introductions: Priority Concerns for your Tribe

Lisa Haws, Manzanita Band of the Kumeyaay Nation –

- Positive land conservation projects.
- Funds for the protection of oak trees.

Arlene Kato, The Cultural Conservancy –

- Drought.
- Revise planning to include farms in development.
- Restore wetland pond on property.

David Thompson, Manzanita Band of Diegueno Mission Indians of the Manzanita Reservation –

- Reforestation.

Diana Beasley, Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians –

- Forest stand improvement.
- Blackberry and other invasive species.
- Overgrazing.
- Re-establish grasslands.

Ryan Macintosh, Santa Rosa Indian Community of the Santa Rosa Rancheria –

- Soil health improvement.
- Watershed enhancement and conservation.
- Riparian vegetation coverage
- Invasive species removal and control.

Gaurav Rajen, Augustine Band of Cahuilla Indians –

- Assess soil health before and after the shelter belts.
- Utilize environmental DNA markers to assess species biodiversity.
 - For folks interested in sharing about use of DNA, please email:
 - grajen@augustinetribe.com

Tim Campbell, Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria –

- Food systems.
- Vegetation management.
- Restoration of native species on tribal lands.

James Gatzke, Washoe –

- Wildfire.
- Impacted plant communities.
- Presence and restoration of culturally important plant communities.
- Re-acquisition of land.
- Partnerships.
- Management of public lands.
- Cultural burning.
- Fuels reduction.

Jerry BigEagle, Susanville Indian Rancheria –

- Post fire restoration.
- Prevention of fire.
- Water shortages.
- Invasive species.

Jeremy Zagarella, Pala band of Luiseno and Cupeno Indians –

- Fire resiliency.
- Restoration of habitat and cultural plants.
- Improved oak woodlands.

Kanyon Sayers-Roods, Indian Canyon Mutsun Band of Costanoan & Kanyon Konsulting LLC –

- Access to land.
- Protection of sacred sites.
- Fire suppression.
- Fire mimicry workshops.
- Stream restoration.
- Water quality.
- Food sovereignty.
- Traditional ecological knowledge.
- Educational outreach.
- Marketing.
- Cultural competency courses and cultural sensitivity training for agencies, educational institutions and businesses.

Kimberly Miller, Morongo Band of Mission Indians –

- Post fire rehabilitation and recovery.
- Invasive species.
- Forest health.
- Watershed management.

Kim Petree, El Dorado and Tume'lay Nissanan Miwok –

- Protection of waterways.
- Education.
- Reforestation in Caldor fire area.
- Burn meadows to create space for the native grasses.

Krystal Moreno, Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians –

- Native plant restoration on the Rancheria.
- Cultural fire.
- Water issues including water quality and tribal water rights.
- Food sovereignty.
- Co-management and land stewardship of federal and state owned lands in the Band's ancestral territory.

Maya Jamal, Bishop Paiute Tribe –

- Food sovereignty.
- Land re-acquisition.

Michael Raigosa, Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians –

- Water rights.
- Water conservation.
- Groundwater sustainability.

Pam Cubbler, Colfax Todds Valley Consolidated Tribe –

- Forest fire fuels reduction.
- Traditional landscape and native plant restoration.

Terre Logsdon, Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians of California –

- Climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Flood prevention.
- Soil and native plant restoration.

Tim Hayden, Yurok Tribe –

- Forest fire mitigation.
- Hazardous fuel reduction.
- Cultural burning.
- Road maintenance and decommissioning.
- Sediment control.
- Fish habitat.
- Drought mitigation measures.
- Invasive species management.
- Alternatives to herbicide for vegetation control.
- Forest health improvement.
- Food sovereignty.
- Feral cattle control.

Trisha Frank, Manzanita Band of the Kumeyaay Nation –

- Hazardous fuel management.
- Reforestation of oak and pinon pine.
- Cultural burning.

Valentin Lopez, Amah Mutsun Tribal Band –

- Reduce invasive species.
- Reduce fuel loads.
- Restore and grow native plants.
- Restore biodiversity.

Kagat McQuillen, NRCS, Northern California Tribal Liaison- Updates from the Last Meeting

- Working Effectively with American Indians Training for NRCS employees implemented.
- Tribal Speaker Series for NRCS Employees: Tribal Fire Management implemented.
- New Tribal Planner position opening soon out of the Eureka NRCS Field Office.
- 1994 Tribal Scholars Program hired for a position out of the Vacaville NRCS field office.
- Direct Hire Positions will be opening soon for various positions including Soil Conservationist positions.

Pedro Torres, NRCS, Southern California Tribal Liaison- Updates from the Last Meeting continued

- Currently on 120-day detail at NRCS national headquarters as a tribal policy analyst.
- A Conservation Activity Plan is being developed for traditional ecological knowledge.
- A traditional ecological knowledge Technical Note is being developed to address incorporating traditional ecological knowledge into NRCS conservation practices.

Natalie Solaris, Intertribal Agricultural Council, Pacific Region Technical Assistance Specialist-

Updates from the Traditional Plant Management Scenarios Pilot

- NRCS/IAC conservation planning for traditional plant management scenarios pilot projects findings and recommendations.
 - Proper tribal engagement training for NRCS staff to understand tribal history, governments, and relationship building.
 - NRCS staff should learn about traditional land management techniques used by tribes in their region.
 - The EQIP process is lengthy and can be complex for a tribe.
 - Expected timelines should be clearly stated.
 - NRCS should understand tribes have different levels of capacity and should respond and provide technical assistance and expertise promptly to continue moving projects forward.
 - NRCS should center traditional practices as conservation practices.
 - NRCS should support tribes in developing their own criteria for tribal plant conservation practices that NRCS can adopt as regional practices.
 - Harvesting techniques should be considered as a conservation management approach.

Chris Zimny, NRCS, State Forester- Prescribed Fire Updates

- NRCS Prescribed Fire Policy revisions for California.
- The NRCS Plant Materials Center in the town of Lockeford is planning to implement management using prescribed fire with assistance from Don Hankins, Plains Miwok burn practitioner and Professor of Geography & Planning at California State University, Chico.
 - A prescribed burn was implemented previously at the Plant Materials Center with Don Hankins.
 - The NRCS Plant Materials Center for California invites tribes to reach out to enquire about how the Plant Materials Center can assist with your conservation goals.
- Prescribed fire liability updates from the California state government pertains to tribes.
 - California legislation recognized cultural burning.
 - California State Bill AB-642 defines a cultural burn practitioner as a person associated with a tribe or organization with experience in burning to meet goals or objectives.
 - New State Legislation, Senate Bill 332 about prescribed fire liability laws recognized tribes in the new laws.
 - If you're doing a prescribed burn with a prescribed burn plan certified by a burn boss, you are not liable for fire escapement.
 - ❖ Cultural burns are now exempt from this.
 - ❖ Burn plans do not need to be written by National Wildfire Coordinating Group certified burn boss.
 - ❖ A cultural fire plan by a cultural fire practitioner is now sufficient to cover liability.
 - Civil liabilities may still apply.
- Funding opportunities are coming to the state for tribal cultural burns through the California Governor's Wildfire Resilience Task Force.
- Note that NRCS must adhere to national government prescribed fire policies.
 - NRCS State Conservationists may make recommendations to national policies but there is no guarantee those recommendations will become adopted into national policies.
- NRCS for California is making revisions to the NRCS-California prescribed burn policy for NRCS-funded projects in California.
 - The revision includes having the NRCS State Conservationist for California define the qualifications that are required for someone to write a cultural burn plan for NRCS-funded projects.
- Tribal burn practitioners from California are in discussions with NRCS California-based staff to advise staff about their thoughts on the qualifications someone should have for planning and implementing cultural burns in NRCS-funded projects.
 - The revisions to the NRCS CA prescribed fire policy must adhere to the national NRCS prescribed fire policy.

**Jae Lee, NRCS, Acting Programs Specialist for California-
Conservation Incentives Contracts (CIC) Program and Drought**

- Information about NRCS Programs for California producers can be found at this webpage:
 - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ca/programs/>

2022 Program Application important Deadlines:

- December 10, 2021 – Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) 1st round of funding.
- April 1, 2022 – Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) “Classic” fund pools and
 - EQIP 2nd round of funding.
- May 6, 2022 – EQIP- Sage Grouse Program.

- Overview of Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 NRCS Programs.
 - CA provided over \$130 Million in conservation.
 - Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) - \$80M.
 - EQIP- Conservation Incentives Contract (CIC) – \$22.5M.
 - 2021 Pilot year for California.
 - Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) - \$4.5M.
 - Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) - \$19M.
 - Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) \$3.2M
- Tribal Funding Summary:
 - TOTAL \$1,648,445 to Tribal Programs in FY 2021.
 - EQIP -Tribal Fund Pools - \$87,983.
 - EQIP – CIC - \$668, 677.
 - Tribal High Priority Areas.
 - CSP - Conservation Stewardship Program - \$141, 785.

**Jeremy Pinto, USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Research Plant Physiologist and Tribal
Nursery Specialist- Tribal Nurseries**

- The slides from this presentation are available at the Tribal Advisory Committee Webpage:
 - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ca/about/outreach/tribal/?cid=nrcseprd1465058>
- Email:
 - Jeremiah.pinto@usda.gov
- Website:
 - <https://rngr.net/>
 - Go to the Reforestation Nurseries and Genetic Resources (RGNR) website for technical publications, discussion forums, information on the Native Plant Network and for contact information.

- Works across 3 Deputy Chief Areas to develop and deliver resources to improve plant materials.
- RGNR started in the 1970s with a reforestation focus.
 - Evolved to include restoration and all types of plants including assistance to tribal nurseries.
- In addition, RGNR fills information gaps through research to provide educational resources and high-quality seedlings and native plants.
- In 2001 the Intertribal Nursery Council formed.
 - The Council meets annually.
 - You are invited to join the Council if you are interested in starting a nursery.
 - The Council's Summer 2022 meeting is in Portland OR.

Jeremy Zagarella, Pala band of Luiseno and Cupeno Indians, Natural Resource Planner-

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program Project

- The slides from this presentation are available at the Tribal Advisory Committee Webpage:
 - <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ca/about/outreach/tribal/?cid=nrcseprd1465058>
- Email:
 - jzagarella@palatribe.com
- Phone:
 - (760) 891-3528
- The Band used the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program on 350 acres for the preservation and restoration of cultural resources following a wildfire in June 2021.
- The fire started off-reservation and moved onto the reservation into important cultural and natural resources.
- Cal-Fire covers suppression duties on the reservation.
 - They were able to protect some of the resources with fire retardant, water drops and cutting fire lines.
 - Very steep hillsides were completely burned and as a result all of the vegetation was removed.
 - This presented severe erosion risks including mudflows when rains came putting cultural resources at risk.
 - Theft of cultural artifacts was also a concern.
 - The Tribal Chair declared a state of emergency.
- The EWP program is designed to protect property during or after catastrophic events.
- NRCS agreed that the tribal value placed on cultural sites qualified as a value in need of protection from damage and destruction.
- NRCS staff worked with the Band to get pricing and finalize a budget.
- EWP typically takes 90 days to process.
- The Section 106 consultation process can take a long time.
- Once the review process is complete NRCS conservation practices will be installed to prevent soil erosion and protect the cultural sites.

Comments & Feedback

- Question: Is cultural burning separate from prescribed burning?
 - Answer: Cultural burning can be considered prescribed burning or separate depending on the tribe and goals.
- NRCS Comments:
 - Starting conversations with the local NRCS field office is the best method of working with NRCS.
 - NRCS is expanding tribal positions with the hiring of Tribal Planners who are dedicated to working with tribes at a local level.
 - If you are aware of anyone interested in working for NRCS, now is the time. We are hiring for the local level now.
 - Please contact the NRCS tribal team or local NRCS field offices to provide information individuals interested in internships or career opportunities.
 - Thank you for all of your input and assisting us in how we deliver our services.
 - Helping People help the land is what we are here for.
 - NRCS wants to help you meet your resource needs.
 - Thank you for all of your participation.
 - I appreciate the interaction, communication and openness.
 - We will continue to listen to your input and ideas in efforts to improve our services to you and tribes across the state.
 - Thank you.