



United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS ALASKA TRIBAL UPDATE 2023



As the largest private landowners in the state, Alaska Natives play a critical role in implementing NRCS conservation programs on-the-ground. Alaska Native Tribal lands are a significant recipient of NRCS conservation investments on a total acre and dollar basis annually. This shared success is built on a foundation of locally-led partnerships and collaboration.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

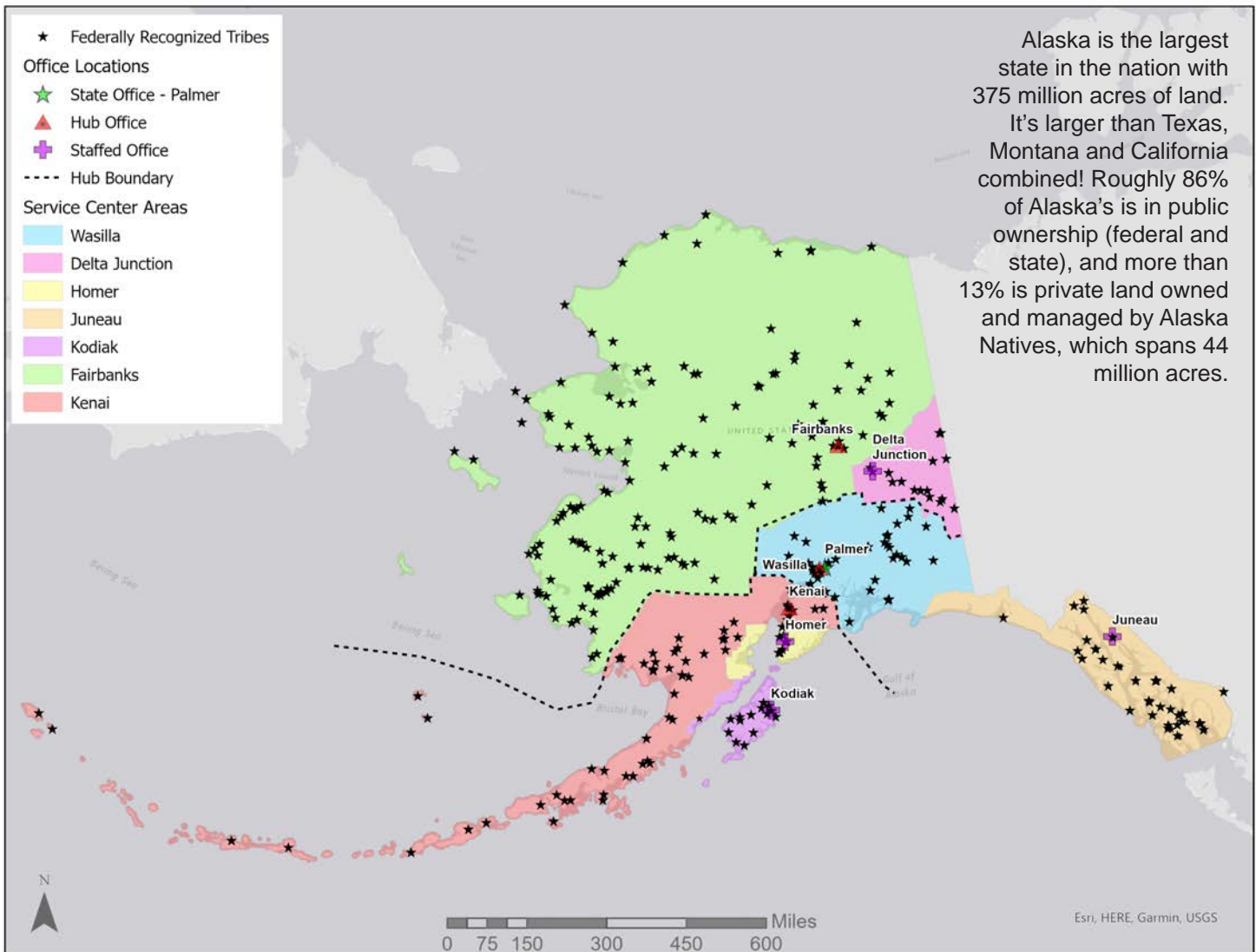
EQIP is our most frequently-used Farm Bill conservation program. It provides technical and financial assistance to help agricultural producers address natural resource concerns that impact soil, water, air, energy, plants and wildlife. Alaska Native tribes, Native Corporations, tribal entities and individual Tribal producers receive the majority of EQIP funds in Alaska.

Fiscal Year	Alaska EQIP General Allocation	Funding to Alaska Natives	% of Total EQIP Funding to Alaska Natives	# of Contracts with Alaska Natives
2014	\$6.6 M	\$4 M	62%	19
2015	\$4.9 M	\$2.9 M	59%	13
2016	\$6.4 M	\$4.1 M	64%	20
2017	\$9.2M	\$6.7 M	73%	21
2018	\$7.4 M	\$4.9 M	66%	14
2019	\$10.7 M	\$10.1 M	94%	16
2020	\$9.2 M	\$6.8 M	74%	20
2021	\$7.7 M	\$6.2 M	81%	12
2022	\$7.7M	\$7.6 M	98%	14
2023	\$12.5M	\$11.1M	89%	11
TOTAL	\$82.3M	\$64.4M	78%	160

Natural Resources Conservation Service

www.ak.nrcs.usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.



As the largest private landowners in the state, Alaska Natives play a critical role in implementing USDA conservation programs on-the-ground. In fact, Alaska Native agricultural producers are NRCS Alaska's biggest customer and their Tribal lands are a significant recipient of NRCS conservation investments on a total acre and dollar basis annually. This shared success is built on a foundation of locally-led partnerships and supported by the efforts of many. In the center of this circle of collaboration is trust that has grown through the years as USDA has worked with its partners to deliver significant resources to Alaska Native-owned and managed private lands.

Alaska has more Indian Tribes than any other state in the nation. There are 229 Federally-recognized Tribes, which is 40 percent of all recognized Tribes in the United States.

Unlike in the Lower 48 states, where the reservation system is commonplace, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971 settled land claims in a way that is not based on the reservation system. ANCSA emphasized Alaska Native corporate ownership of land.

Through ANCSA, the federal government transferred 44 million acres – land to be held in corporate ownership by Alaska

Location of Federally-recognized Tribes in Alaska and USDA-NRCS Service Center areas.

Native shareholders – to Alaska Native regional and village corporations.

ANCSA divided the state into 12 distinct regions and mandated the creation of 12 private, for-profit Alaska Native regional corporations and more than 200 private, for-profit Alaska Native village corporations.

Although Alaska does have one reservation, much of the Alaska Native managed land in the state created through ANCSA is uniquely Alaskan.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Examples of EQIP Projects with Alaska Native Tribes...



Trails and Walkways

Hardened trails allow for safe human access to hunting and fishing areas while protecting soil from erosion and reducing human disturbance on wildlife habitat.



Aquatic Organism Passage

NRCS provides engineering design services and financial assistance to remove or replace inadequate culverts and install bridges or large culverts that improve salmon access to spawning and rearing habitat.



Stream Habitat Improvement and Management

This practice helps improve, restore or maintain the ecological functions of a stream and its adjacent floodplain and riparian areas, using natural materials such as woody debris. It helps maintain adequate stream flows to sustain diverse habitats for salmon and other aquatic species.



Seasonal High Tunnels

This is a popular conservation practice in which growers install a high tunnel structure (also called a hoop house) that allows them to extend the growing season and increase the diversity of crop production. NRCS has helped many Alaska Native groups increase production in community gardens by installing seasonal high tunnels.



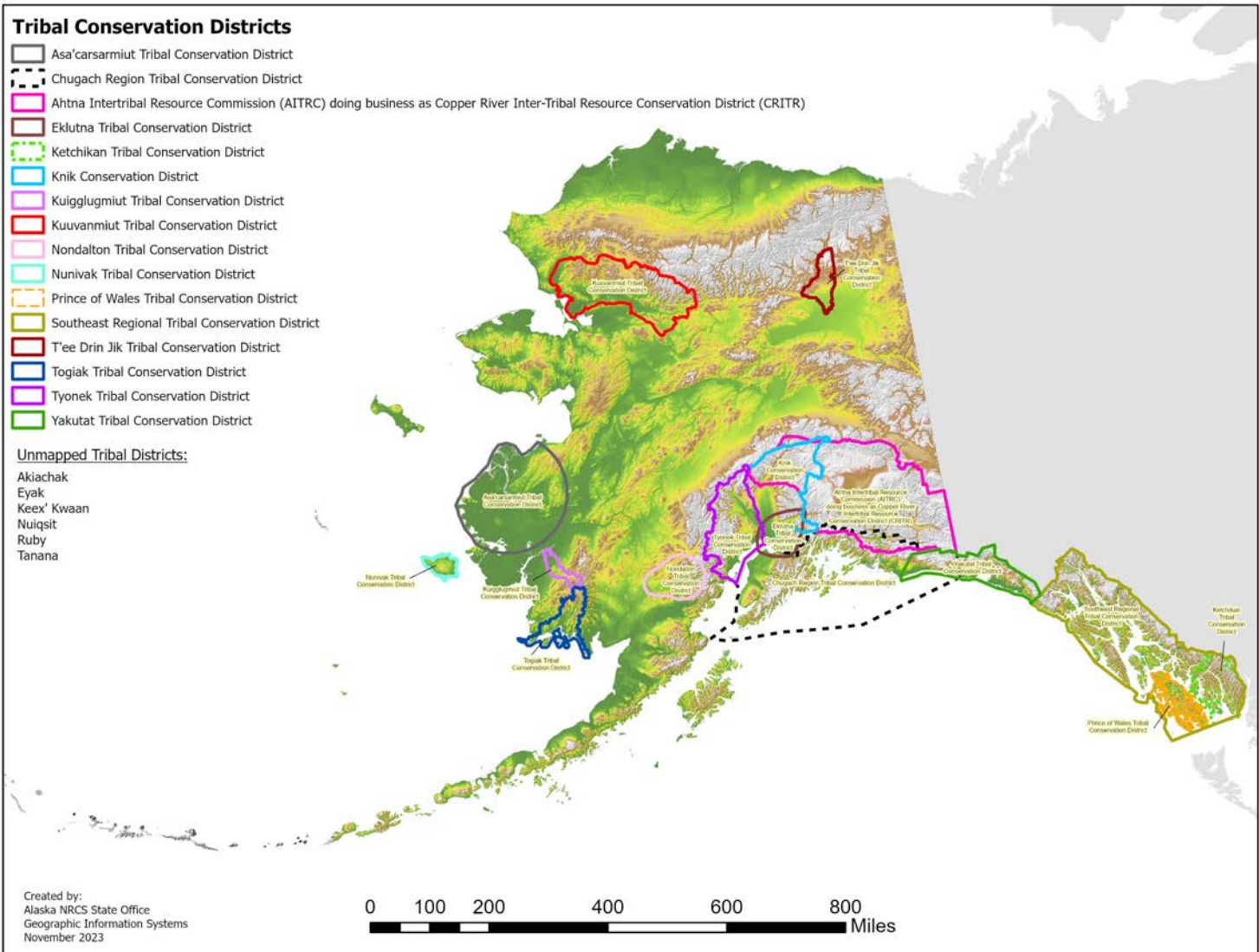
Moose Habitat Improvement

NRCS partners with Tribes and other entities to perform conservation projects that improve plant health and vigor to provide healthy habitat for moose and other wildlife. NRCS partnered with Choggiung Limited to improve moose habitat by promoting more new growth on willow trees. By strategically cutting the willow stems using a method called the "hinge cut," the trees grow new shoots that provide excellent browsing forage for hungry moose. Pictured: Craig Sanders, NRCS, and Dugan Neilsen with Choggiung Limited.



Forest Stand Improvement

NRCS partners with Alaska Native groups to proactively manage private forest lands to reduce wildfire risk, increase forest health and enhance fish and wildlife habitat. Common forestry conservation practices include pre-commercial thinning, brush management, and fuel and fire breaks.



Tribal Conservation Districts

An important part of managing and conserving Alaska Native lands is working with Tribal Conservation Districts (TCDs). TCDs combine local and traditional knowledge with technical resources to actively manage natural resources in a defined area.

The goal of Tribal Conservation Districts is to set local priorities for conservation and ensure sustainable use of natural resources for subsistence, economic opportunity, resource development, and cultural preservation. Once a TCD is established under Tribal law, it can enter into a mutual agreement with the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture

and other federal agencies to carry out programs to accomplish conservation goals.

From the first TCD established in Alaska in 2004 to the 22 currently in the state, the rise of TCDs has cultivated meaningful change in the way USDA works with Alaska Natives. TCDs help NRCS understand the priority resource concerns of Alaska Native entities; and NRCS benefits from continued engagement with our Alaska Native partners.



Copper River-Ahtna Inter-Tribal Resource Conservation District (CRITR) displaying their signed agreement with USDA. Pictured from left to right: Christopher Gene, Karen Linnell, Bruce Cain and Gloria Stickwan. Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission (AITRC) was formed in 2011 to conserve, manage, and develop fish, wildlife and plant resources of the Ahtna region according to culturally relevant values. AITRC was formed as the Copper River Intertribal Resource Conservation District (CRITR) and was the first intertribal conservation district in Alaska.

Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP)

EWP helps people reduce imminent hazards to life and property threatened by excessive erosion and flooding caused by heavy rains, drought, earthquakes, windstorms and other natural disasters. All projects must be sponsored by a political subdivision of the State such as a city, county, borough or conservation district; or by a federally-recognized Tribe. In Alaska, Tribal governments have been active sponsors for EWP projects. EWP projects in Alaska are diverse and have involved activities such as relocating homes that are threatened by erosion, stabilizing streambanks, removing debris and repairing and armoring levees.

Fiscal Year	Alaska EWP Investments	# of Alaska Communities Benefiting from EWP
2014	\$4,193,349	2
2015	0	0
2016	\$9,205,651	2
2017	\$32,500	1
2018	\$2,819,564	3
2019	\$247,700	2
2020	\$260,153	2
2021	\$4,935,785	3
2022	\$7,374,817	4
2023	\$880,883	4
TOTAL	\$29.9 million	23

Alaska Native communities benefiting from EWP

(Fiscal Years 2014 through 2023)

1. Akiak
2. Alakanuk
3. Atmautluak
4. Buckland
5. Chevak
6. Galena
7. Glennallen
8. Hooper Bay
9. Huslia
10. Kwethluk
11. Kwigillingok
12. McGrath
13. Mekoryuk
14. Napakiak
15. Port Heiden
16. Seward
17. Tetlin
18. Tuntutuliak

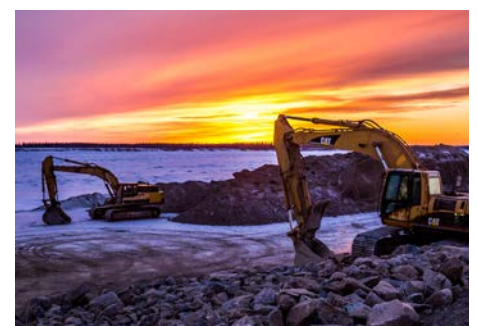
Examples of EWP Projects in Rural Alaska...



Severe soil erosion in Huslia, Alaska. NRCS assisted the community in 2014 and 2019 to relocate residences that were threatened by erosion, demolish abandoned structures, and remove debris from the threatened areas. In both cases the Huslia Village Council managed the construction and used a local labor force via a Cooperative Agreement.



A home is threatened by severe streambank erosion in Kwethluk, Alaska. In 2020, NRCS helped relocate 11 homes in Kwethluk and Akiak that were in imminent danger and moved them to a safe inland location. All work was performed locally via a Cooperative Agreement.



Contractors repaired and armored a levee in the City of Galena to stabilize the streambank and protect infrastructure following rapid soil erosion caused by spring breakup. This work was done via a federal contract in 2016.

Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program

The Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program includes the Flood Prevention Operations Program (Watershed Operations) authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1944 (P.L. 78-534) and the provisions of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act of 1954 (P.L. 83- 566). It provides for cooperation between the Federal government and the States and their political subdivisions to address resource concerns due to erosion, floodwater, and sediment and provide for improved utilization of the land and water resources.

The WFPO program provides technical and financial assistance to States, local governments and Tribal organizations to help plan and implement authorized watershed projects for the purposes of:

- Flood Prevention
- Watershed Protection
- Public Recreation
- Public Fish and Wildlife
- Agricultural Water Management
- Municipal and Industrial Water Supply
- Water Quality Management

Project sponsors can use land treatment solutions or structural solutions, which require construction. An approved watershed plan must be in place prior to initiation of any corrective land treatment or structural solutions.

Once the watershed plan is approved, the project sponsor helps landowners install planned land treatment measures if that is the appropriate solution. For structural solutions, project sponsors ensure surveys and investigations are completed. They also acquire detailed designs, specifications and engineering cost estimates for construction projects. If needed, project sponsors will outline areas where land rights, easements, and right-of-ways are needed.

WFPO with Alaska Native Communities

\$40.3 million for Phase 1

Completed Phase 1, development of a Preliminary Investigation and Feasibility Report, in the following communities (all projects will move forward to Phase 2 for development of a Watershed Plan):

1. Alakanuk
2. Akiak
3. Golovin
4. Kotlik
5. Napakiak

Phase 1 in Progress:

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 6. Atka | 12. McGrath |
| 7. Atmoutluak | 13. Shishmaref |
| 8. Fort Yukon | 14. Tuntutuliak |
| 9. Hooper Bay | 15. Tununak |
| 10. Kwigillingok | 16. Tyonek |
| 11. Levelock | 17. Unalakleet |



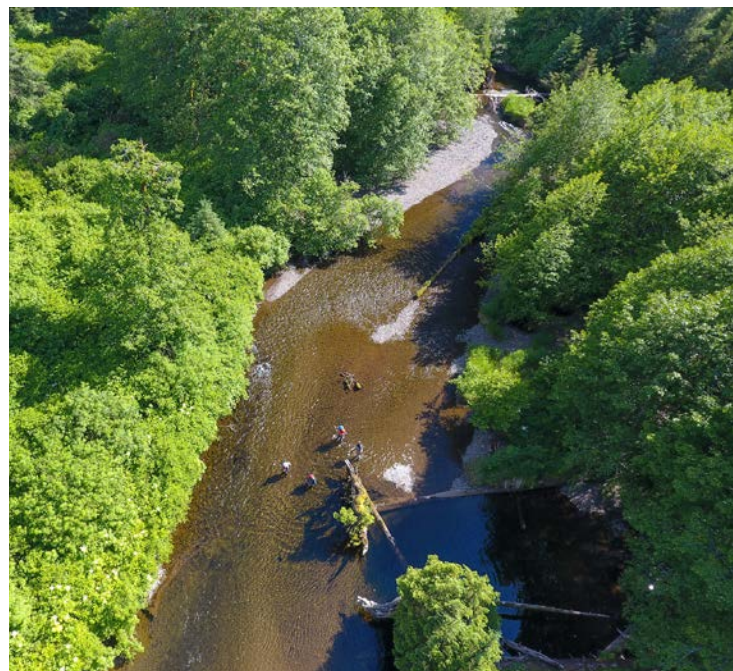
Kwigillingok

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns. Through RCPP, NRCS seeks to co-invest with partners to implement projects that demonstrate innovative solutions to conservation challenges and provide measurable improvements

and outcomes tied to the resource concerns they seek to address. RCPP is a nationwide competitive program. NRCS awarded funding for 6 RCPP projects in Alaska since the program was introduced in the 2014 Farm Bill. Four of those projects are represented by an Alaska Native lead partner and are delivering conservation results on-the-ground that benefit native communities.

Alaska Native Lead Partner	RCPP Agreement Name	NRCS Funding	Partner Funding	Total Funding
Tyonek Tribal Conservation District	Implementing Education, Outreach and Conservation Practices on Tribal Land for Socially Disadvantaged Producers and Alaska Tribal Conservation Districts (2014 - 2021)	\$1,600,000	\$ 1,761,326	\$3,361,326
Sealaska	Hoonah Native Forest Partnership (2014 - 2021)	\$ 2,262,787	\$540,500	\$2,803,287
Sealaska	Hoonah Native Forest Partnership Renewal (2020 - 2025)	\$1,802,490	\$1,802,490	\$3,604,980
Sealaska	Keex' Kwaan' Community Forest Partnership (2018 - 2023)	\$ 2,070,000	\$225,000	\$2,295,000
AHTNA Intertribal Resource Commission	Copper Basin Landscape Resiliency (2018 - 2023)	\$ 1,710,000	\$596,945	\$2,306,945
TOTAL	5 Projects	\$9.4M	\$5M	\$14.4M



RCPP Example: Hoonah Native Forest Partnership

The Hoonah Native Forest Partnership (HNFP) was formed in 2015. This “All Hands, All Lands” partnership is an alliance of landowners, organizations and stakeholders advocating for the Hoonah area. The HNFP works to assess resource conditions and identify projects intended to improve fish and wildlife habitat, ensure long-term timber production, and support sustainable watershed management. RCPP funds were an initial source of startup funds to help collect valuable field data and site inventory that helped prioritize where to apply conservation treatments across the landscape. The project was renewed through 2025 and received additional NRCS funding along with partner matching funds. HNFP trains local community members to perform field work, keeping local people employed and benefiting rural economies. Photo courtesy of Sustainable Southeast Partnership.

Cooperative Agreements with Alaska Natives

Aside from Farm Bill conservation programs, NRCS also provides assistance to Alaska Natives via Cooperative Agreements. These agreements help fund goods and services and that are mutually beneficial to NRCS's mission and to the partnering organization.

For example, some NRCS agreements with Alaska Native entities help fund staff for Tribal Conservation Districts to provide technical assistance and conservation planning services. Other examples are agreements that provide education and outreach about conservation programs to historically-underserved producers.

Fiscal Year	Alaska NRCS Cooperative Agreements with Alaska Native Entities	# of Agreements
2014	\$75,000	3
2015	\$85,000	4
2016	\$40,000	1
2017	\$185,000	4
2018	\$564,983	6
2019	\$30,000	1
2020	\$808,425	5
2021	\$22,000	1
2022	\$350,000	2
2023	\$250,913	2
TOTAL	\$2.3 million	29



A crew member with Chugachmiut works on the Sterling Fuel Break project on native lands managed by Kenai Natives Association.



For more information Contact

Alan McBee
State Conservationist
Phone: 907-761-7780
Email: Alan.McBee@usda.gov

Ann Fischer
Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships
Phone: 907-761-7720
Email: Ann.Fischer@usda.gov



Visit Us Online:

www.nrcs.usda.gov/AK