

Agenda - NRCS NV TAC

April 17th, 2025, meeting

9 am to 12 pm

Introductions 9 to 9:15

NRCS Opportunities Overview 9:15 to 9:45 (15 minutes for comments/questions) – Trina

- Technical Assistance
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Alternative Funding Arrangement (AFA's)
- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)
- Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG)
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- Watershed's

Programmatic Updates 10 to 10:30 (10 minutes for comments/questions) – Ari

- Tribal Payment Limitations
- Outlook on funding changes (What we did in FY25 & LWG Participation)
- NV Application Deadlines

Technical Updates 10:40 to 11:05 (10 minutes for comments/questions) – Jim

- Boundary Fence

Tribal Issues/Concerns 11:15 to 11:55 – Group Discussion

Close out 1155 to Noon (Next Meeting Fall 2025)

Minutes

Introductions 9 to 9:15 – Attendees – Tribal Representatives: Steven Austin (Fallon), Lorinda Sam (Duckwater), James Simmons (Summit Lake), Harriett Vegas (Las Vegas), Kendrick Owyhee (Duck Valley), Lisa Jim (Duck Valley), Reggie Premo (Duck Valley/UNR), Ahmad Alfanatseh (Duck Valley), Marlene Begay (Walker River), Cliff Smart (Ft. McDermitt)

Federal attendees (NRCS Staff): Heidi Ramsey (State Conservationist), Pedro Torres (National Tribal Liaison – NHQ), Jim Gifford (State Resource Conservationist), Ari DeLara (ASTC-Programs), Rachel Larue-Uecke (Public Affairs Specialist), Trina Johnson (Resource Conservationist – Programs), Morgan Weigand (NRCS – Winnemucca), Joe Noyes (District Conservationist – Ely), Albert Mulder (District Conservationist – Fallon), Jamie Gottlieb (District Conservationist – Las Vegas), John George (NRCS NV – Tribal Liaison)

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Trina

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Discussion

- James Simmons (Summit Lake)
 - 1) Native seed collecting, propagation/storage/growing of material, is there assistance for those items – Response – Assistance is structured for the procurement and planting of species, we do not specifically have payments for collecting, growing and storage of materials. Suggested avenues for assistance were looking further at NRCS NV practices to see if any would meet the requested intent (Range Planting & Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities), NV Native Seed Group, Plant Materials Center, Conservation Innovation Grant, working with Plant Material Centers in CA & NV for assistance or possible Interim Conservation Practice Standard (ICPS) or new payment scenario, Development for Native Seeding but with all functions identified in the ICPS.
 - 2) Wildlife Monitoring Opportunities – Is there financial assistance available for wildlife monitoring for tribes – Response – We have a variety of ways we may be able to assist with wildlife monitoring depending on what the goals are of the

client and the situation. The best way to know is to work with the field office, in this case Winnemucca and the State Biologist, to learn more about the problem (resource concern) we are looking to address, and the possible tools (practices) we could use to address the problem. All NRCS work must be tied to addressing a resource concern (opportunity), but most important to identify that problem is communication, site visits and discussion. A CEMA and/or Wildlife Monitoring practices may be able to address need.

- Steven Austin (Fallon)
 - 1) Newly acquired land (10,000 ac's) interested in assistance for fencing (cross fencing). Albert to follow up with Steven on interest.

- Ahmad Alfanatseh (Duck Valley)
 - 1) Requested more information regarding cement blankets for lining canals instead of traditional systems
 - 2) Albert mentioned it is difficult to meet our standard and/or specs when installing.
 - 3) Something for Doug Higbee, our State Conservation Engineer, to investigate.
 - 4) Also, maybe looking at Conservation Innovation Grant or Interim Conservation Practice Standard if current Standard and Spec's do not support.

- Cliff Smart (Ft. McDermitt)
 - 1) Lithium America is requesting the tribe to supply native plants for their operations. Cliff asked if there's a way NRCS could assist with such a venture?
 - a. While NRCS cannot assist with the direct purchase of the stock to supply to another entity, we may be able to help improve the high tunnels discussed by Cliff or build assistance in developing new ones. There are several abandoned high tunnels from a former operation that the tribe is looking at retrofitting for such an option. NRCS would not be able to supply the stock for the operation but might be able to assist with improving the irrigation system in the high tunnels once they are operational again. May be a tie also with the Summit Lake Request on practice availability to collect and grow native seeds for propagation on the landscape (Possible ICPS again or request for additional Payment Scenario).

- Harriet Vegas (Las Vegas)
 - 1) I am interested in improving natural resources but need to visit with staff on needs and will follow up.

- Reggie Premo (Duck Valley)

- 1) Requested information regarding staffing in Elko – Heidi reinforced Staffing commitments to customers, and the State Office had a plan in place to work on Elko staffing, all requests will come through John for the foreseeable future.

Programmatic Updates 10 to 10:30 (10 minutes for comments/questions) – Ari

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Discussion

- James Simmons (Summit Lake)
 - 1) Discussed low participation in committees like this due to a lack of funding to attend as tribes needed to be able to compensate staff for the time they took to attend.

- Reggie Premo (Duck Valley)
 - 1) Interested in the Air Quality opportunities (Tractor Replacement) and if additional funds would be available for Fiscal Year 2025.
 - a. Ari stated no additional funds would be available for FY 2025
 - b. NRCS NV would be requesting additional funds for FY 2026 but not guaranteed.
 - 2) Requested to consider the Duck Valley Conservation District to host the Elko Local Work Group in Owyhee this year. John stated we can follow up with the Elko Association of Conservation Districts.

- Steven Austin (Fallon)
 - 1) Interest in wildlife habitat funding
 - a. Opportunities exist in both Sage Grouse Funds pools as well as in EQIP through Local Workgroup fund pools. Need to explore where interest lies and how we can assist in meeting those goals and objectives.

- Kendrick Owyhee (Duck Valley)
 - 1) When will NRCS know its budget for FY26
 - a. The response was made to the fall State Technical Advisory Committee meeting.

- Lisa Jim (Duck Valley)
 - 1) How did funding announcement align with getting word out to communities for the air quality opportunity (Tractor Program) as it didn't seem the word got out to folks as effectively as it could have.

- a. There was the 30-day announcement of the program, but there is recognition that we could have done better to get the word out and a commitment was made to improve upon that for FY26 signup.

Technical Updates 10:40 to 11:05 (10 minutes for comments/questions) – Jim

- **Boundary Fence**

Discussion

- Reggie (Duck Valley)
 - 1) Reggie helped get the original guidance put in place in 2011 recognizing tribal allotment and assignments for fencing.
 - 2) Reggie gave an example of Mule Deer impacting community gardens in Duckwater which was impacting plant productivity for those trying to grow small gardens.
 - 3) Jim stated it was something to look at on a case-by-case basis and that we would look at situations as they came up.
- James (Summit Lake)
 - 1) Can “boundary fence” be used for maintenance or is it for installation only?
 - a. It’s a tricky answer. We install fences to address a resource concern (fix a problem). Regarding existing fence, it comes to if it’s a “functioning” fence. If the fence is standing, and restricts livestock movement, even if it’s old, we would not “maintain” that fence. On the other hand, if the fence is down, in complete disrepair and is not “functioning” we could consider replacing the section of non-functional fencing. They are case by case determinations, but no matter what, the installation of the fence must be addressing a resource concern.
- Harriet Vegas (Las Vegas)
 - 1) Needs to visit with staff before going forward with questions.
- Lisa Jim (Duck Valley)
 - 1) Can owner (other side of the fence) apply for the boundary fence?
 - a. Anyone can apply to fund a project, we just must make sure we are following the state bulletin and that the applicant, whoever that is, meets the program’s eligibility requirements.
- Kendrick Owyhee (Duck Valley)
 - 1) The Duck Valley Natural Resources Department is working to reestablish their maintenance agreements for boundary fences in the area.

- Cliff Smart (Ft. McDermitt)
 - 1) Would be interested in discussing the possibility of boundary fence in the far northern end of the reservation for what is referred to as “The 40”. Large spring area that needs neighboring cattle excluded from damaging the area.

Tribal Issues/Concerns 11:15 to 11:55 – Group Discussion

- Cliff Smart (Ft. McDermitt)
 - 1) Interest in looking at spring area southeast of tribal center that isn’t functions.
 - 2) Overall office function from NRCS is going well.
- Kendrick Owyhee (Duck Valley)
 - 1) Status of Coop Agreement?
 - a. Still on pause pending review. Awaiting final decision.
 - 2) Can NRCS pay out for work completed Jan. 20th through Feb. 11th?
 - a. Please follow up with Chris on the status of making payment.
- Harriet Vegas (Las Vegas)
 - 1) Please make sure to share the two documents listed in the chat.
 - 2) A site visit would be appreciated after she has talked to staff.
- James Simmons (Summit Lake)
 - 1) Staffing – Are things looking similar for NRCS as it is for other federal agencies?
 - a. Heidi responded that yes, they were, and NV was taking an all-hands approach with the focus being on customer service and availability to the individual landowners.
- Reggie (Duck Valley)
 - 1) Interested in virtual fencing
 - b. Heidi responded that yes, they were, and NV was taking an all-hands approach with the focus being on customer service and availability to the individual landowners.
- Jamie Gottlieb (DC – NRCS – Las Vegas)
 - 1) Wanted to remind everyone that us being present and at tribal meetings is important so we can be available to know what is going on for the tribes.

Links

CEMA LINK: [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives/eqip-cpas-dias-and-cemas#:~:text=review%2C%20and%20checkout.-,Conservation%20Evaluation%20and%20Monitoring%20Activities%20\(CEMAs\),by%20Qualified%20Individuals%20\(QIs\).](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives/eqip-cpas-dias-and-cemas#:~:text=review%2C%20and%20checkout.-,Conservation%20Evaluation%20and%20Monitoring%20Activities%20(CEMAs),by%20Qualified%20Individuals%20(QIs).)

Cost List Link: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/payment-schedules>

Action Items

- 1) Follow up with Summit Lake on Wildlife Monitoring interests. **(Morgan & Todd to Follow up with James)**
- 2) Follow up with Fallon on cross fencing interest on 10,000 ac unit. **(Albert to Follow up with Steven)**
- 3) Follow up with Fallon on Wildlife habitat improvements opportunities. **(Albert to Follow up with Steven)**
- 4) Follow up on Concrete Blanket for ditch lining (Duck Valley Irrigation District) – Initial conversation needs to be with Doug. **(John to Follow up with Doug)**
- 5) Follow up with Ft. McDermitt on boundary fence out at “the 40” and additional spring/stock water Southeast of the tribal center. **(Morgan/John to Follow up with Cliff)**
- 6) Explore ways to assist tribes in participating in these kinds of committees (request for money to pay for staff time). **(John to Follow up with Chris & Heidi)**
- 7) Plan for improving notification of Air Quality Program for FY 26. **(John to Follow up with Ari)**
- 8) LWG meeting for Tribal Fund Pool (Next meeting July/August to discuss priority resource concerns (problems) and practices (tools to fix problems) to help inform ranking information for Fiscal Year 2026.) **(John to Follow up with Members on best dates)**
- 9) Look at the possibility of having an Elko LWG meeting in Duck Valley. **(John to Follow up with Reggie)**
- 10) Look for avenues to help with collection, propagation, storage of native planting stock (Summit Lake & Ft. McDermitt interest). **(John Follow up with Jim & Heidi)**
- 11) Chris R. follow up on request regarding Duck Valley Coop agreement payments. **(Complete – Chris has visited with Kendrick and Crystal)**
- 12) Attach documents (presentations and items from Chat) from meetings. **(John to complete when sending out minutes)**
- 13) Virtual Fence – Reggie would like to see some TA/Workshop in Duck Valley regarding it. (visit more with Reggie, factsheet from agency, maybe vendor contact information). **(John Followed up with DV, plans in the works for workshop)**
- 14) Share information on the cost list, provide more information on what’s available. One suggestion is to pick maybe a land use per meeting and discuss key land uses & associated practices. **(John to Follow up with members on best way forward)**
- 15) Look into the possibility of sharing engineering staff from ID to help with survey/design work in Duck Valley. Holding joint meetings between ID/NV NRCS & Duck Valley to discuss need and opportunities. **(John to Follow up with Heidi & Doug)**