



Axel Sanchez and Pedro Torres discuss NRCS programs with Tribal environmental staff at Region 9 Tribal EPA Conference.

## Tribal Conference participation in the past year

**The Intertribal Agriculture Council's Pacific Region Native Youth in Food and Agriculture Leadership Summit** brought 20 high school and collage aged youth, representing 15 Nations, to Woodland, California, to participate in three days of leadership development, natural resources, and agriculture based curriculum.

From Oct. 12 to 15, 2017, attendees participated in workshops, cultural exchanges, college tours, native plant propagation projects, tribal food enterprise tours, and professional development exercises. The structure of these summits also formally expose Native youth to NRCS programs, conservation related activities, and career pathways.

NRCS Regional Soil Health Specialist Zahangir Kabir and State Tribal Liaison Pedro Torres presented a rainfall simulator and discussed soil health issues, including soil compaction and organic matter. They also discussed career opportunities and their own personal career paths, as well as academic requirements for a career with NRCS.

NRCS California sent Pedro Torres and Escondido Soil Conservationist Axel Sanchez to inform tribes about NRCS programs at the 2017 **Region 9 Tribal EPA Conference** hosted by Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians Oct. 31 to Nov. 2, 2017. There were 423 attendees including representatives from 102 tribes.

The exhibitor hall hosted government agencies, such as Army Corps of Engineers, as well as intertribal environmental organizations, such as Native American Environmental Coalition. Workshops and breakout sessions were in progress covering conservation issues related to water, air, land, renewable energy and solid waste.

The **Intertribal Agriculture Council's Annual Membership Meeting** attracts participant tribes from all over the country. The 2017 event in Las Vegas included workshops and exhibits from multiple USDA agencies, including Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rural Development, Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service, and the Risk Management Agency.



Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service

California



This year, California was chosen to coordinate both the NRCS exhibit and workshop. A well-rounded view of NRCS' mission on tribal lands around the country was provided with the assistance of other states, including Washington, Oregon, Arizona, Michigan and Nevada. Astor Boozer, NRCS Western Regional Conservationist, and Jim Etters, Director of Land Management for the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, made presentations that included examples of NRCS programs and partnerships that can benefit tribes.

**AISES Leadership Summit** was held March 15 to 17, 2018, at the Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indian Reservation to build professional skills for students leaving college and beginning careers.

Over 200 American Indian STEM college students and professional members attended to listen to speakers from the federal, corporate, and nonprofit sector. NRCS is a national travel sponsor for the AISES Leadership Summit, providing travel funds for four students to be able to attend.

NRCS National American Indian Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program Manager (AIAN SEPM) Deborah Clairmont, delivered a presentation on interviewing and networking to over 50 students with the help of Pedro Torres and California AIAN SEPM Suzanne Frazier. This included an introduction to Pathways Internship Program opportunities, California IAC internship program and how to become an Earth Team Volunteer.

California tribes, state and federal agencies came together April 4 to 5, 2018, at the McClellan Conference Center for the third **California Tribal Water Summit**, a conference developed and maintained by the Department of Water Resources which occurs in concert with the California Water Plan Update.

Both tribal and agency speakers took the stage to explore concerns facing California tribes including tribal/agency collaborations, application of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in policy, and obstacles to traditional gathering and cultural burning. Suzanne Frazier attended to build networks with tribal speakers and share more about the Pathways program available through NRCS.



Intertribal Agriculture Council's Pacific Region Native Youth in Food and Agriculture Leadership Summit: Pedro Torres and Zahangir Kabir, Ph.D., with tribal youth after a soil health presentation using the rainfall simulator.



IAC meeting in Las Vegas 2017: From left to right are Wisconsin State Conservationist Angela Biggs, Arizona Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships Rebecca de la Torre, California Assistant State Conservationist for Management & Strategy Sharon Nance, and Las Vegas District Conservationist Terri Knight.



IAC meeting in Las Vegas 2017: Pedro Torres, Tribal Liaison for California, and Lydia VerBrugge, American Indian/Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program Manager for Missouri speak to a tribal member from South Dakota about NRCS programs.

**Want to learn more about conservation assistance available to tribes?**

[www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov)

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