June 30, 2015

Tribal representatives:

On behalf of Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Washington State, attached please find a summary of actions and initiatives conducted by the NRCS to uphold tribal treaty rights in Washington. Also included are sections from other USDA agencies: Risk Management, Farm Services, and Rural Development. Other agencies have and will provide program information in future activity reports.

I commend the efforts of tribal leaders to protect salmon habitat in western Washington. As Washington State Conservationist for the NRCS, I place trust responsibility and meaningful tribal consultation among my top priorities. I have emphasized this priority to our agency leaders in Washington, DC and have begun work with other USDA agencies to ensure collaboration.

NRCS is working to protect and restore natural resources while ensuring agriculture viability. The agency is committed to finding ways to request and target program funding to address wildlife habitat concerns, especially salmon and shellfish; improve outreach and increase the level of stewardship among our clients; and establish a structured process that facilitates better and more meaningful communication and consultation with tribes.

One of the documents attached is a fact sheet outlining the Resource Stewardship Planning process that provides a landowner with a roadmap to achieve sustainability goals and provide natural resource benefits from working agricultural lands. A plan, developed using NRCS assessment tools, measures natural resource concerns like soil erosion and carbon sequestration. These tools will evaluate the land based on current land assessments and the performance of management techniques and conservation practices. The plan compares conservation systems against stewardship thresholds for soil, water, air, plant and wildlife resources.

As State Conservationist, I will continue to focus on upholding trust responsibilities within the scope of my authority and executing programs in a way that considers tribal needs and salmon recovery efforts.

ROYLENE RIDGES AT THE DOOR
State Conservationist

Attachments

CC: Robin Slate, Tribal Liaison, NRCS, Olympia, WA