A Note from the State Conservationist

Greetings Tribal producers and partners,

Our work together is going far to address natural resource concerns with Tribal members and on Tribal lands. Despite the challenges we have all dealt with over the past year, 2021 has also had many successes.

NRCS Montana focuses conservation efforts on serving the Tribal nations and producers in the state with staff assigned to each reservation and annual funding allocated through its Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Nationally, since 2017, 5 percent of EQIP and CSP funds are required to be set aside for socially disadvantaged producers of which Tribal applications are included. On average, Tribal farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners in Montana receive 22 percent of the general EQIP funding available each year. In 2021, the most recent complete fiscal year, the EQIP funding pool for socially disadvantaged producers was just over $1.6 million. However, voluntary conservation by Tribal producers exceeded that amount by nearly $1.5 million totaling 19 percent of Montana’s general EQIP allocation. In addition, agricultural producers and partners are encouraged to work with their conservation district and NRCS staff to develop a Targeted Implementation Plan that focuses on a specific natural resource concern and compete for even more funding.

A new funding opportunity in fiscal year 2021 included the Climate Smart Ag and Forestry initiative. Through this initiative, 14 Tribal contracts were funded for $2,499,621. NRCS Montana added more than $1.3 million to the national EQIP-CSAF allocation to fund all of the applications.

My thanks to the Fort Belknap Indian Community specifically for bringing the next...
issue to my attention. After hearing and understanding concerns regarding the NRCS payment schedule and the actual cost of doing business on reservations, I have discussed the challenge and communicated possible solutions with national NRCS leadership and am waiting for a reply. I will provide an update when information is available.

I want to recognize the Tribal partners, NRCS Tribal conservationists, and land managers that have all cooperated to get so much conservation on the ground this past year – supporting sustainable agriculture also supports our rural communities.

This newsletter is the first of a quarterly publication. I'll continue to share timely information here and in other avenues such as the Tribal Conservation Issues committee meetings as will Kyle Tackett, our assistant state conservationist for partnerships and Tribal liaison, and our Tribal conservationists.

If you don’t know your local Tribal conservationist, they all introduce themselves in this newsletter. Give them a call. If you see them in town, say hi. NRCS is here to help people help the land.

I look forward to ever more productive collaboration and conservation implementation over the year to come.

Take care,

Tom Watson
NRCS State Conservationist in Montana

Montana Soil Outreach

From now through July 2022, the Montana Association of Conservation Districts, Montana Watershed Coordination Council and partners are reaching out across the state to ask: What more might be done to better support farmers and ranchers in managing soils in Montana?

The purpose is to increase the pace and scale at which land stewards implement voluntary practices and systems to maintain and improve soil health, and thereby the long term economic and ecological vitality of agriculture in Montana. In August of 2022 a report will be shared on what was learned along with any recommendations that seem to emerge. All responses will be kept confidential and anonymous.

How to Participate

Your time is limited, and yet it’s a complex topic. The outreach is scaled to adjust to your time and level of interest.

There are two basic ways that we hope you will participate: through a short (less than 5 min) survey and/or a more detailed version.

If you would prefer to share your thoughts over the phone, email exploringsoil@macdnet.org to schedule a time.

Attend one or more of five in-person focus groups across the state in addition to at least one virtual option in spring 2022. Meetings will include lunch and take place from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.

- Great Falls, March 16
- Glasgow, March 17
- Billings, March 23
- Kalispell, April 14
- Dillon, April 15
- Virtual Meeting, May 26

Get all of this and more information at https://montanasoiloutreach.macdnet.org/.
In case you didn’t know!

Thirty-one years ago, on August 3, 1990, President George H.W. Bush declared November as the National American Indian Heritage Month, later to be known as Native American Heritage Month. This was a landmark bill that honored America’s tribal people and gave them a platform to share their culture, traditions, music, crafts, dance, etc. The link for the National Native American Heritage site is https://www.nativeamericanheritagemonth.gov/.

NRCS Montana has done projects with tribes and tribal members across the state. Below are a couple links to the NRCS Montana video series pages. These contain clips from across the state including a couple videos showing some of the projects with tribal owners.

Francis “Boo Boo” Bird, Blackfeet: https://go.usa.gov/xMwza
Ft. Peck Tribe Buffalo Management: http://go.usa.gov/xMwzS
Kailee Calnan
Chinook Field Office, serves Rocky Boy and Fort Belknap reservations

I grew up a few miles out of Havre, Mont. I have a lot of family that farms and ranches in Montana, but I wasn’t really raised on a farm or ranch. I did grow up with horses and competed in rodeo through high school. I went to college at Montana State University where I earned a degree in natural resources and rangeland ecology. During that time, I was involved in the MSU Range Club and Collegiate Cattlewomen. I started with NRCS as an intern the summer of 2008 in Chester. I spent the next two summers in Forsyth and Townsend, and after graduation worked in Deer Lodge for 2.5 years. From there I moved back to Havre as a soil conservationist and have now ended up as the Supervisory District Conservationist for the Havre work unit, which includes the Havre, Chinook, Rocky Boy and Fort Belknap offices. My husband Cory and I just bought a house in Havre and we have a 1 year old son Tucker. He is getting to a fun age and really loves to be outside. My hobbies include photography, outdoor activities such as hiking and camping, genealogy and scanning old family photos.

Rebecka Ayre
American Indian Alaskan Native Special Emphasis Program Manager

Hello! My name is Rebecka Ayre, most call me Becky. I love traveling, hunting, hiking with my dog, spending time with family/friends, and reading a good book.

I was born in Helena and grew up in Roberts, Mont, on a small 80-acre farm and went to a small k-12 school. I was active in most groups including FFA and 4H. Growing up in a more rural area instilled a passion for agriculture. I attended college at MSU Bozeman and got a dual major in animal science emphasis in livestock management and natural resource and rangeland ecology emphasis in rangeland management. After graduation I helped out my parents on their farm for a year.

In May 2016, I started my career with NRCS as a rangeland conservationist in Malta. In late 2017 I joined the Montana Civil Rights Advisory committee as an area representative. In July of 2021, I became the district conservationist for the Helena field office. In October 2021, I became the American Indian Alaskan Native Special Emphasis Program Manager (AI/ANEPM) on the Montana Civil Rights Advisory Committee. In this role I serve as a liaison between the National AI/ANEPM and local tribal conservationists, employees, and other interested groups. I work with local tribal conservationists to identify barriers in employment and come up with solutions. I work with the Montana Civil Rights Advisory Committee and the State Conservationist to address barriers. I also keep employees informed of activities via emails, newsletters, etc.

Elizabeth Ballou
Havre Field Office

Hi! My name is Liz Ballou, and I am the Tribal Conservationist for the Chippewa-Cree Tribe, on the Rocky Boy Reservation within the Bear Paw Mountains in Hill County. I am a graduate of the California State University at Chico, where I earned my BS degree in agriculture, with an option in range management. I am returning to NRCS after 21 years of being an elementary school teacher. Previously, I was a soil conservationist in the Pendleton, Oregon, field office and a biological technician in soils, working in Wisdom, Montana. I have been in Havre since February, having moved from a town with no stop lights near the Lost Coast of northern California. In my spare time, I enjoy anything that has to do with the outdoors. My favorite summer activities are camping, hiking, and mountain biking. I recently acquired a stand-up paddle board, so I will be adding that to my list. Snow skiing is my number one activity in the winter.

I have established several connections with producers at Rocky Boy during the short time I have been in my new position. I am focused on providing technical assistance to the Tribe to address priority resource concerns. The Tribe is currently in the process of completing a large irrigation diversion project. I will have my hands full completing range inventory this fall. I attend the Natural Resource Department meetings monthly, and I recruited an Earth Team Volunteer from Box Elder High School with assistance from Zane Not Afraid.

Liz Ballou

Becky Ayre

Kailee Calnan with husband, Cory and son, Tucker.
Kathy Knobloch
Lame Deer Field Office

Kathy Knobloch has been the NRCS Tribal Conservationist serving the Northern Cheyenne Reservation since 1998. Growing up on her family’s cattle ranch near Busby instilled a love for the plants, animals, and people of the area and led her to MSU Bozeman to study range science. During college, she had the opportunity to work in the (then) Soil Conservation Service student trainee or “co-op” program, which was another big piece of her education in natural resource conservation. After receiving her degree, she returned home to put it to use.

She is a member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe and is part of the third generation to operate the family ranch. She and her husband spend most of their time chasing cows and kids.

Zach Lenning
Tribal Planner for Fort Belknap, Chinook Field Office

Hello,

I have worked with the NRCS for the past couple of years, moving around the state of Montana to work different jobs before I got a full time position with the agency at the end of 2020. I started working with the Fort Belknap Indian Community at the beginning of the summer of 2021 and have since been trying to learn the land and the people that live and work on it as fast as possible. Future projects include reseeding crop ground to pasture for the Buffalo program and developing a long term water infrastructure update plan. I am excited to continue growing in my new role as a Tribal planner!

Dezerae Lorash-Knoll
Browning Field Office

Hi, my name is Dezerae Lorash-Knoll. I am a descendant of the Blackfeet Tribe and have been with the USDA-NRCS a little over 10 years as a soil conservationist. I started with the agency as an intern in 2010 in the Cut Bank field office while attending Blackfeet Community College. I transferred to Salish Kootenai College where I received my BA degree in environmental sciences/terrestrial resources. In 2013, I became full time with NRCS as a soil conservationist with my first duty location in Lewistown, Mont. In 2014, I moved to Chinook as a soil conservationist and took on a civil rights duty as the American Indian Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program Manager for Montana. In 2017, I took a job bringing me closer to my home in Cut Bank/Browning as a soil conservationist serving the local Blackfeet Reservation. I have one daughter, Kamryn, who is thirteen years old. We both share the love of horses and O-Mok-See. NRCS has great programs to assist producers such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program.
Evan Van Order  
Hardin Field Office  
Hello, my name is Evan Van Order, and I am the NRCS Tribal Conservationist for the Crow Tribe. I began my career with the NRCS in 2002 as a soil conservation technician in the Hardin field office, providing technical assistance with conservation projects throughout Big Horn County. In 2019, I was hired as the Tribal Conservationist to serve the Crow Tribe by promoting natural resource conservation within the Crow Reservation. Big Horn County has been my home for nearly 20 years, and I am honored to be a part of this great community, helping landowners and producers achieve their conservation goals.

Cassie Powell  
Browning Field Office  
In June 2020, Cassie Powell was hired as the District Tribal Conservationist at the NRCS office in Browning. Cassie was born and raised in Babb where her family owns a ranch. Growing up on a ranch in this community is what helped fuel her connection with the people and the land here.

Cassie earned her Associate of Science degree in Natural Resources at Blackfeet Community College and a bachelor’s degree in environmental science from Salish Kootenai College with an emphasis on fish and wildlife biology. Cassie worked seasonally with Glacier National Park Service for ten seasons before and during college.

Cassie knew she always wanted to work in the federal arena and she wanted to work in Montana. However, she started out with the Bureau of Reclamation in Nebraska and Wyoming, eventually transferring to the Bureau of Land Management in Havre. Even though Cassie was working away from her hometown of Babb, she always planned to come back home and serve her community. Cassie missed her home and the mountains stating, “there is this connection with the land and the people. I never got that off the reservation. I wanted to be able to come back and do something beneficial to my community.” She first got the opportunity to come back and work for her community when she got a position working at Blackfeet Fish and Wildlife. After working for the Blackfeet Tribe for a couple years the next stop for Cassie was her current position as a District Tribal Conservationist at NRCS. She was hired and took on the position in June 2020. She stated she is just touching the surface and still has so much to learn but regardless she is here to help. Cassie would like every producer on the reservation to be aware of the programs that NRCS has to offer.

Herb Webb  
Pablo Field Office  
I am Herb Webb, the tribal conservationist on the Flathead Indian Reservation. I’ve been with the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), now NRCS in Montana for 37 years. I joined SCS after college where I got degrees in wildlife conservation and range management. Working for this agency there have been many changes both on the landscape and with how we do things. It’s been rewarding to assist farmers and ranchers to make improvements on their land. Maybe the biggest change from when I walked into the Choteau field office in 1984 is how computers have become a part of everyday life. Back then there were no computers in field offices or in the farmer’s home. Now they are practically on every desk.

In my spare time I used to hunt and fish a lot, but I’ve slowed down these past few years. These days I do a lot of cloud cartography, and I get distracted by woodworking and art of all kinds. I like to do a little painting, drawing and some carving. As the old cliché goes “Jack of all trades, master of none” or maybe my attention span can’t handle one thing for too long.
Greetings Tribal partners and property owners,

I would like to make you aware of upcoming opportunities for possible restoration and protection of wetlands.

USDA-NRCS is one of the leading agencies that offers and manages a variety of conservation easement programs in the country. The Agricultural Conservation Easement Program Wetland Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE) is one of these which provides long term protection and restoration of previously altered wetlands.

Wetland Reserve Easements provide habitat for fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species, improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, protect biological diversity, provide resilience to climate change, and provide opportunities for educational, scientific, and limited recreational activities.

Eligible landowners include owners of privately held land including land that is held by American Indian Tribes. All landowners, including required members of landowner-legal entities, must meet adjusted gross income (AGI) limitations and must be compliant with the HEL/WC provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985. These documents must be filed prior to application with the landowners respective Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. A farm business plan must also be filed with the FSA office on a CCC-902 form in consultation with the FSA office.

WRE applications may be filed at any time through your local NRCS field office. Although continuous applications are permitted, we will set application batching period dates for consideration during any fiscal year.

In addition to individual applications, NRCS has annual requests for proposals on Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP) projects. Through WREP, NRCS works with eligible partners which includes American Indian Tribes to develop agreements to leverage resources for high priority wetland protection, restoration, and enhancement and to improve wildlife habitat.

Interested Tribal organizations should review the following website to determine if a WREP proposal may be a good fit with Tribal goals and objectives. The announcement asking for proposals has not gone out for 2022 and there may be changes in the upcoming year, but this information should serve as a good baseline of what to expect. [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/easements/acep/?cid=nrcseprd1459249](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/easements/acep/?cid=nrcseprd1459249)

Best regards,

Allen Persinger
Assistant State Conservationist – Easement Programs

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NRCS Announces 2022 Wetland Reserve Easement Funding Opportunity

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Montana is announcing fiscal year 2022 assistance opportunities for agricultural producers and private landowners for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) – Wetland Reserve Easements. While NRCS accepts applications for Wetland Reserve Easements year-round, producers and landowners should apply by the Dec. 3, 2021, ranking date to be considered for this year’s funding.

“Easements are sometimes a perfect fit for a landowner who is looking to protect and improve wetlands or provide critical habitat for wildlife,” said Allen Persinger, NRCS assistant state conservationist for easement programs in Montana.

ACEP helps producers enroll wetlands, grasslands and farmlands into easements for long-term protection. ACEP Wetlands Reserve Easements specifically allow landowners to successfully restore, enhance and protect habitat for wildlife on their lands, reduce damage from flooding, recharge groundwater and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities. Eligible landowners can choose to enroll in a permanent or 30-year easement. Tribal landowners also have the option of enrolling in 30-year contracts.

Ranking dates for all programs and states are available at [www.nrcs.usda.gov/staterankingdates](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/staterankingdates). Applications received after ranking dates will be automatically deferred to the next funding period.

To learn about ACEP and other technical and financial assistance available through NRCS, call your local USDA Service Center or visit [www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov).

If you represent a Tribal organization that has an interest in pursuing a proposal, I would be happy to schedule a time to discuss in further detail. Please send any inquiries to my email: allen.persinger@usda.gov
Multi-Agency Groups Work Together to Protect and Preserve Wildland Urban Interface

Fertile valleys and soaring mountain peaks of northwest Montana surround the largest natural freshwater lake west of the Mississippi River in the lower forty-eight states. Flathead Lake, with its crystal-clear water, abundant resources, and recreational opportunities is the showpiece of Lake County. Positioned in the northeast corner of the 1.2-million-acre Flathead Reservation, Flathead Lake has along its shorelines and tucked within its dense forests hundreds of homesites and other structures.

With its current population density and anticipated growth, the Rocky Point/White Swan area has been identified as a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) by Lake County. WUI is defined as a transitional area between wilderness and land development. The constructed environment intermingles with the natural one and as a result, is at greater risk of catastrophic wildfire. The Rocky Point/White Swan area has been designated as a high priority for fire resilience and forest management.

“This is a unique situation,” states James Lozeau, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal (CSKT) Forestry. “There are 800,000 acres of timberland in the area. The tribe owns the south end of the lake with private landowners along the lake shores. You have private ownership, tribal ownership, allotments and a state wildlife refuge, basically a tribal section surrounded by private entities. One road in and out. It would be chaos if something did happen on this heavily trafficked road.”

Due to the increased chance of catastrophic wildfires, NRCS along with seventeen other natural resource partner groups came together to address the dense forests and abundant wildlife within the Rocky Point area. Rather than one-offs and selected random projects across the county, NRCS established a Targeted Implementation Plan (TIP) focusing on 5,000 acres of forest that encompasses 600 homesites within the designated WUI. “With Montana Focused Conservation, we take a new approach and focus on an issue within an area, in this case the Wildland Urban Interface and forest health,” explains NRCS Tribal Conservationist Herb Webb. “Now we focus on one issue in a geographic region and focus on what’s important for this resource need, in this place.”

Not only is this approach to conservation more targeted, but also it provides an opportunity to bring together multiple groups and agencies for even greater impact. CSKT Tribal Forestry is one such group that works across the entire reservation but has been harvesting in and around the NRCS TIP targeted area for some years. “Their footprint and what CSKT is doing is way beyond the 5,000 acres that we are focusing on,” states NRCS’s Webb. “We shared our preliminary maps with them and as it turns out, they had plans for work in some of those same areas. So, the Tribe signed up for work through the TIP on a parcel of ground inside this boundary.”

“Generally, with the Tribe, we are trying to return our forests to the old, traditional ecological state,” states Shawn DeFrance, CSKT Tribal Forestry. “This project specifically is for wildfire risk. On these unmanaged units you see a lot of ladder fuels, fuels that will carry fire up into the canopy. Our objective, if we do have a fire here, is to keep it on the ground so that we can catch it and minimize risk.”

CSKT member Lozeau concurs, “Crown fires carry the fire the majority of the time. On the ground, you get maybe three-foot flame lengths depending on the brush, in the crown you can get one-hundred-foot flame lengths – that’s
what we’re trying to minimize. If we keep everything on the ground, we have a better chance of protecting home ownerships.”

Fire reduction projects can encompass a variety of approaches depending on the stand and its location - from complete stand removal to select tree removal and thinning. “We look for the dominant and co-dominant trees,” states Service Forester Shawn Morgan from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. “By that I mean, the trees that are getting the most sunlight, the highest canopy in the forest. We thin from below and remove our intermediates and suppressed. For fuel mitigation, you want to create space between the crowns and keep the fire on the ground. For forest health and vigor, you create canopy gaps for rejuvenation, allowing sunlight to hit the forest floor and then a new age class will develop underneath.”

Local Partnerships Take the Lead

On the local level, the Lake County Conservation District (LCCD) is leading the charge. “We are all about voluntary conservation,” LCCD’s Heidi Fleury explains. “A lot of people in the area are aware and concerned about fire safety. Once homeowners or landowners contact us, we conduct an assessment of their property and share with them ways they can make their area more ‘fire wise’ and fire safe in their ignition zone.” For the dense forests surrounding their homes, homeowners can apply for cost-share forest management assistance. “When homeowners join the program, we give them a forest management plan which they use to inform their contractor of the work to be done,” Heidi continues. “After the work is completed, we reimburse the homeowner with a cost-share at a certain rate.”

Private homes and man-made structures are not the only considerations when developing forest management plans such as this one. Multiple plants and animals call the Flathead Reservation and Lake County home, including at least seven endangered species -- grizzly bears, bull trout, Canada lynx, wolves, yellow-billed cuckoo, and whitebark pine among them. To minimize impacts, NRCS and its partners assess action plans prior to implementing them. “We do go through the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process to make sure we address the concerns and threats to endangered species,” states NRCS’s Webb. CSKT Tribal Forester DeFrance echoes the importance of full environmental assessments when developing its harvest plans, “Wildlife preservation might ask us to leave an elk pass-through area or the hydrology department will want us to make sure we aren’t harming stream flow. We have an interdisciplinary team and conduct an environmental assessment with everyone’s input.”

“There is more here than understory,” states NRCS’s Webb. “Anytime you do anything in the landscape to benefit one resource it has a domino effect. You’re going to benefit other species as well. There are just a lot of species that benefit from good management.”

Advantages of good forest management extend across boundaries and are mutually beneficial for both man and nature. Landscape scale projects such as the Rocky Point TIP bring together multiple landowners and multiple stakeholders for mutual benefit. “Groups and people bringing resources to the table, sharing and pooling money, staff, expertise and science,” concludes NRCS Supervisory District Conservationist Ben Montgomery. “When we invest taxpayer dollars, they are being spent wisely and being leveraged across multiple agencies and organizations to achieve something bigger.”

Home in Rocky Point that Tribal Forestry protected by thinning the trees around it, reducing risk from fire.
EQIP Helps with Improvements on the Soap Creek Watershed

Kim Iron is a Crow tribal member that runs a cow/calf operation down on the Soap Creek watershed South of Fort Smith. Kim began working with the NRCS back in 2016 when she heard about the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Through the years of working with Kim with her CSP contract, Kim has recently been able to obtain an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contract to address some of the resource concerns that she identified that prevented her from achieving her management goals for her family ranch.

Through EQIP, Kim has been able to address the needs of installing additional cross fence on her range units to help control grazing and improve utilization of the grass on her ranch. Now she has the ability to change season of use and control the amount of time her cows are allowed to graze on individual pastures instead of the historic season long grazing management implemented in the past. Through the resource inventory the NRCS provided, several areas on Kim’s ranch were identified that contained sulfur cinquefoil and African wiregrass (ventenata), both invasive noxious weeds. Through EQIP, Kim will receive technical assistance and financial assistance to offset the cost of applying herbicide to treat the noxious weeds. With the improvements made with the new cross fences, the treatment of noxious weeds and the addition of a stockwater system, Kim will have the ability to manage her rangeland to improve plant production and health and improve her forage available for her livestock in the years to come.

Grazing Management the Ultimate Success Story on the Northern Cheyenne Rangeland

Greetings, from Northern Cheyenne! I hope this finds everyone well and enjoying some much-needed moisture. When thinking about what to share, my mind went to grazing management, the ultimate “success story” on rangeland. Since 2018, seven Tribal ranchers have implemented and/or committed to prescribed grazing systems on nearly 41,000 acres of the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. That is a great start, especially when you consider the challenges they’ve overcome to make it work.

Ranchers need to have or create several pastures that are close enough together to rotate their livestock during the grazing season. This may require additional leases, crossfences, and possibly hauling livestock long distances. And not just any lease will work; if a pasture is shared with other operators, everyone has to agree to the planned management system.

Another challenge is that each pasture must have enough water to support the entire herd during different seasons of the year. This allows the plant communities in the other pastures rest from grazing, improving their health and productivity. Installing numerous wells, pipelines, spring developments, and tanks is time-consuming and expensive, even with NRCS financial assistance. Permission is needed from the Tribe, BIA, individual landowners, and the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO). Water developments require surveys, utility location, Tribal water use permits, pumping tests, and electrical permits. Whew!

I find it very rewarding to help ranchers work through this process. It isn’t an easy task, but it is possible and worthwhile to keep the land healthy and productive into the future. Congratulations to those that are rising to the challenge! Please call me with any questions you have about grazing management or other NRCS assistance.
2021 IAC Annual Conference

Join us as the IAC highlights Tribal producers and land stewardship efforts that lend important modeling and direction to all sectors of agriculture and land management. The in-person annual conference will be held December 7th through the 9th in Las Vegas, Nevada at the newly redesigned Virgin Hotels.

The Intertribal Agriculture Council is excited to announce our 2021 Annual Conference theme “Original Land Stewards.” As the original land stewards, Native peoples have actively managed the ecosystems from which much of the modern world food supply originates since time immemorial.

The Intertribal Agriculture Council is limiting the number of in-person attendees at the 2021 IAC Annual Conference and the Virtual Conference will be hosted online at the same time. We feel a responsibility to protect our employees, attendees, and the Tribal nations that will be in attendance. We will adhere to the CDC’s guidelines for the entire event. Register soon!
**Tribal Field Office Directory**

**Browning Field Office**  
Serves: Blackfeet Reservation  
Blackfeet Tribal Headquarters  
640 All Chief’s Rd.  
Browning, MT 59417  
Phone: (406) 338-3153  
*Tribal Conservationist* - Cassie Powell  
Email: cassie.powell2@usda.gov  
Phone: (406) 338-3153 ext. 100  
Cell: (406) 224-5112

**Soil Conservationist**-  
Dezerae Lorash-Knoll  
Email: dezerae.lorashknoll@usda.gov  
Phone: (406) 338-3153 ext. 103

**Crow Agency Field Office**  
Serves: Crow Reservation  
Hardin Service Center  
205 13th West Street  
Hardin, MT 59034-0205  
Phone: (406) 629-3228  
*Tribal Conservationist*-  
Evan Van Order  
Email: evan.vanorder@usda.gov  
Phone: (406) 629-3228  
Cell: 551-3952

**Fort Belknap Field Office**  
Serves: Fort Belknap Reservation  
Currently serviced by the  
Chinook Service Center  
228 Ohio St.  
P.O. Box 189  
Chinook, MT 59523-0189  
*Supervisory District Conservationist* -  
Kailee Calnan  
Email: kailee.calnan@usda.gov  
Phone: (406) 357-2320 ext 117

**Tribal Planner** - Zach Lenning  
Email: zach.lenning@usda.gov  
Phone: (406) 357-2320 ext 18

**Lame Deer Field Office**  
Serves: Northern Cheyenne Reservation  
Phone: (406) 477-6494  
19 W. Chief’s St.  
P.O. Box 330  
Lame Deer, MT 59043-0330  
*Tribal Conservationist*- Kathy Knobloch  
Email: kathy.knobloch@usda.gov  
Phone: 477-6494

**Pablo Field Office**  
Serves: Flathead Reservation  
Phone: 675-2700  
Tribal Land Department  
42487 Complex Boulevard  
P.O. Box 871  
Pablo, MT 59855-9700  
*Tribal Conservationist*- Herb Webb  
Email: herb.webb@usda.gov  
Phone: 675-2700 ext. 1245

**Poplar Field Office**  
Serves: Fort Peck Reservation  
Phone: (406) 768-3964  
500 Medicine Bear Road  
Box 1027  
Poplar, MT 59255-1027  
*Tribal Conservationist*- Paul Finnicum  
Email: paul.finnicum@usda.gov

**Rocky Boy Field Office**  
Serves: Chippewa Cree Reservation  
Currently serviced by the  
Havre Service Center  
206 25th Ave. W., Ste. 1  
Havre, MT 59501-6008  
*Tribal Conservationist*- Elizabeth Ballou  
Email: elizabeth.ballou@usda.gov  
Phone: (406) 265-6792

**Supervisory District Conservationist** -  
Kailee Calnan  
Email: kailee.calnan@usda.gov  
Phone: (406) 357-2320 ext 117

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If you or anyone you know would like to be added to the mailing list for the Montana NRCS’ Conservation Pathways Newsletter, please send your email address to mt-nrcs-publicinfo@usda.gov, Subject: Conservation Pathways.

If you require a hard copy of the newsletter, send your mailing address to the email address above or:

**USDA-NRCS**  
Public Affairs  
Attn: Conservation Pathways  
10 E Babcock St, Rm 443  
Bozeman, MT 59715

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