

February 2014

AZ Tribal Connection

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Important Dates to Remember

March 18-20, 2014

Climate Change Adaption
Regional Tribal Workshop
AATCD/INCA
Prescott, Arizona

Upcoming Federal Holidays, 2014

February 17
President's Day
All NRCS offices will be closed

Reminder!

NRCS accepts applications for all programs on a continuous basis.
Contact your local NRCS field office or Tribal liaison for more info.

Richard Begay
(Tribal Liaison, North Area)
928-871-4528, x107

Dennis Chandler
(Tribal Liaison, South Area)
928-524-2652, x114

State Conservationist Update

A message from Keisha Tatem

Greetings and Happy New Year! We have started the new year with very good news. Congress recently passed the Fiscal Year 2014 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, which funds the Federal Government through September 30 and allows us to continue operating our vital conservation services and programs across the landscape. All producers with a conservation plan are encouraged to visit their local field office before the **April 18** deadline to be considered for this year's funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). If you don't have a conservation plan, contact one of the offices listed on the last page, schedule a field visit, and our trained technical specialists will be out to assess your operation and identify resource concerns that may be eligible for the program in the future.

In addition to the passing of the budget, we are expecting a new Farm Bill any day now. Once the legislation passes, the rulemaking process will begin and stakeholders will have an opportunity to make comment on the rules



Keisha Tatem, State Conservationist, Arizona

proposed by the agency to implement the programs. We encourage all Tribal producers to share their input on NRCS programs by submitting comments themselves or by providing feedback through a stakeholder group, such as the Arizona Association of Tribal Conservation Districts (AATCD). The AATCD will be hosting their annual meeting March 18-20, 2014. I look forward to seeing you there!

West Regional Tribal Conservation Advisory Council Tours the Gila River Indian Community

By: Phillip F. Jacquez, District Conservationist, Chandler Field Office



Gary Parker (center) talking to the RTCAC about the Gila River Indian Irrigation & Drainage District and EQIP.



Irrigation lateral at G&G Farms.

The West Regional Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (RTCAC) gathered at the Wild Horse Pass Resort in Chandler, Arizona, for a two-day conference in September. The council is comprised of nine Tribal representatives from the Western states that provide consultation to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on program policy and regulations. The council also includes the Regional Conservationist, and three State Conservationists, and a representative from the American Indian Alaska Native Employee Association (AIANEAs).

During the meeting, the RTCAC members were able to break from policy discussions to see the application of conservation practices by the Gila River Indian Community. Several years ago when Gila River was organizing and planning their new irrigation water delivery system, they learned of the Chandler Field Office's success with addressing the natural resource concerns of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community. The success was due to the farmers and Tribe's interest in conservation improvements. The irrigation department and the farmers teamed up with the Local Work Group, and identified what improvements needed to be made. In turn the Tribe applied for financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). After the contracts were funded, most projects were installed within six to eight months.

Gila River has many more Tribal members interested in farming, but they have limited resources. To improve success, Gila River developed their Agriculture Improvement Program. Tribal members apply for conservation improvements, and the projects are reviewed and approved by the irrigation district board. The Community applies for EQIP, and the fields under contract are leveled and ditched by Gila River Farms construction. A benefit of the Agriculture Improvement Program is the program covers costs that cannot be covered through EQIP. The result is increased land treatment throughout the entire community. Since 2006, 19 EQIP contracts have been written on over 5,100 acres of irrigated land. Nine contracts are completed. Approximately 5 million dollars have been obligated, and 3.9 million have been paid toward completed structural and management practices. The primary resource concern for the community is inefficient water use on irrigated lands.

The council learned about the operations at the Gila River Farms from Jerry Garner, Farm Manager, and about the Tribe's irrigation and water use policies from Gary Parker, Acting Executive Director of the Gila River Indian Irrigation and Drainage District. The tour provided the council with a great example of the conservation work that can be done through proactive partnerships.

For more information on the Gila River Indian Community, please visit www.gilariver.org.

Helping the Kaibab Paiute Help the Land

By Kyle Spencer, District Conservationist, Fredonia Field Office

The homelands of the Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians are located just west of Fredonia on the Arizona/Utah border and consists of over 120,000 acres that ranges from approximately 4,600 ft to 7,000 ft in elevation. These elevation changes allow for a diverse mix of plant communities. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has worked with the Tribe for many years to address resource concerns with programs including the Conservation Technical Assistance Program (CTA) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

One major concern for the Tribe is water efficiency on their farmlands, and the lack of water distribution for livestock and wildlife. Livestock have to travel long distances to water and the wildlife (especially the mule deer herds) usage is heaviest around the reliable water sources. In addition to the water concerns, the Tribe wanted to address plant productivity and noxious weed concerns that were becoming predominant in some areas.

During 2012 and 2013, the Tribe approached NRCS about helping them address the concerns that they had. A conservation plan was updated to address issues pertaining to the range and cropland areas. EQIP funding opportunities were used to improve their irrigation efficiency on the farmland, and both, water distribution and plant productivity on the rangeland.

Working with NRCS, the Tribe decided to replace the old and worn sprinkler wheel lines with a pivot system as well as install a micro-irrigation system for the orchard area. The pivot system was installed in 2013 and has provided a reliable and efficient system for the Tribe. The farmland is also being used to supplement their cattle herd during the winter months as well as a transition pasture in the fall. For years the Tribe has not been able to properly care for the trees, and gardens within the orchard area because of an inefficient water delivery system. The new micro-irrigation system will allow the water to be applied where it is needed most.

Manuel Savala, the Tribal Chairman, emphasizes the good that the orchard provides. He said, "The orchard provides fresh produce for the Tribal people, and also helps with community relations." Nearby residents in the town of Moccasin work with the Tribal members to harvest the produce and also host food preservation classes.

The Tribal council also believes in the importance of greater livestock and wildlife distribution to reduce grazing pressures and is currently working with NRCS to install over 10 miles of pipeline, multiple drinkers, and water storage facilities. A new water harvesting catchment is also planned in an area that does not have a spring or well water. These new facilities will allow for areas that have historically been grazed all season long to rest, and will allow for a rotational grazing system to be implemented. The new water developments will also allow wildlife species greater range and grazing options.

Conservation practices like brush treatments and range seedings have also been used to increase forage productivity and to provide greater soil protection. Over the last couple of years, the Tribe has aggressively addressed the noxious and invasive weeds, mainly Scotch thistle and salt cedar. The removal of these species has increased the opportunity for the native vegetation to re-establish.

The Tribe is also working cooperatively with NRCS on a trial seeding plot using new technologies such as seed coatings to aid in germination and establishment. In addition, a variety of plant materials are used to identify the best practices and materials used on areas across the AZ Strip that are lacking perennial vegetation. NRCS and the Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians continue to work together to accomplish common goals and objectives that help the land.

For more information on the Kaibab Paiute Tribe, visit <http://www.kaibabpaiute-nsn.gov>



Manuel Savala, Chairman, Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians.



Current range conditions on the Kaibab Paiute lands.



Range reseeding on the Kaibab Paiute Lands. Indian Rice Grass (c)



Loren Crank, Soil Conservation Technician

Welcome to Arizona!

Aneth Satellite Office

In an effort to effectively provide consistent services to the Navajo Nation, the Aneth satellite office has transferred to the administration of Arizona NRCS. The office is located in the Aneth Chapter House and is a satellite office of the Shiprock Service Center. We are excited to welcome **Loren Crank**, Soil Conservation Technician, as well as **Eshyla Becenti**, Soil Conservation Aide.

New Cultural Resources Specialist

Charlie Webber was recently selected to support to our northern Arizona field offices. With a Master's degree in anthropology from Northern Arizona University, Charlie brings over 10 years of experience as an archaeologist at Grand

Canyon National Park, Flagstaff Area National Monuments, and various cultural resources management companies in Flagstaff.



Barry Hamilton, Tribal Relations Liaison

National Tribal Liaison

Barry Hamilton was recently selected Tribal Relations Liaison for the agency in Washington, D.C. His duties include providing leadership in coordinating natural resources program policy and activities to address the needs of Tribal government and American Indians, and Alaska Natives at the local level.



Charlie Webber, Cultural Resources Specialist

Get Involved

NRCS accepts applications for all programs on a continuous basis. Contact your local NRCS field office or Tribal liaison for more info.

www.az.nrcs.usda.gov



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AATCD Conference

Climate Change Adaptation Regional Tribal Workshop, March 18-20, 2014. Prescott Resort & Conference Center, Prescott, Arizona. Learn about climate change and how to address it's impacts. Sponsored by Indian Nations Conservation Alliance (INCA) and the AATCD. \$50 registration fee. For more information, please call 406-684-5199.

NRCS Local Field Office Locations

Area 1 (Northern)

Aneth - 435-651-3330
Chinle—928-674-3612
Flagstaff—928-774-2401
Fredonia—928-643-7062
Holbrook—928-524-2652
Kayenta—928-697-8482
Keams Canyon—928-738-5667
Kingman— 928-753-6183
Prescott Valley—928-774-2401
Shiprock—505-368-4260
Springerville— 928-333-4941
Saint Michaels—928-871-4528

Area 2 (Southern)

Avondale—623-535-5055
Casa Grande—520-836-1960
Chandler—480-988-1078
Douglas—520-364-2001
Parker—928-669-9826
Safford—928-428-5537
San Carlos—928-475-2692
Sells—520-383-2851
Tucson—520-292-2999
Whiteriver—928-338-3852
Willcox—520-384-2229
Yuma—928-782-0860