

NRCS Tribal Relations – *Working Effectively with Tribal Governments*

National Civil Rights Committee Meeting
August 9-11, 2005
Wichita, KS

OBJECTIVE

- Overview of Indian tribes
- Overview of Federal Trust Responsibility
- Overview of NRCS Tribal Relations
- Q&A

Why learn about Indian tribes?

1. *Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, September 23, 2004*

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/09/20040923-4.html>

2. NRCS Mission - ... *provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.*

CULTURE – Talking Points

- Indian tribes/ Native Americans
- Indian
- Not all tribes are federally recognized
- Prefer to use the individual tribe when possible (Navajo, Hopi, Blackfeet)

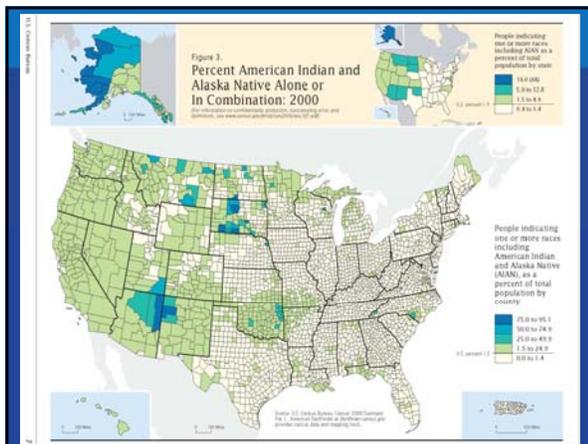
CULTURE – Talking Points

- Geographic distribution of communities makes it difficult to refer to as one “Indian community”
- Cultural ties to tribal areas is strong
- Social and Economic conditions are important to consider

CULTURE – Talking Points

- Each tribe is culturally rich and unique
- Family
- Language
- Land and its Resources
- *Mother Earth*
- *All my relations...*

Where are the Indian tribes?



INDIAN TRIBES

- Federally Recognized Indian Tribes: 562
- Total number of Reservations: 326
- Landless tribes: 56

- Alaska Natives: 225 (46M acres)

TRIBAL LAND HOLDINGS

Tribal land holdings are as follows:

- > 1,000,000 acres	21 tribes
- 500,000 – 999,999 acres	9 tribes
- 100,000 – 499,999 acres	33 tribes
- 50,000 – 99,999 acres	21 tribes
- 10,000 – 49,999 acres	43 tribes
- 1,000 – 9,999 acres	53 tribes
- 1 acre - 999 acres	102 tribes

- Landless tribes: 56

RELATIONS

- Nation-to-Nation (Tribes-to-Tribes)
- Government-to-Government (EO)
- Peace
- War
- *“All my relations...”*

What is the Federal trust responsibility to Indian tribes?

- The Federal government maintains a special trust relationship with Indian tribes pursuant to treaties, statutes, Executive Orders, judicial decisions and other legal instruments. Inherent in this relationship is an enforceable fiduciary responsibility to Indian tribes to protect their lands and resources, unless otherwise unencumbered through mutual agreement.

What is meant by a government-to-government relationship?

- The President's Executive Order requires the Federal government to recognize tribal governments as the governments of separate, sovereign nations. This relationship is unique as the Federal government does not owe any other entity, state or private, a trust responsibility.

How is NRCS meeting its responsibility?

TRIBAL RELATIONS

- Maintain Nation to Nation Relationship
- Coordinate program policy to address tribal government, American Indians, and Alaska Natives needs
- Coordinate among federal agencies
- Interact with Tribal Representatives and Tribal Colleges and Universities

TRIBAL RELATIONS

Background

- Executive Order 13175, *Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments*, November 6, 2000
- Executive Order 13270, *Tribal Colleges and Universities*, July 3, 2002

TRIBAL RELATIONS

Background

- USDA Department Regulation 1340-6, Policies on American Indians and Alaska Natives, October 16, 1992 **BEING REVISED**
- GM Title 410, Part 405 (August 2004) **REVISED**

TRIBAL RELATIONS

Accomplishments

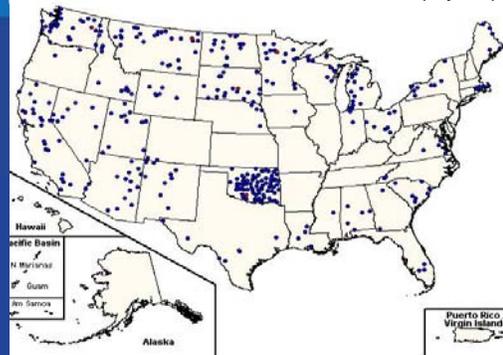
- NRCS field offices provided assistance to Indian tribes through Conservation Technical Assistance, Soil Surveys, RC&D, and cost-share programs, amounting to more than \$31 million and 245 FTE in FY 2004.

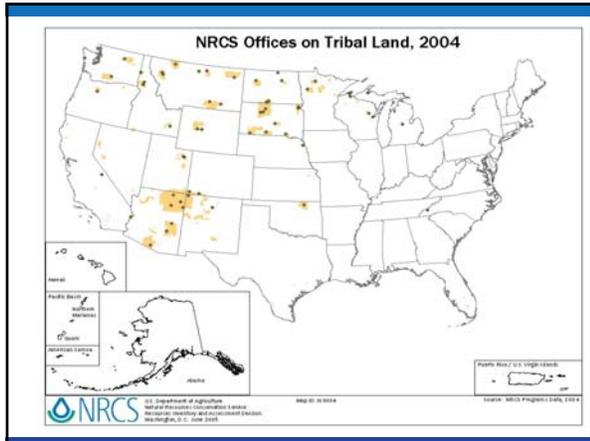
TRIBAL RELATIONS

Accomplishments

- NRCS has a total of **383** field offices servicing American Indians and Alaska Natives, with 61 full-time offices located on tribal lands.

NRCS OFFICES ASSISTING INDIAN TRIBES - TOTAL 383 (May 2005)





United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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TRIBAL RELATIONS

Accomplishments

- NRCS conducts training courses for employees in *Working Effectively With American Indians, Working Effectively with Alaska Natives, Contracting in Indian Country, and Consultation with Tribal Governments.*

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TRIBAL RELATIONS

Accomplishments

- AIAN employment was
 - 321 employees in FY 2003,
 - 327 employees of FY 2004, and
 - 329 employees in FY 2005.
 - Remains at 2.7 percent of NRCS workforce.

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CONCLUSION

“...we want to reach out to each of our customers to provide the information and help they need in the way they want to receive it. That’s the service they deserve, and the service we’re proud to provide.”

“NRCS: Conservation and Tribes.” Remarks at the American Indian/Alaska Native Employees Association for NRCS Eighth Annual Training Conference, Flathead Indian Reservation (Bruce I. Knight, Chief, NRCS) June 29, 2005 <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/news/speeches05/tribes.html>

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS