

Alaska Native News

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Greetings from the Alaska Native Liaison

Hello Everyone,

I am happy to present the first issue of Alaska Native News for USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Alaska!! I hope to reach more Tribes & Tribal entities through this newsletter.

My goal within each newsletter is to bring to you important dates, program information, highlights and examples of our projects with Native customers, and current activity with the Tribal Conservation Districts. This first issue will be a brief introduction to NRCS.

For those who do not know USDA - NRCS, we are a federal agency within the United States Department of Agriculture. NRCS is an agency that

works with the private landowner to help conserve their natural resources.

NRCS has numerous cost share programs available as directed by the Farm Bill. In Alaska, subsistence activities are viewed as agriculture when applying for the Farm Bill Programs.

NRCS also provides technical assistance as requested. We have specialists in numerous scientific fields such as, biologists, engineers, soil scientists, agronomists, and conservation planners.

We also have Tribal Conservation Districts (TCD). These TCDs help NRCS deliver our Farm Bill programs. There are four established



Fish camp near Tyonek, Alaska

TCDs in Alaska with several more demonstrating interest.

Included in this first issue is information on TCDs and their current projects, and where to find additional information about NRCS.

Current News from Tribal Conservation Districts

The four established Tribal Conservation Districts are Tyonek TCD, Kuiglugmiut (Kwethluk) TCD, Asa'carsarmiut (Mt. Village) TCD, and Nunivak Island TCD. Each TCD has their own set of priorities, goals, and missions.

Kwethluk TCD is currently working on a high tunnel (hoop house) project. Last summer they received various sizes of high tunnels as a pilot project. The goal is to determine which size of high tunnel best fits their geographical area. By doing so they will also be growing fresh vegetables for the community. This food source will add to the subsistence foods they gather.

Mt. Village TCD is developing a business plan to help develop their natural resources. Other plans included the possibility of a hardened ATV trail, marketing tundra tea products, and general natural resources awareness.

Nunivak Island TCD was established to revitalize their reindeer herd with hopes to begin mar-

keting the meat to local communities.

Tyonek TCD is looking to form additional partnership opportunities like the ones they have formed with the 16B Game Unit management area. Tyonek TCD hired a full time Natural Resources Technician and Grant Writer last year.

Most notably, last December, representatives from Alaska made an overwhelming appearance at the Indian Nations Conservation Alliance/Indian Agricultural Council Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada.

And don't forget the symposium "How to Form a Tribal Conservation District" August 24-25, 2012 in Anchorage. For more information on the symposium please contact Angela Sandstol at: angelasandstol@gmail.com



Tribal Conservation District Representatives from Alaska at the INCA/IAC Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada.

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American Indian/Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program

My name is Jane Standifer-Trenton (Dena'ina) and I serve as the American Indian/Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program Manager for NRCS Alaska. The Special Emphasis Program (SEP) was developed "to provide focus on such issues as employment, retention, promotion, training,

career development, and advancement opportunities affecting American Indian and Alaska Native employees and applicants at NRCS". It is the policy of NRCS to conduct a positive and continuing American Indian/Alaska Native SEP to provide equal employment opportunity (EEO) for Ameri-

can Indian and Alaska Natives in all personnel management policies and practices, as well as in NRCS sponsored programs and activities. (continued)

See AI/AN SEP on Page 2

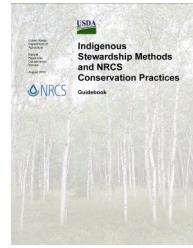
For More Information on USDA-NRCS

From time to time I send emails on important dates, meetings, or other

general information that may be useful to your tribe or corporation. Send me an email at:

kristine.harper@ak.usda.gov to be added to the list!

Indigenous Stewardship Methods and More



Knowledge, no matter where it comes from or how it is derived, is useful. In 2010, the previous Alaska Native Liaison produced a Guidebook titled, "Indigenous Stewardship Methods and NRCS Conservation Practices". This guide will help NRCS and Tribes to work on a professional level to achieve their common goal - helping the land.

The work group who wrote the guidebook consisted of Native Elders/Advisors and NRCS

employees who had many years of experience with Tribes, natural resources, and the agency.

The guidebook is available at: <http://www.ak.nrcs.usda.gov/Alaska%20Native%20Groups/AlaskaNativeGroups.html>

NRCS has a number of conservation cost share programs in addition to the technical services we provide. Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is our most popular program. Wildlife

Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is also a favorite. (WHIP is taking applications but funding has not yet been made available for Alaska this year.) There is also the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and Emergency Watershed Program (EWP). Please visit our website for a list of all programs: www.ak.nrcs.usda.gov

Don't forget about the free technical assistance we provide as well with our diverse group of specialists!

"NRCS Alaska is striving to provide the best possible assistance to Alaska Natives..."

AI/AN SEP continued from page 1

NRCS Alaska is striving to provide the best possible assistance to Alaska Natives by increasing the number of American Indian and Alaska Native NRCS employees and encouraging participation of American Indians and Alaska Natives in NRCS programs and activities. NRCS also ensures the American Indian/Alaska Native community receives equal treatment in all

aspects of employment, and promotes cultural diversity awareness in the work place.

I provide cultural information to our employees statewide and send recruitment (and college scholarship) opportunities from nationwide contacts. I also attend cultural events to provide more training to our employees, receive concerns you have with pro-

gram delivery or EEO issues and forward those to our State Conservationist, and attend job fairs in order to provide outreach and recruitment.

You can contact me directly at: (907) 373-6492 ext. 113 or via email at: jane.standifer-trenton@ak.usda.gov

What is a Tribal Conservation District?

A Tribal conservation district (TCD) is a geographical area established for conservation purposes, governed by a board of directors. The board determines the area's renewable natural resource concerns needing priority attention.

The TCD provides an organized entity to work with the

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). USDA needs the TCD's local leadership to help bring the much needed programs to Alaska Villages and Corporations.

A TCD, formed under Tribal law, serves as the focal point for a grassroots effort and the coordinating point in working with other entities in solving

concerns by building coalitions founded on common objectives. These other entities may be local, state and federal.

Please contact Kristine Harper for more information about TCDs at: kristine.harper@ak.usda.gov



Kuigglugmiut TCD and their high tunnel project that will help bring fresh produce to the area.

Alaska Tribal Conservation Alliance

The Alaska Tribal Conservation Alliance (ATCA) was established in 2011. Their purpose is to improve the conservation and sustainable development of the natural resources and improve the quality of life within Tribal Conservation Districts serving Tribal Governments, Native Corporations and other stakeholders within their districts.

During their first strategic planning meeting the following mission statement was written: "To provide education,

collaboration, outreach to the Tribal conservation districts in Alaska, to preserve and enhance the natural resources and traditional subsistence way of life." Along with the Mission the following Vision Statement was developed: "To see Alaska Tribal Conservation Districts function to promote healthy people and environments throughout Alaska."

ATCA is well on their way. To date, they have filed their articles of incorporation, secured a grant writer, held planning

meetings, and planned the "How to Form a Tribal Conservation District Symposium"

The Symposium will be August 24 & 25, 2012 in Anchorage. ATCA has scholarships to assist with travel costs.

For additional information on ATCA or the symposium please contact Angela Sandstol at: angelasandstol@gmail.com



"Healthy Land, Healthy People"

State Technical Committee Meetings

The State Technical Committee (STC) Meeting is one avenue to hear about what NRCS is doing in Alaska. Two State Technical Committee Meetings are held each year, typically in the Spring and Fall.

The purpose of the STC is to provide recommendations for establishing technical guidelines and program criteria and

priorities necessary to carry out conservation provisions of the Farm Bill. Although the STC has no implementation or enforcement authority, USDA gives strong consideration to the Committee's recommendations. The NRCS State Conservationist chairs the committee and its members are composed of individuals and groups who represent a variety of natural resources

sciences and occupations including, soil, water, air, plants, wetlands, and wildlife.

For additional information on how to become a member and view a list of current members please visit: <http://www.ak.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/StateTechComm.html>

Meeting notes are also posted at this website.



Tyonek Tribal Conservation District - Community Garden

The Native Village of Tyonek is planning a community garden for summer 2012. Individuals and families in Tyonek plan to grow flowers and vegetables for themselves and the community thanks to cooperation with the Tyonek Tribal Conservation District (TTCD), NRCS and UAF Extension Service. TTCD and the native village of Tyonek have held two community

meetings so far to discuss needs for the garden, including fencing, equipment, plot arrangement, plot sign up, an irrigation system, and a lumber gathering party for raised beds. On March 23, at the second meeting, attendees planted tomato, herb, and flower starts using materials provided by TTCD (including pots, soil, seed, shelving, and grow lights). At the end of the

day, garden coordinator Annabell Goozmer visited the school and planted vegetable starts with students. The next community garden meeting / planting party is April 18, where attendees will have the opportunity to plant vegetable starts including broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, and others, as well as the opportunity to make seed tapes for carrots.



Tyonek Tribal members planting seed starts for community garden.