

WTCAC Meeting
February 21, 2003

Session opened at 9:05 a.m. Welcome by Chairman Jean Buffalo-Reyes. Introductions of participants. See sign in sheet. (28 total participants.)

Roll Call: Red Cliff, LCO, St. Croix, Ho-Chunk, Bad River, Lac du Flambeau, Forest County Potawatowmie, Oneida, Sokaogon.

Minutes tabled by Oneida, 2nd by Bad River. Will be provided at next meeting.

Bob Batalia, State Agriculture Census. Is an USDA information agency with a FO in Madison and part time workers around the lake gathering statistics. Census is done every five years and has currently identified 77,000 farms in WI. Info is on their website. Each Native American farm is treated as an individual and listed separately with only 37 Native American producers currently ID'ed in Wisconsin. Farm defined as a place that produces \$1,000 of agriculture products. Wild rice, aqua-culture, Sugar bush, bee honey, specialty crops, cranberrys, etc. are considered agriculture activities that Tribal farmers produce.

This census information is used by private individuals for planting and planning purposes, and used by Govt. for policy and program estimates and determinations. WTCAC recommends to Ag Statistics to include Tribal Farms as a separate entity for inclusion as "invested interest" for all members of the Tribe. Current statistics does not account for the acreage of Tribal Farms or the people they serve.

Meeting temporarily halted and moved to a larger room.

Reconvened at 9:53 a.m.

Pat Leavenworth, STC briefing. Served as acting Deputy Chief for Programs in DC for 6 months. Responsible for writing rules for the new programs, and revising the rules for the older Farm Bill programs. Worked on 2003 budget. Omnibus spending bill recently passed. Expect to get our allocations by Mid-March. Handed out projected budgets for the programs. Handed out brochure of WI NRCS accomplishments. Amounts for Conservation programs fairly close to what the House had previously approved, and what was anticipated. State allocations still need to be made. Determinations as to how much Technical Assistance and Financial Assistance to be to WI. EQIP estimate is about \$12.5 dollars. Last years allocation was about \$7 million. Technical Service Providers (TSP) is a new area in the Farm Bill, and allows NRCS to pay private individuals, and Govt. Partners, for their assistance in helping NRCS deliver the programs. Need to meet certain certifications. Fedbizops.gov is where the information is currently being advertised.

EQIP Program: Tom Cogger reviewed the three proposals that were discussed at the last meeting. 1) Base percentage funding of EQIP for each Tribe, balance of funds use determined by WTCAC committee. 2) Base equal funding for each Tribe. 3) All funds administered by WTCAC. Competitive Projects only. Keep in mind these are NOT grants funds. Specific

projects need to ID'ed and \$ must be used only for that. Pat L. stated \$ are CCC funds and will have a significant amount of oversight on them. Must be used to address National priorities, have some sort of environmental competitive process, and very detailed oversight and monitoring by WTCAC. An area of new ground is LRF, whereby potential for 90% Cost Sharing would be available. Rules are becoming stricter for NRCS oversight and the Regional Conservationist may be required to be signatory for contracts over \$100,000. The STC may be required to sign all EQIP contracts with structural Cost sharing over 50%. Discussion ensued about past problems that Tribes had with EQIP. Question about how allocation is to be made to the individual Tribes and Projects. Can the Tribal Conservation Annual plans be used to establish Tribal priorities, or Departmental Plan as to needs. Jan Whitcomb, EQIP Program Manager, provided an overview of how EQIP currently works and handed out a copy of the current proposed EQIP rule. Have a State signup now for manure storage, and each project is scored and ranked, and funded until \$ is gone. Each County will be given an allocation and they have also developed ranking & scoring criteria. Counties have developed a listing of what natural resource concerns that are a priority, and have set scores to address those concerns. Jan summarized the major rule changes from the old EQIP program. Raises payment limitation to \$50,000. Eliminated the priority areas. Allows for payment to be made 1st of year of contract when practice is completed. Removed the 5 year length, contract is now valid for one year after the installation of last practice. Page 66-61 in middle of page. Regional Conservationist may be required to be signatory for contracts over \$100,000. The STC may be required to sign all EQIP contracts with structural Cost sharing over 50%. At the bottom of page it states that NRCS intends to cost share practices at no more than 50%. Page 66-62, talks about \$2.5 million limitation, the \$450,000 limitation and the Social Security number issue. Also talks about BIA official signing for the Tribes, however many WI Tribes are self-governance Tribes and the BIA has no jurisdiction. Page 66-68 talks about LRF criteria.

Participants can not have gross incomes greater than \$2.5 million. Could affect those Tribes with Casinos. Appears to be a Tribal exemption in the FSA manual saying Tribes would be not held to that, however it needs to be watched as it could change. \$450,000 payment limitation per producer (entity) also affects Tribes, as SS#'s of all Tribal members would be required to be submitted with each EQIP application. This is un-obtainable for Tribes and will effectively exclude Tribes from participating in EQIP. NCAI is meeting next week, and Tribes should address this concern immediately.

Tom Cogger reviewed the practice list currently put together. Will adopt the entire list as Jan had presented. Talked about additional practices such as organic farming, fish hatchery and dry hydrants as additional practices to add. There are more practices on list that need new standard developed, maximum cost share limits established, and what the cost share will be. All EQIP funds have to be obligated in contracts by September 30th, otherwise the money is lost. Structural practice standards can be addressed to John Ramsden and Management related practices would be addressed to Pat Murphy.

Tony Bush handed out a spreadsheet summary of the Tribal Conservation Plans of Operations and the resulting budget needs. It identified each Tribes needs in relation to Staff, support costs, and conservation/environmental projects and practices needed in the Tribal Communities. These

Conservation Plans and Budget items help the various USDA agencies identify where they may be able to provide assistance through the programs they have available.

Vic Price, Area Resource Conservationist, handed out materials about the WHIP program and explained the need to identify Tribal wildlife habitat practices that might be unique to Tribes and could be added to the WHIP program. Many good suggestions were given as to Tribal needs.

Discussion ensued about the new provisions in the EQIP Final Rule. Two resolutions were drafted concerning cost share rates and Tribal social security numbers. Resolution #02-21-03-1 motion to approve by Ho-Chunk, 2nd by Oneida. Resolution #02-21-03-2 motion to approve by Bad River, 2nd by Ho-Chunk. Both approve unanimously.

Motion to adjourn by Ho-Chunk, 2nd by Forest County Potawatomie. Adjourned at 2:40 pm.