

Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council



*A report on
protecting and
restoring natural
resources on
Tribal lands in
Wisconsin*

Stewardship for the Future

Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council

A Voice for Conservation on Tribal Lands

The Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WTCAC), formed in 2001, provides a forum for the 11 Native American Tribes in Wisconsin to identify and solve natural resource issues on tribal lands. The Council gives a strong voice to tribes on conservation issues at the state and national level.

Funding for Conservation Work

Through a strong partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Council reviews and recommends proposals for conservation projects from tribes. Tribal Conservation Advisory Councils were authorized in the 1995 Farm Bill as advisory bodies to NRCS and all of USDA on tribal issues. For tribal resource issues, WTCAC serves as the equivalent to the Wisconsin State Technical Committee. Wisconsin's was the first such council formed in the country.

Some of the roles of the WTCAC are:

- to advise USDA and NRCS on better ways to meet tribal needs
- to identify natural resource issues affecting tribal lands or ways of life
- to communicate tribal conservation needs to legislators
- to provide input on pending conservation legislation and policy

Members of the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council

Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa

Forest County Potawatomi Community

Ho-Chunk Nation

Lac Courte Oreilles Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa

Lac du Flambeau Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa

Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin

Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin

Red Cliff Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa

Sokaogon Mole Lake Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa

St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin

Stockbridge-Munsee Community



Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council USDA Honor Award



Left to Right: Secretary Tom Vilsack, Pat Pelky - Oneida Nation, Jonathan Pyatskowit - President WTCAC, Tom Krapf - NRCS Wisconsin, Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan

Photo taken August 2010

The Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WTCAC), received the USDA Secretary's Honor Award in 2010. The 11-member tribal organization was recognized for exemplary service and achievement during the 62nd annual Honor Awards ceremony in Washington, DC, in August, 2010. Former Council President Jonathan Pyatskowit, of the Menominee Nation, accepted the award from Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, on the council's behalf.

The Secretary's Annual Honor Awards are USDA's most prestigious awards. The Honor Awards recognize USDA employees at all grade levels and private citizens who have made outstanding contributions supporting USDA's mission.

Since 2001, the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WTCAC) and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Wisconsin have worked together to adapt Farm Bill programs and conservation practices to meet the needs of tribal lands. Our collaboration with WTCAC has helped us develop three key strategies to meet our agency's Trust responsibilities:



⌘ NRCS has assigned conservation planners to work with each tribe; and NRCS managers, engineering staff and others have specific responsibilities to make conservation programs work on tribal lands.

⌘ NRCS allows flexibility in standards and policies when appropriate. Every year, NRCS meets with WTCAC to consider and act on requested program adaptations. In 2012, WTCAC worked closely with NRCS to establish a Regional List of Practices and Payment Schedules for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). In consultation with WTCAC, we retained practices of particular importance to the Tribes. For example, Wild Rice Plantings and Walleye Aquaculture Ponds. In 2011, the Lac du Flambeau Band worked with NRCS to improve the process for tribal applications for our Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). They are now successfully implementing a CSP conservation plan on 28,449 acres of tribal land in Northeastern Wisconsin.

⌘ NRCS devotes a portion of financial assistance dollars specifically to meet conservation needs on tribal lands. In FY 2013, the WI NRCS committed to a record \$500,000 in EQIP tribal set aside funds.

As the new Wisconsin State Conservationist, I look forward to broadening our partnership with WTCAC. Wisconsin has created a model for how USDA programs can work on tribal lands. Through outreach efforts to other states, NRCS and WTCAC have planted the seeds for successful Tribal Conservation Advisory Councils across the country.

Looking forward, we are confident we will see further growth for WTCAC and NRCS:

- Tribal participation in USDA programs will grow with the new Farm Bill.
- WTCAC Tribal Student Internship will help launch the next generation of conservation professionals.
- We will strengthen our relationship with the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers to protect cultural resources.
- WTCAC's representation on the Regional Tribal Conservation Advisory Council, USDA Task Forces, and their meetings with USDA leadership will yield continued positive results.

We are proud of the important avenue WTCAC now offers to other USDA agencies, APHIS, FSA, USFS, NASS, and Rural Development, to make their programs meaningful on tribal lands.

NRCS is grateful for the patience and good will shown by the Tribes and the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council as we continue to meet our Trust responsibilities. This strong partnership becomes possible among those who truly understand the land.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jimmy Bramblett". The signature is fluid and cursive.

State Conservationist
Wisconsin



A Voice for the Future of Wisconsin Tribes

The Wisconsin Tribes are stewards of over 650,000 acres of vast natural resources, including forestland, wetlands, streams and lakes. Their focus is to protect pristine areas, restore degraded natural resources, and help build strong communities.

Since the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WTCAC) was formed, tribal participation in USDA conservation programs projects has multiplied. Projects range from simple well closures to protect groundwater, to broad campaigns that combat invasive plant and aquatic species, to constructed practices that sustain native food sources. Two of NRCS's programs, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) are highlighted in this report.

In order to meet Tribal needs WTCAC has worked with NRCS to develop new technical standards, such as Wild Rice Seeding, Tree Drops for Fish Habitat and Aquaculture Facilities. WTCAC has worked with NRCS to modify existing technical standards such as Pest Management for Aquatic Invasive Species and Hoop Houses for Community Gardens to better fit Tribal needs and environmental issues.

Other Major WTCAC Initiatives:

WTCAC has strengthened partnerships with many of the other USDA Agencies, including Farm Service Agency (FSA), Rural Development (RD), the Forest Service (FS) and Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). In addition to USDA partners, WTCAC has also established a strong working relationship with the Environmental Protection Agency.

With grant funds from the USDA Office of Advocacy and Outreach, WTCAC developed a training program to teach federal and state recognized tribes how to organize Tribal Conservation Advisory Councils (TCAC's) and work with USDA Agencies. Over the last three years, WTCAC has coordinated these Outreach efforts with the Indian Nations Conservation Alliance (INCA) and the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) providing USDA program training to tribes in 25 states across the nation.

In 2009, WTCAC established the Native American Student Summer Internship Program for students pursuing degrees in Natural Resources, Biological Sciences, Agriculture, Agricultural Business, Forestry, Civil Engineering and Animal Health and Husbandry.

This program exposes students to potential career opportunities within USDA, with the hope that someday they will become employees of USDA who will work with the farmers, ranchers and communities of our country's 566 Tribal Nations. It is WTCAC's belief that for USDA to have fully successful programs on Tribal Nations, USDA needs to have Tribal employees working on those Tribal Nations, who understand the customs, beliefs, and needs of the people.

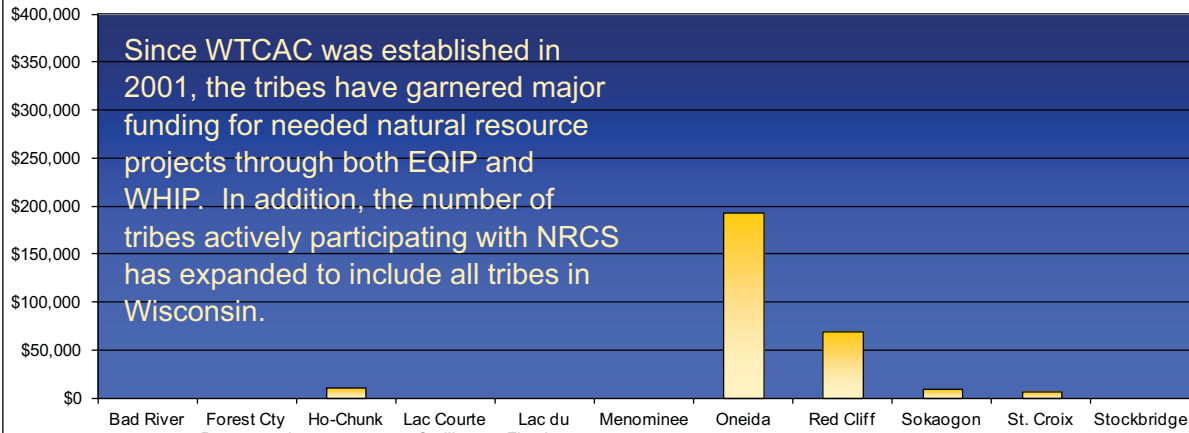
Every year the Internship program continues to grow, and in 2013 14 internship positions were identified in Wisconsin and Michigan with several agencies that include NRCS, FS, and APHIS.

This program has been accepted into the USDA Pathways Student Employment Opportunities (SEOs) USDA Third Party Contractors (Internship) Program. Student work performed under this WTCAC Third Party Contractors (Internship) program will count towards Federal work experience conversion in upon acceptance into a Pathways internship. The WTCAC Internship Program is the only one of its kind in the nation for Native American students.

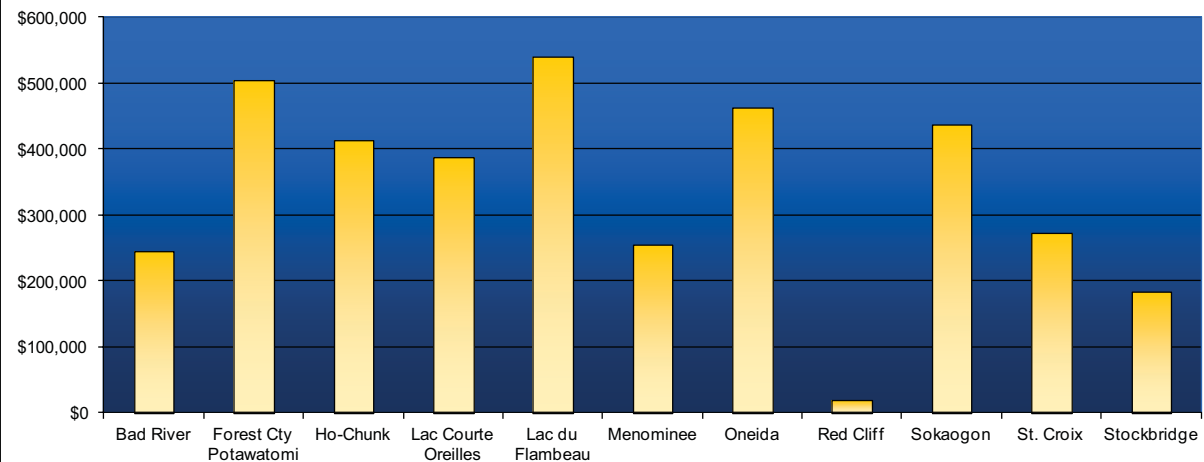


For more information on WTCAC Strategic Plan, By-laws, training opportunities and Student Internship Program www.WTCAC.org

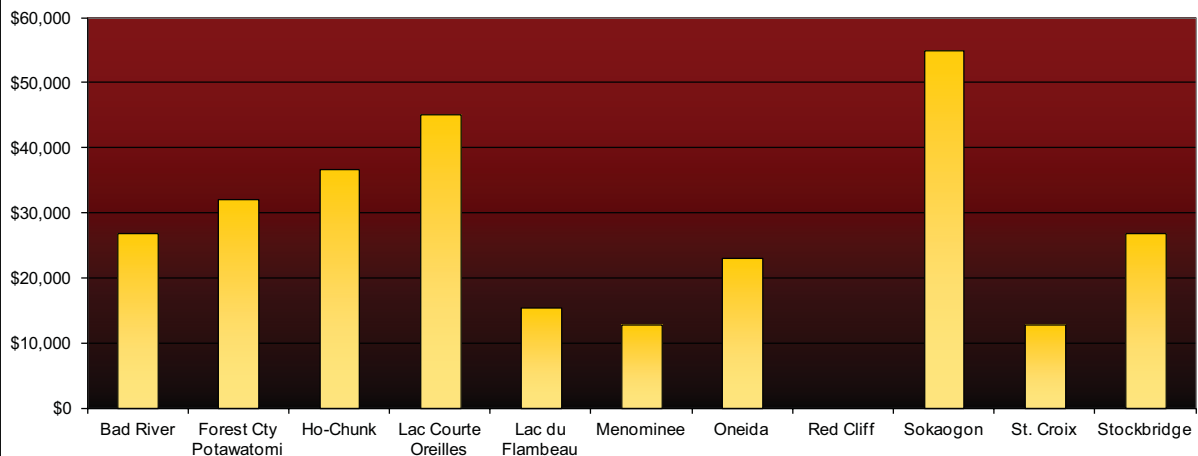
Tribal EQIP Dollars through 1995 Farm Bill 1996-2000 (Pre-WTCAC)



Tribal EQIP Dollars 2001-2012 (with WTCAC)



Tribal WHIP Contracts 2003-2012



Lake Superior Chippewa

Bad River Band



Ed Wiggins works with Limnological Research staff to collect wild rice density data.



Dan Wiggins Jr. puts finishing touches on the split rail fence at Waverly Beach

Improving Wildlife Habitat through Wild Rice Monitoring

Through WTCAC special project funding, the Bad River Natural Resources Department (BRNRD) was able to: collect wild rice density count data; develop wild rice harvester surveys and interview harvesters upon their return to landings. In cooperation with the University of Minnesota's Limnological Research Center, the department sampled and analyzed sediment cores for phytoliths to better understand the historic range of wild rice at selected sites within the Reservation. Collecting this data helps the BRNRD to discover trends between wild rice bed health and abundance and other monitoring parameters, including disease, wild rice worms, and wildlife abundance. Overall, this project helped enhance data collection efforts that will allow us to better understand wild rice ecosystem dynamics.

Waverly Beach Access

Waverly Beach is an important place on the Bad River Reservation. Not only does it have an important cultural significance but it is also a popular community gathering location that lacked a safe and reliable access to the beach. With the assistance of NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), BRNRD, Bad River Tribal Roads Department, the Association of American Indian Physicians, and community members we were able to install an access trail and stabilize the eroding hill side at Waverly Beach.

Evan Rosin, Shane Cadotte, and Ben Connors help roll out the geotextile base of the trail.



Lake Superior Chippewa

Wood Duck Box Installation

Using EQIP funds, wood duck nesting boxes were installed on inland ponds on tribal lands throughout the Bad River Reservation. These nesting boxes were installed to improve wood duck nesting habitat throughout the reservation.

Bat House Project

As a pilot year, bat houses were installed using EQIP funds on the Bad River Reservation. They were installed near the Bad River hatchery, Bad River hatchery ponds, the Bad River boat landing, and in New Odanah. These bat houses will not only provide areas for bats to raise their young throughout the summer months but will also serve as valuable educational tools throughout the community.

Beaver Dam Removal

In the summer of 2012, eleven beaver dams along an intermittent stream were removed using EQIP funds for a restoration project on the Bad River Reservation. In the summers of '11 and '12, WTCAC interns (who are also Bad River tribal members) assisted the Bad River Natural Resources Department with beaver dam removal projects. These beaver dams needed to be removed in order to stop the erosion of a bank on a capped landfill thereby minimizing the risk of pollution and contamination to the area.



Ed and Dan Wiggins installing a wood duck nesting box. Box was installed just in time to be put to use this past spring!



Bat houses located at Bad River boat landing.



Austin Mika, WTCAC intern, assisting with beaver dam removal

Bad River Band

Forest County Potawatomi Community

The Big Garden Adds a New “hoop house”



With EQIP assistance, the Forest County Potawatomi Community (FCPC) Language and Culture Department, together with the FCPC Natural Resources and other departments, has recently completed construction of a 72-foot hoop house at a farm property known as “Kche Kde Gan” (The Big Garden). Hoop houses are small, semi-portable structures that can be used as greenhouses for starting seedlings and for growing heat-loving vegetables. A hoop house provides frost protection, limited insect protection, and growing season extension. This hoop house is part of an ongoing community garden project with the original motto “Start small and grow” and the goals of involving the community, extending organic food supplies for the community, educating the community on gardening for a healthier life, and promoting sustainability.



Members of the FCPC Natural Resources Department securing the hoop house cover at Kche Kde Gan.

Previously at the farm, FCPC has grown community gardens containing native heirloom squashes, tomatoes, beans, potatoes and cabbage, reflecting a neo-traditional horticulture pattern of the reservation period. Special care is taken to ensure no cross-pollination of the squashes, in order to maintain their traditional genetic identity.

In addition to the hoop house, the property also has an extensive apple orchard. Not too far from the farm, the Language and Culture Department maintains a sugarbush for maple syrup. As with the maple syrup that they produce, produce from the community garden is presented to Tribal elders at a community celebration. The Tribe also plans to use the garden in an apprenticeship program, where Tribal youth will work alongside Tribal elders to tend to the garden. We believe the location of the garden will embrace the connection of Potawatomi teachings to the land and that the environment will help promote actions that reinforce these teachings. The construction of the hoop house is a great step toward continuing to develop our gardening practices, growing our traditional foods, and promoting a healthy and self-sufficient community.

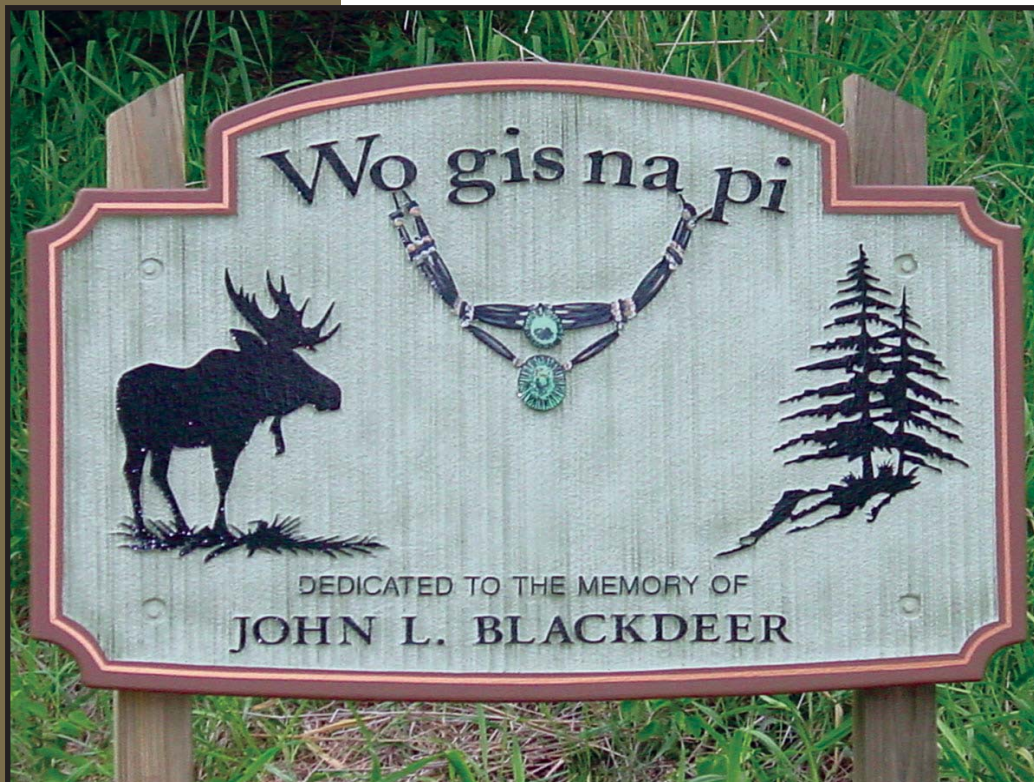
*“Start
small
and
grow”*

Photos courtesy of the
Forest County Potawatomi
Community



Forest County Potawatomi
Community

Ho-Chunk Nation



Wo gis na pi Habitat Restoration Project

The 450 - acre Wo gis na pi property located in Monroe and LaCrosse Counties of Wisconsin was assessed in 2001 for resource concerns that could be addressed by USDA - NRCS programs. The assessment identified several opportunities for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) practices to be implemented to conserve soil and benefit water quality and wildlife resources. In 2002, the Nation began installing 9,600 feet of grassed waterways to prevent gully erosion in areas used for agriculture.



Prescribed burn to top-kill woody vegetation and promote the growth of warm season grasses in the wetland buffer area.

Habitat restoration projects began in 2004 with the restoration and enhancement of approximately 12 acres of wetland habitat and the establishment of 17 acres of mesic prairie wetland buffer. In 2007, the Nation implemented a project to create a stream buffer along the tributary that traverses the property and flows into Fish Creek, a Class II trout water. The project mechanically removed unwanted woody canopy vegetation to allow for sunlight penetration and development of a dense herbaceous layer of grasses and sedges. The herbaceous layer is better suited to intercept surface water runoff and allow for infiltration. The mechanical treatments are now being followed by other management practices to control invasive species and promote native vegetation. The Nation periodically uses prescribed fire and chemical spot treatments with selective herbicide to meet management objectives.

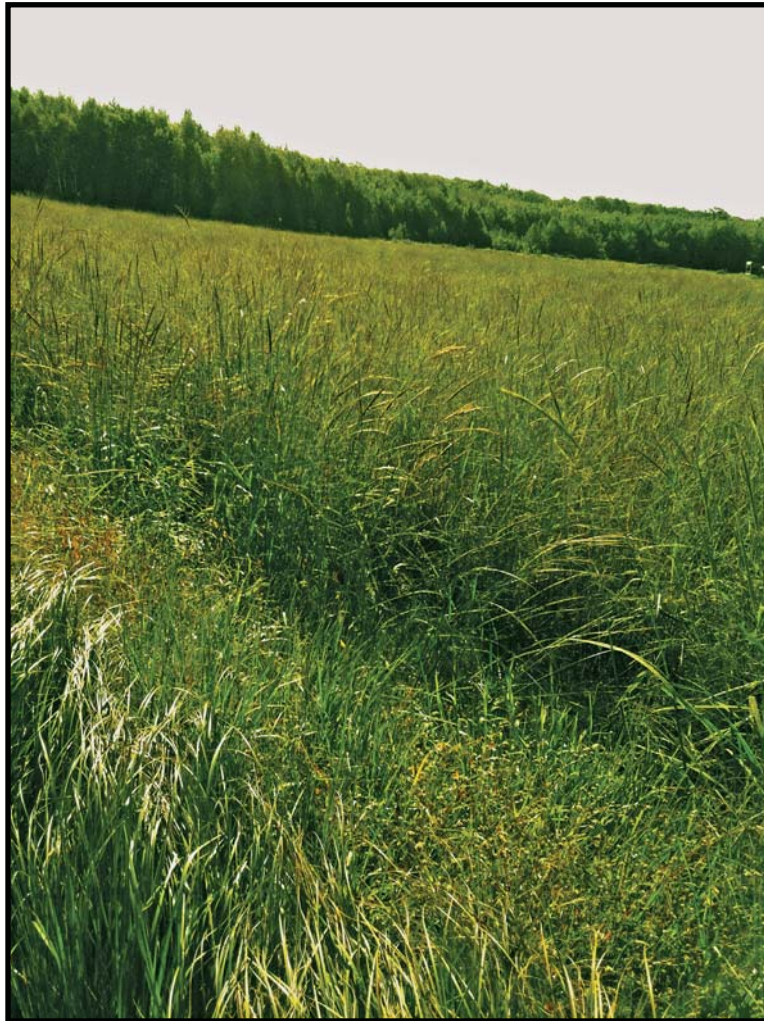


Ho Chunk Nation fire crew taking a break between units.

Ho-Chunk Nation



Lac Courte Oreilles Band



Lush stands of re-seeded Wild Rice

Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation

The Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe has completed many projects over the years utilizing funds from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program administered by NRCS.

Using NRCS funds, historical areas of wild rice continue to be re-planted with native wild rice. This has resulted in over 50 acres of new wild rice beds on the LCO Reservation.

Lake Superior Chippewa

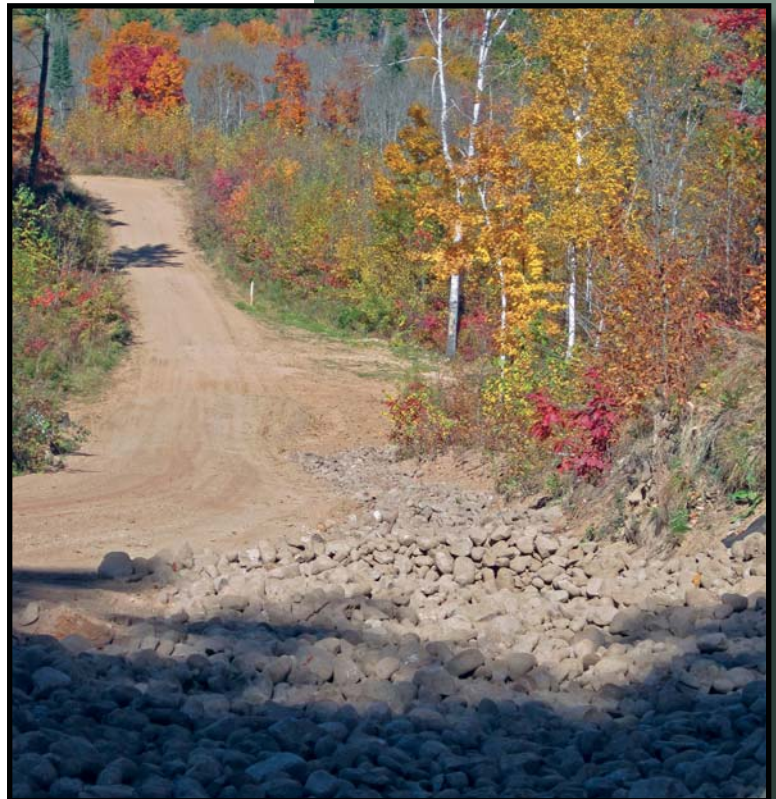


Erosion on a steep slope on the LCO reservation

Other successful projects completed include:

- timber stand improvement
- wild rice re-seeding
- tree planting/pruning
- aquatic organism passage
- obstruction removal

In 2012, the LCO Conservation Department and NRCS engineers completed two large projects in the Summit Creek Watershed. Over 600 cubic yards of large rock and crushed stone were used to create a lined waterway on a steep slope; and construct a stream crossing along a tribal forest access road.



Lined waterway erosion control practice

Lac Courte Oreilles Band

Lac du Flambeau Band



Conservation Stewardship Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program Enhances Wildlife Habitat

The Lac du Flambeau Tribe places a high priority on the management of the wildlife resources on the reservation. Through the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contract, the Tribal Forestry Department initiated a Forestry Stand Improvement for Wildlife project. This project entailed designating den trees and snags as reserve trees within an active timber sale. Salvage of dead trees, small diameter woody stems, or other woody debris as biomass was not permitted. This created a stand structure that benefits wildlife versus a “clean” timber sale area. We selected this area as surrounding lands had been previously harvested with few snags or den trees remaining. A concurrent project is the placement of ten nesting boxes on the reservation.

Lake Superior Chippewa

With funding through EQIP, Lac du Flambeau has constructed and placed over 50 nesting boxes in the last five years with assistance from NRCS. Following the timber sales we widen, grade, and replant miles of timber sale forest trails with grasses and clover to benefit wildlife.



Crop Tree Release before harvest



Crop Tree Release after harvest

Lac du Flambeau Band

Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin



Stream Crossing

The Menominee Reservation has over 300 miles of streams within the exterior boundaries. Great care is taken to protect the waters of the reservation whenever possible from human impacts. The project site was a small stream crossing that was necessary to keep the trail users from having to use the shoulder of the state highway to get around the crossing. Using NRCS EQIP practices, the Tribe was able to engineer an instream crossing point on a small creek. The crossing has drastically reduced the amount of sedimentation while protecting the stream banks from erosion. The design also provided protection to the stream bottom while allowing for the natural movement of fish and other aquatic species.

Lake Access

The Menominee Reservation has over 50 lakes that are used by tribal members for fishing. Fish remain an important food source for tribal members on the reservation. Most of these lakes have unimproved landings that were a significant source of sedimentation at the landing site. The result was rutted landings that were very shallow. Lake access points ensure that tribal members can access the lakes for fishing harvest while reducing the sedimentation and maintaining safety.



Crowell Lake boat landing



Hazel Lake boat landing

Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin

Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin



Coyote Run Wetland Restoration Project

The headwater wetlands of the South Branch of the Suamico River were degraded by decades of farming, nutrient rich runoff, and sedimentation. Restoration of these wetlands provides much needed breeding and staging habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds. A diversity of habitats including hardwood swamp, marsh, sedge meadow, and tall grass prairie are represented within the project area.

The restored wetland filters sediment and runoff from a 2,000-acre agricultural watershed prior to releasing it into the South Branch of the Suamico River. Conservation practices include grassed waterways, buffer strips, and access road construction. NRCS engineering criteria were used for the design of earthen berms and properly sizing the hydraulic capacity of culverts and spillway structures, which are critical for controlling water levels.

Project construction took place during the fall of 2006 and summer of 2007. Over 65,000 cubic yards of soil was used to build berms, basins, and spillways and 5,000 cubic yards of stone were placed.

Sixty acres were planted with native seed mixes and 3,000 aquatic plants were hand planted. Over 6,000 tamarack, white pine, swamp white oak, and northern white cedar tree seedlings were planted in 2008.

Monitoring and Observations: Monitoring for invasive plant species occurs annually focusing on common reed grass, reed canary grass and purple loosestrife. Over 50 colonies of common reed grass and 900 clones of reed canary grass have been treated with herbicide. Hand pulling purple loosestrife prevents it from becoming established.

Amphibian surveys have been ongoing since 2008. The most notable observation has been the establishment and expansion of a population of spring peepers (*Pseudacris crucifer*). There were no indications of spring peepers at the site in 2008. In 2009 the call of a lone spring peeper was noted. As of the 2011 monitoring season they can be heard in full chorus in numbers too plentiful to pick out individuals. Wood frog, leopard frog, and gray tree frog populations also appear to be expanding.

Many shorebirds, tundra swans, bald eagles, American white pelicans and numerous species of waterfowl are routinely observed using the site. A nesting pole was erected in 2010 to encourage eagle or osprey to breed here. In the spring of 2012, an endangered whooping crane utilized this restored wetland for several weeks. The presence of this whooping crane is emblematic of the quality of this restored wetland habitat.

Ongoing Efforts: The fall of 2011 marked the beginning of a three year project to establish Manoomin (wild rice). A single Manoomin plant was discovered growing there in the summer of 2010. It is thought that a seed hitch-hiked a ride with migrating waterfowl. During the 2011 growing season, 17 individual rice plants were counted. This productivity has increased our hope for success. Our goal is to establish a 10-acre self-sustaining population of Manoomin by 2014.

The tall grass prairie is scheduled to be burned in the spring of 2013. The use of fire as a management tool should help reduce the need for herbicide by promoting native prairie vegetation adapted to periodic burns.

Establishment of Bergamot within the native prairie and along the trail system within the project site offer community members a place to gather this culturally significant plant. Known in Oneida as Number 6, this plant is used medicinally to treat and prevent colds and flu.

2013 will see the start of a large scale stream restoration project directly downstream from the wetland. The goal is to restore floodplain wetlands and spawning habitat for northern pike. Pike and other culturally important fish species will prosper from the improved habitat and provide additional opportunities for tribal members to utilize their natural resources. The establishment of this headwater wetland will improve water quality, moderate and sustain flows on the river system. These are key functions of a wetland, critical to the success of the stream project.



Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin

Red Cliff Band



Restoring Passage for Brook Trout

In 2012, the Red Cliff Natural Resources Division received EQIP funding to address resource concerns limiting fish populations on two tribal streams. Though relatively small in size, Chicago Creek and Red Cliff Creek are important stream bodies to the Tribe. Both watersheds are entirely within the exterior boundaries of the reservation, they both flow directly through the center of the tribal community, and both impact the overall water quality of the reservation shoreline as tributaries to Lake Superior.

A perched culvert on Chicago Creek was isolating resident brook trout populations on what is otherwise considered a healthy trout stream. With an estimated cost of over \$400,000, replacing the culvert entirely was not a feasible option. Instead Natural Resource staff worked with NRCS to

Lake Superior Chippewa

design a series of three small drop pools on the downstream side of the culvert that raises the water level back into the culvert, allowing brook trout to again pass upstream freely.

Natural resource concerns on Red Cliff Creek were more complex. The stream suffered from warm water temperatures and excessive amounts of fine sediments in the system. Over twenty beaver dams within a two mile stretch of stream exacerbated these issues. The dams slowed and pooled the flow, causing warmer water temperatures and additional sediment accumulation. Spawning substrates were buried and upstream fish passage from Lake Superior was extremely limited. To improve stream health, the beaver dams were removed and a control program was implemented. In addition, a 40 foot section of actively eroding stream bank was corrected by using large woody debris and brush bundles to add stability to the site.



Beaver dam on Red Cliff Creek before removal.



Same site on Red Cliff Creek after beaver dam removal.

Red Cliff Band

Lake Superior Chippewa

Sokaogon Mole Lake Band



Construction beginning on the Mole Lake aquaculture facility



Construction of the outlet structure for the facility

Construction of Sokaogon Aquaculture Facility Begins

A 20+ year dream for the Sokaogon is coming to fruition. With funding from EQIP, NRCS partnered with the Sokaogon Mole Lake Band to begin the construction of an aquaculture facility. Funding was also received from BIA Fish Hatchery Maintenance, Sokaogon Finance and BHP Billiton Trust Fund for the Sokaogon People. The Sokaogon People have always done the best they could with their very small aquaculture facility that was in an old cement garage (Kramer Lane). They would collect spawn and rear the eggs to eventually restock fry to area lakes where they harvest walleye annually.

Lake Superior Chippewa

On October 16, 2012, construction of the new Sokaogon Chippewa Aquaculture Facility began with a blessing from our local elder, Fred Ackley Jr.

Construction began with the clearing for four 0.6 acre rearing ponds, a seepage-drainage pond and the concrete outlet structures of each pond. All of the excavated material from the seepage-drainage pond was reused to build the berms of the rearing ponds.

In the spring of 2013, construction will resume with completion of earthen pond construction and installation of a high capacity well, pond plumbing system, roads and rubber pond liners. Future plans include the construction of several storage buildings and an egg incubation facility to replace the current facility located on Kramer Lane.

In May of 2013, newly hatched walleye fry will be stocked into the ponds for grow-out to different sizes. The ponds will be drained in late-fall with walleye growth of 6 to 7 inches expected. Each pond will have the potential to produce approximately 40,000 summer fingerling walleye (1-2 inches) and 10,000 fall fingerling walleye (6 to 9 inches) in the same year. The Tribe will be able to stock an additional 6 to 8 lakes per year - per pond with this production.

In the future, Tribal Members, school classes, and others will be encouraged to visit the aquaculture facility for tours and educational opportunities. Education will focus on the structure and function of local environments, with an emphasis on culturally important species such as walleye and nearby wild rice. Eventually, the complex will include a classroom-laboratory and walking trails through the local wetlands and grasslands for educational purposes.

Walleye rearing ponds will help provide a healthy, sustainable fishery in the Mole Lake area. Pictured here a large female walleye to be spawned out for collection, then released.



Sokaogon Mole Lake Band

St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin

Restoration Efforts

Through a Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) project, NRCS partnered with the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin to restore grassland and pine barrens habitat which will benefit wild lupine, a favorite food source of the endangered Karner Blue Butterfly. This project also aims to reduce the density and distribution of spotted knapweed, an invasive plant, on tribal lands.

Approximately 12 acres of former grassland/pine barrens is being restored after years of fire absence led to a dense oak - aspen - pine habitat, crowding out valuable herbaceous species. This project is located in central Burnett County on tribal lands.

Management practices on the project site include: fall and spring prescribed burns, wetland scrapes, ditch plugs, brush management, and frost seeding native grass and forb species. Project partners in addition to the NRCS include the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Along with the management practices described above, biological control in the form of root and bud weevils have been introduced.



Prescribed burns are utilized in restoration efforts.



After five years of restoration efforts a majority of the property has returned to native grasses (little and big bluestem) and forbs (butterfly milkweed, bergamot, and cream indigo). Wild lupine returned to the site in 2009 and has continued to expand through 2012. Blueberries are also being managed on the site. A combination of opening the canopy and prescribed burning has led to an expansion of the blueberry plants and resulted in a yield the past two summers. It is hoped continued management for blueberries on the property will increase gathering opportunities for tribal members.

In 2012, the St. Croix Chippewa also received funding from an WTCAC EQIP Aquaculture Initiative to construct drainable walleye ponds to mitigate resource concerns on outdated walleye rearing ponds. The new ponds will allow the St. Croix Tribal Natural Resources Department to produce walleye fingerlings for stocking to lakes in Northwest Wisconsin.

St. Croix has also worked on or is currently working on projects involving shoreline protection, wild rice reseeding, access road construction, wood duck boxes, and well abandonment with the cooperation of the USDA-NRCS.



A close up of a lupine on our Cty Hwy. X site that we have been managing for Jackpine savannah using EQIP funds.



Walleye ponds built in 2012



Karner blue butterfly

St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin

Stockbridge-Munsee Community



Restored wetland



Wetland Restoration

The Stockbridge-Munsee Community completed the restoration of a previously tiled 40-acre farm field in 2011. The completed wetland represents a lot of hard work by the Tribe, NRCS, and Shawano County Highway Department, who worked together to successfully complete the construction of wetlands despite some engineering challenges. The uplands surrounding the wetland restoration site were planted with native warm season grasses with EQIP funding utilizing a new no-till drill, which was purchased in partnership with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The completed restoration site will provide wetland and native grassland habitat for some of the Tribe's most treasured natural assets.



Before



After

Improving Stream Flow

The Stockbridge-Munsee Community completed the removal of an obstruction and a logging road from a small creek through the NRCS EQIP. The removal of the obstruction and logging road will allow for the natural movement of water, small fish, and invertebrates. The Tribe, Stockbridge-Munsee Community Roads crew, and NRCS worked together to complete the obstruction removal.

Stockbridge-Munsee Community

US FOREST SERVICE

The US Forest Service (USFS) recognizes and values the unique relationship the agency has with American Indian Tribes of Wisconsin. The USFS works cooperatively with Tribes to redeem our trust responsibility and protect American Indian rights as they pertain to Forest Service program, projects and policies.

The Eastern Region of the National Forest System (Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest), the Northern Research Station and Forest Products Laboratory, and Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry provide technical and financial assistance, affirm and protect rights of treaty lands, and work together with American Indians for mutual benefit of forests and natural resources across the state.

College of the Menominee Nation

The US Forest Service's Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) is one of four Forest Service units working with the College of Menominee Nation. Since 2003, the Forest Service's Northern Research Station, Eastern Region of the National Forest System, and Northeast Area State and Private Forestry, along with FPL, have been working collaboratively on a variety of projects highlighting the Tribe's sustainable forest management practices. Partnership work continues to focus on education, research, technical assistance, and indigenous wisdom for sustainable forestry and sustainable forest products. The Menominee Forest has been managed in a sustainable manner for more than 100 years. Recently, the College of Menominee Nation, the Northern Research Station, and regional university partners successfully competed to become the Northeast Climate Science Center. In its first year of funding, the consortium received \$1.5 million.

From Forest to Final Four: Native American sustainable forest supplies wood for NCAA "Court of Champions."

When it comes to the NCAA Men's Basketball Final Four, all eyes are usually set on the athletes. In 2012, the court itself received special notice. This 'Court of Champions' came from the Menominee Forest and Menominee Tribal Enterprises in rural northeast Wisconsin, in cooperation with the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison. The Menominee Nation manages about 235,000 acres of forestland on its reservation north of Shawano, producing about 20 million board feet of lumber annually from 14 species of wood. The toughness of the court's maple wood possesses physical properties only outdone, perhaps, by the athleticism it supports. The wood is very strong and does not splinter or sliver, not to mention it is inherently beautiful. About 225 panels make up a regulation-size court, typically costing \$100,000 or more.

Battling Oak Wilt on Menominee Tribal lands

The Menominee tribal lands are home to impressive high quality hardwood stands containing large diameter oak. These phenomenal oak are at risk of being destroyed by the deadly oak wilt disease. Oak wilt is a non-native disease that spreads to adjacent oak trees through connected roots, leading to expanding "pockets" of diseased trees in a stand. The traditional method to control oak wilt is to cut the root grafts using a vibratory plow. Unfortunately, this technology does not work on the glacial till soils of the Menominee lands,



Menominee Tribal Enterprises produces the maple flooring for the 2012 'Court of Champions' of the Final Four.



Oak wilt is a devastating disease of oak in Wisconsin. New methods are protecting the oaks on the Menominee Indian Reservation from this disease.

because big boulders cause skips and breaks in the plow line. With the assistance of the US Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry's Forest Health Protection program, the Menominee Tribal Enterprises are using a new method of breaking the connected roots by "popping" out stumps with a backhoe. This is the first large scale test of this method in the nation. Ongoing evaluations indicate that this is a cost effective way of protecting this valuable and important oak resource. The Forest Health Protection program provides financial and technical assistance to Tribes to control or lessen the damage from forest insects and diseases.

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest Host WTCAC Student Interns

Two WTCAC interns of the Bad River and the Red Cliff Bands of the Lake Superior Chippewa were stationed at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center in Ashland. They developed and gave creative teaching programs highlighting Ojibwa culture and language. One intern taught the techniques, history, and cultural significance of Manoomin (wild rice) including making your own equipment. The other intern interpreted the "Words of Birds" through an Ojibwa bird BINGO game. As a part of their responsibilities, the interns inventoried all the trees and vegetation on the visitor center property using I-Tree, a USFS analysis tool designed to assess and manage community forests, and to link urban forest management activities with environmental quality.

Birch Bark Supply Concerns Addressed through Forest Inventory

Paper birch has furnished American Indians in the Northeast with the material for transportation, storage, and many other uses. This year, Northern Research Station Forest Inventory and Analysis staff analyzed the trend of the paper birch resource in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, especially in areas ceded by the treaties of 1836, 1837, 1842 and 1854. They found dramatic declines in paper birch throughout the region, including harvestable paper birch bark supplies. The guidelines for inventorying suitable bark were developed jointly with tribal members and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission. This finding provides a scientific basis for management efforts to sustain this important species.



Creating a sustainable supply of birch bark through better inventorying and management.

Photo: David Lee, Bugwood.org

FARM SERVICE AGENCY

The Rhinelander Farm Service Agency (FSA) office, serving Oneida, Florence, Forest and Vilas Counties, collaborated with Mike Preul from Sokaogon Chippewa Community regarding eligibility of Lake Wild Rice for FSA's Non-Insured Assistance Program (NAP). NAP provides catastrophic coverage (CAT) over 50% on eligible non-insurable crops at a price of \$250 per crop, per county, not to exceed \$750 per county.

There were various issues that FSA faced as they worked with Preul on the potential NAP eligibility for wild rice.

An eligibility requirement for wild rice requires that the lake included in the policy be in reservation boundaries and managed entirely by the Tribe. Rice Lake, located in the Sokaogon Chippewa Community reservation boundaries, met this requirement.

In addition, under FSA directives, the NAP definition of eligible crops states "Eligible crops are any commercial agricultural crop (excluding livestock and their by-products), commodity, or acreage of a commodity grown for food or fiber for which CAT is not available." Thus, as a cultivated crop, wild rice met the NAP crop eligibility definition.

In accordance with the Risk Management Agency (RMA) policies, procedures that FSA structures NAP policies, currently only cultivated wild rice grown in man-made flood irrigated fields is approved. While most northern Wisconsin tribes do manage their wild rice beds, the beds generally do not have any water control structures to control the flow and availability of water which limits the potential for NAP policies for wild rice. The Sokaogon Chippewa Community met the qualifications though, due to their detailed documentation regarding water level management provided by Preul.

On September 29, 2011, a 2012 NAP policy was entered into with the Sokaogon Chippewa for loss coverage on wild rice in Rice Lake. They were able to file a loss claim and were paid for 50% of their 2012 losses.

FSA is encouraged by this opportunity to work with the Sokaogon Chippewa Community and looking for possibilities of expanding the NAP program to include situations in which wild rice is being managed by the tribe but with no flood control structures in place.

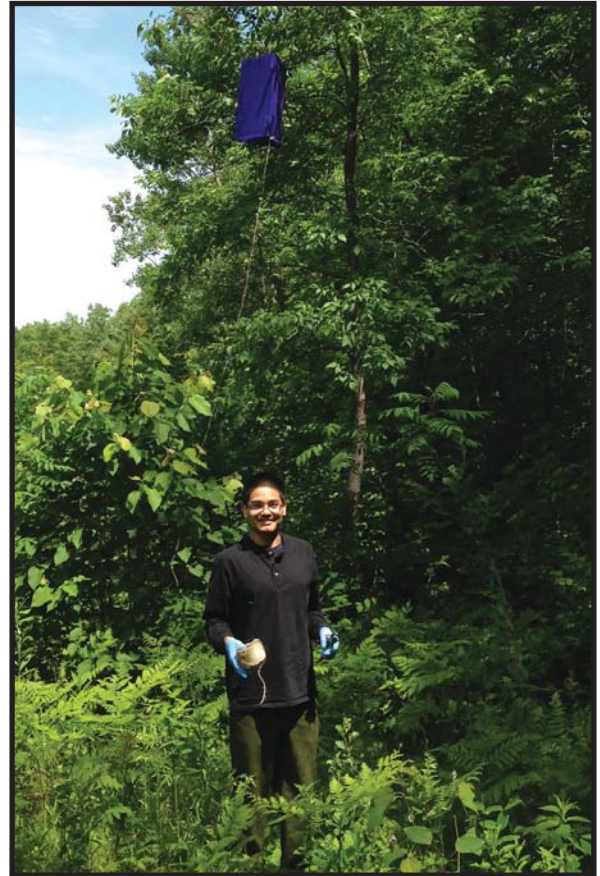
For more information: www.fsa.usda.gov



Wild rice growing on Rice Lake, Sokaogon Chippewa Community

ANIMAL HEALTH AND PLANT INSPECTION SERVICE

Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) of fish is an emerging disease possibly introduced into the Great Lakes in 2003, affecting a number of fish species including walleye and perch. Mass die-offs associated with VHS of both rough and sport fish species have been observed since 2005. With subsistence fishing being both culturally and nutritionally important to Native American peoples in Wisconsin and the region, many tribes actively stock the waters in the Great Lakes and its inland fisheries. The stock fish and other fish from the same waters must be tested for VHS, but Tribal financial constraints limit the number of lakes from which fish have been tested. Veterinary Services provided funding through WTCAC to Stockbridge-Munsee Community, Forest County Potawatomi Community, and St. Croix Chippewa Indian Community to expand and increase efficiency of testing for VHS and for purchasing sampling equipment, laboratory fees and personnel costs.



Plant Protection and Quarantine partnered with various Tribes of Wisconsin to place purple colored detection traps for Emerald Ash Borer, one of the worst invasive forest pests threatening over 765 million ash in Wisconsin. Ash is vitally important to the basket making art of northern Tribes. Additional work with Tribes focused on developing and testing plant health action plans to be used when responding to new invasive species.

The USDA APHIS Wildlife Services (WS) program specializes in resolving conflicts with wildlife, some species having cultural significance for Wisconsin Tribes. USDA Wildlife Services has partnered with WTCAC Student Internship Program to help bring USDA program knowledge to the Tribal Nations. The internships have been a great benefit and opportunity for the students and the WS program. The students learned about USDA - WS and wildlife management while USDA - WS acquired a better understanding of Wisconsin Native American culture from a more personal perspective. The ultimate goal of the internship program is to provide the students with knowledge and experience for a position that interfaces the USDA and the Tribes cultures.

For more information: www.aphis.usda.gov

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Residents and businesses in two northwestern Wisconsin communities now enjoy public water and sewer service thanks to a partnership between the Danbury Sanitary District and the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin.

Neither the St. Croix Tribe, nor the Village of Danbury had a municipal system, and residents in both communities were facing failing individual septic systems and contaminated wells. Additionally, the issues were leading to concerns of pollution to the nearby St. Croix River. The St. Croix River is listed as a National Scenic River and designated as an Outstanding Resource Water by the State of Wisconsin.

Now those issues and concerns can be put to rest, as the communities completed new systems that will reinforce water quality and preserve the environment for the region. The Tribe and Danbury Sanitary District formed the Joint Water Quality Commission to construct, operate, and manage the new, state-of-the-art, water treatment and sewer collection facilities.

USDA Rural Development Wisconsin Assistant to the State Director, Lori Wells, said infrastructure projects like these directly tie into the sustainability and viability of communities.

“This project reflects the commitment of the local leaders to their residents,” said Wells. “The new commission established by this endeavor is the first joint system of its kind in the Nation, bringing together an Indian Nation and a sanitary district to form a regional system. By partnering together and sharing resources, the Village of Danbury and the St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin are able to provide needed services to both their communities; and improve the quality of life for area residents. USDA Rural Development is pleased to be a part of projects such as this, which are vital to the sustainability of our rural communities and allow our rural residents a safer, cleaner living environment.”

USDA Rural Development approved Water and Waste Disposal loan and grant combinations totaling \$8.75 million to help with the cost of constructing the new facilities. The State of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and Indian Health Services contributed another \$4.6 million to the \$13 million project.

For more information: www.rurdev.usda.gov/wi



Attendees at the official grand opening of the Danbury/St. Croix municipal system tour the new facility.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

The USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts hundreds of surveys every year and prepares reports covering virtually every aspect of U.S. agriculture. Production and supplies of food and fiber, prices paid and received by farmers, farm labor and wages, farm finances, chemical use, and changes in the demographics of U.S. producers are only a few examples. NASS is committed to providing timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to U.S. agriculture.

Every five years, NASS takes a Census of Agriculture, providing the leading source of facts and figures about American agriculture. The Census provides a detailed picture of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. It is the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every state and county in the United States.

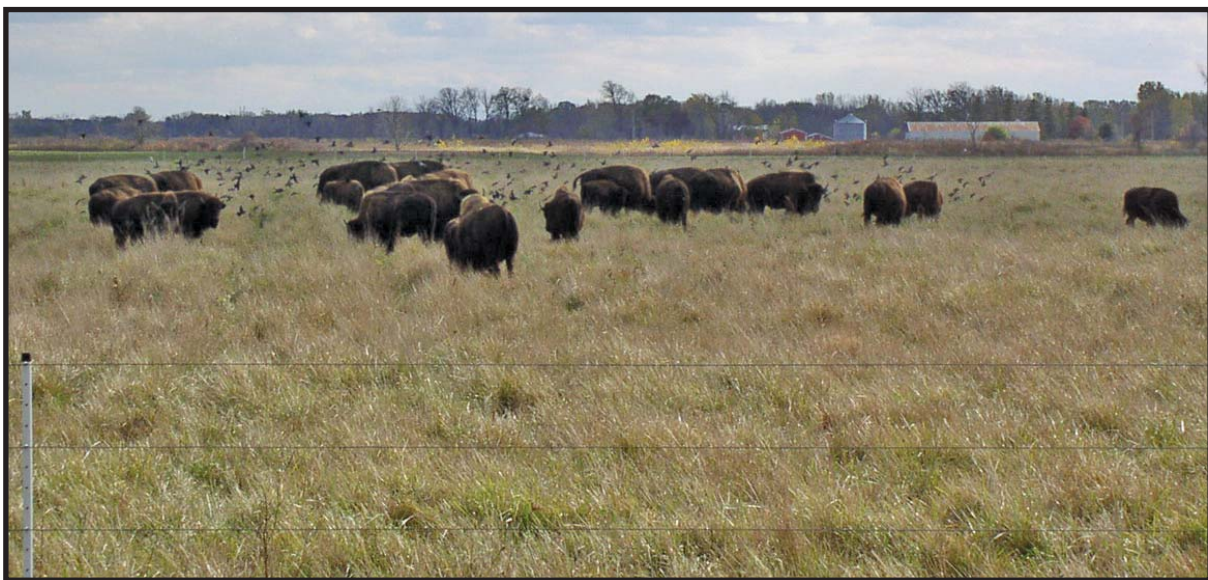
In recent Censuses, NASS has worked to collect more detailed information about agriculture on reservation lands in an effort to create the most comprehensive and accurate picture of farms and farmers nationwide. The 2007 Census of Agriculture marked the first time NASS attempted to collect a Census report from individual farm operators

on American Indian reservations in all states. In 2002, reservations were counted as a single farm and reservation officials supplied counts of individual operations.

The 2007 Census of Agriculture found that the number of American Indian or Alaska Native farm operators continues to rise. The 2007 Census counted a total of 79,703 American Indian or Alaska Native operators on 61,472 farms and ranches across the United States. More than a quarter of these operators also reported another race. The count of American Indian or Alaska Native operators grew 88 percent from 2002, significantly outpacing the 7 percent increase in U.S. farm operators overall. There were a total of 55,889 American Indian operators who reported American Indian or Alaska Native as their only race in 2007. Of these, 34,706 were principal operators, up 124 percent from 2002. The 2012 Census of Agriculture will be conducted and analyzed throughout the coming year. Data from the 2012 Census of Agriculture will be released in beginning in February, 2014.

For more information:

[www.agcensus.usda.gov/
Publications/2007/](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/)



Buffalo grazing on a farm on the Oneida Nation Reservation



Bear Trap Falls, Menominee Reservation

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