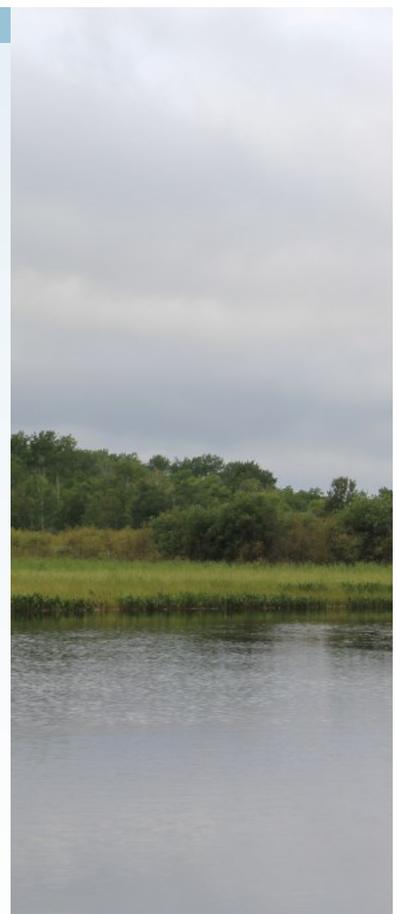


# WTCAC Newsletter



## Traditional Uses and Culture Provide an Effective Approach for Protecting and Caring for Wetlands

Two new videos produced by the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council, Wisconsin Wetlands Association, and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service highlight the work of the Oneida Nation in Northeastern Wisconsin. The long-term landscape approach the Oneida Nation takes to protect and restore their reservation is improving water quality, alleviating flooding, and providing habitat. It's also helping to revitalize their culture. The healthier natural environment provides opportunities for their people to hunt, fish, and gather what nature has provided and also establishes relationships that will build a stronger community today and for future generations. These videos are part of a larger initiative by the partners to raise awareness of the vital work tribes in Wisconsin are doing to protect and restore wetlands and watersheds. View the videos: [Creating a Path: Watershed Conservation and the Oneida Nation](#) and [Planting a Seed: Revitalizing Land and Culture](#).

## WTCAC & NRCS Conservation Report Released—Jonathan Pruitt

In March of this year, the 2021 WTCAC Conservation Report was released. This report was created through a partnership between USDA NRCS, WTCAC, and the Wisconsin Tribes. This publication is the revival of a biannual WTCAC report that was last published in 2013. These reports showcase conservation projects completed by Tribal Nations and USDA agencies in Wisconsin. This report highlights the importance of conservation efforts to tribal sovereignty and the cultures of Tribal Nations. Healthy lands and waters support the animals and plants that are hunted, fished, and gathered under established treaties. Natural resources are a critical component of many indigenous ceremonies and practices. With the help of WTCAC and USDA, these conservation efforts ensure that these lands and waters remain healthy and animals and plants remain abundant for present and future generations. Look for the WTCAC Stewardship Report 2021 at <http://wtcac.org/stewardship-reports/>.

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### Special points of interest

- Learn about the LdF forestry, WTCAC, and NRCS partnership
- WTCAC Forestry Committee is celebrating five years!
- Lots of media has been released recently through many different partnerships! Make sure to check out all of the links.



### Letter from the WTCAC Executive Director—Jeff Mears

WTCAC joins the many others in extending our condolences to our friends, relatives, and partners of the Oneida Nation who are grieving the senseless loss of life in yet another mass shooting on May 1, 2021.

WTCAC looks to a brighter future, working with the Tribal Nations in Wisconsin, addressing natural resource and agricultural issues, and providing a positive experience for our 2021 interns. We have college student tribal members from Oneida, Ho-Chunk, Lac Courte Oreilles, Bad River, Lac du Flambeau, and Red Cliff starting on June 7th working at WTCAC member Tribe reservations and USDA agencies.

## Jobs, Jobs, and More Jobs!!! - Jerry Thompson

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced over 2,000 full-time career positions currently available with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Risk Management Agency (RMA), and the Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Business Center. Positions to be filled by July 15th. The Forest Service (FS) and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has also announced that they will soon be advertising positions. These jobs can be found on the [www.USAJobs.gov](http://www.USAJobs.gov) website and can be sorted by Job type, Agency, and State. Positions available for current College Seniors graduating this spring, Graduate Students, and Recent Graduates/Alumni job seekers.

WTCAC has partnered with the Salish Kootenai College and the USDA Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) Business Center to promote a 1994 Tribal College Direct Hiring

Event on May 21st for numerous positions with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and other USDA Agencies.

There is a two-step process to attend:

- 1) Register in advance by clicking on the following link: <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=5zZb7e4BvE6GfuA8-g1GI0cnOiEjI01s7tGblCJOptUNVI3VU-dTQVZVRTMyWij%20g4VDEzVkdBR0RVUC4u>
- 2) Send copies of resume and unofficial transcript(s) to Cynthia Cuellar, [cynthia.cuellar@usda.gov](mailto:cynthia.cuellar@usda.gov)

Registration is required to participate. Submit resume/transcripts by **May 19th, 11:00AM MDT**. Full list of jobs available located on inside pg. 6. Contact Jerry Thompson at 715-821-0555 or [JThompson@wtcac.org](mailto:JThompson@wtcac.org) for more information about the various positions and application assistance.

## NRCS Partnership Spotlight: Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Forestry—Tom Melnarik & Ethan Sennett

The Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Tribal lands encompass a 144 square mile area. Renowned for its' water resources, approximately 44,000 acres are managed for forestry usage and are equally as important to the Tribal members for gathering, sustenance and recreation.

During the historic logging period, (1890-1904) the Lac du Flambeau reservation was essentially clear-cut. The resulting buildup of logging slash, (cut tops and branches), burned intensely on and off for years; resulting in historic changes to the once majestic old growth pines and hardwoods of the north woods. New trees, primarily trees that grow quickly like aspen and white birch, replaced those original forests. Today's reservation forests are a direct result of those historic logging activities.

A proactive, sustainable logging program built on data collected over 60 years, with consultation of the Tribal membership and Tribal council has resulted in an Integrated Resource Management Plan or IRMP. The IRMP lays out the goals and objectives of the future forest with a strong emphasis on forest management techniques that can return as much of the forest to pre-historic logging forest cover types as possible.

"The Lac du Flambeau Forest is owned by the membership, and although logging is an important source of both jobs and revenue, traditional gathering of forest plants, animals and products for medicinal, cultural, ceremonial and recreational purposes is far more important," said Ethan Sennett, Lac Du Flambeau Forestry Department Supervisor. "The forest is primarily managed for multiple uses like maple syrup production, white birch bark gathering, medicinal plant gathering, wildlife, recreation and hunting."

A unique aspect of the Lac Du Flambeau Forestry program is that the staff also manages the Tribal Farm. There they grow pumpkins, blueberries, raspberries, Christmas trees and strawberries. Some of the crops are sold commercially, however Tribal members are prioritized. "It is extremely popular, and the annual strawberry season has become an exciting and anticipated event", said Ethan.

*Story continued on page 3...*



*Lac du Flambeau community members harvesting pumpkins*



**WTCAC CWMA Coordinator—Billy Pocan**

William (Billy) Pocan is the new cooperative weed management area (CWMA) coordinator for the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WTCAC). He has worked for Oneida Environmental Health Safety & Land Division for the last several field seasons as a natural resource technician. Billy has experience documenting, responding, and controlling numerous invasive plants and has provided outreach at multiple community events.

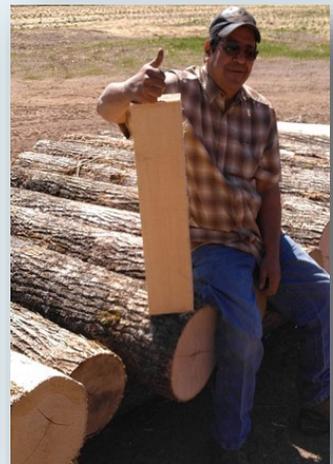
*“It is rewarding to sometimes see three generations of Tribal members harvesting our produce together.” ~Ethan Sennett, LdF Forester & Farm Manager*

## NRCS Partnership Spotlight...Continued from page 2

“The Tribal Elders can pick for free and they often bring their families with to help them harvest. It is rewarding to sometimes see three generations of Tribal members harvesting our produce together.”

“NRCS programs have been invaluable to our management at the farm and in the forest,” said Ethan. The farm has benefitted from seasonal high tunnels, fencing, irrigation assistance, and a weather station that monitors air temperatures and soil conditions for more efficient watering. Some of the practices used in the forest include access roads into maple syrup areas, timber stand improvement, and tree planting. Wildlife has also benefitted from these programs with practices that encourage the leaving of snag trees and the placement of nesting boxes. “Some of the practices used to manage for specific tree species and forest conditions get expensive,” added Ethan. “The extra dollars that NRCS programs provide, allow us to manage with Tribal membership goals in mind and still stay within budget.”

The two main NRCS Conservation Programs that support these activities are EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) and CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program). EQIP is tailored to cost-share on conservation practices to meet resource concerns, while CSP looks at existing stewardship activities and takes it to the next level by means of enhancements required for compliance. Both programs are an integral part of Lac Du Flambeau’s forest and farm management, and have proven to be very successful. The WTCAC staff and Board of Directors works with all of the Tribes in Wisconsin to offer these programs through NRCS.



*LdF elder collecting Basswood*



# HELP CONTRIBUTE TO THE 2022 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE!

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) conducts the Census of Agriculture just once every five years, and it's rapidly approaching in December 2022. The census is the only complete count of all farms and ranches across every state in the U.S. and the people who operate them. It includes even the smallest plots of land - rural or urban - growing fruits, vegetables, or raising food animals during the census year.

The number of Native American agriculture ranchers and farmers that reported in 2017 increased 7 percent from the 2012 Census of Agriculture. A total of 178 Native American famers were counted in Wisconsin. Tribal summaries published in 2017 can be found at:

[www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017)

Our goal over the next year is to inform anyone who farms or ranches about the upcoming agriculture census, and encourage them to make sure they are counted.

## How can you help?

If you raise any type of livestock or fish or grow crops, fruits, or vegetables, please make sure we have your farm counted by going online at:

[www.agcounts.usda.gov/static/get-counted.html](http://www.agcounts.usda.gov/static/get-counted.html)

At the site, please complete the brief questionnaire to make sure your operation is counted for the next Census of Agriculture. Remember any size of farm - large or small - is important to U.S. agriculture.



## What will your tribe gain by cooperating on the Census of Agriculture?

- Delivery of USDA benefits and service to farmers and ranchers.
- Farm counts are the basis for future USDA benefits.
  - Natural Resources Conservation Service Programs, like EQUIP
  - Farm Service Agency Programs
  - Rural Development Programs
  - Extension Service Funding
- Census data are used in preparing grant proposals and funding requests for organizations, like Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WTCAC).

## Do you really need to count me?

**YES** - if you own or rent agricultural land, grow vegetables, grow horticultural or floricultural products, tap maple trees, have fruit or nut trees, cattle, horses, poultry, hogs, bees, aquaculture products, or consider yourself a farmer or rancher, we need to hear from you.

Your response to this survey will help NASS provide the most complete accounting of agriculture in the United States. Did you know that 75 percent of the 2 million farms in the United States reported agricultural sales of \$50,000 or less in the 2017 Census of Agriculture? Many people who do not consider themselves to be farmers or ranchers actually meet the official census definition of a farm - any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been produced per year.

## Will my information be kept confidential?

**Absolutely.** Respondents are guaranteed by law (Title V, Subtitle A, Public Law 107-347) that their individual information will be kept confidential. NASS uses the information only for statistical purposes and publishes data only in tabulated totals. The report cannot be used for purposes of taxation, investigation, or regulation. The privacy of individual records is also protected from Freedom of Information Act requests.

## Census of Agriculture





## EAB Web Series a Success!

The WTCAC Forestry Committee with the help of many partners organized a six-week web series all about the Emerald Ash Borer, silviculture, and preparedness. The web series was held on Thursday afternoons for two hours each week. There were roughly 150 registrants each week for the web series. All six videos are published on YouTube and have had 194 view to-date. The agenda for each webinar is in the description. The playlist for the videos is found here: [https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL14m8i0nlyKIWld7rNR6jJCU\\_I2-byANn](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL14m8i0nlyKIWld7rNR6jJCU_I2-byANn)



**Job, Jobs, Jobs... Continued from page 2**

### FPAC Business Center Direct Hire

**Positions available for:** Human Resources Specialists, Management and Program Analysts (Risk Analysis), Financial Management Specialists, Accountants, Systems Accountants, Budget Analysts, Real Property Specialists

### NRCS Direct Hire Positions available

**for:** Range Management Specialists, Soil Conservationists, Soil Conservation Technicians, Soil Scientists, Engineering Technicians, Civil / Environmental/Agricultural Engineers, Archaeologists, Biologists, Economists, Foresters, Agronomists

### FSA Direct Hire Positions available

**for:** Loan Assistants (Previous Farm Loan Officer Trainee), Program Technicians, Loan Specialists, Supervisory Loan Specialists, Agricultural Program Specialists, Administrative Specialists, Administrative Technicians

### RMA Direct Hire Positions available

**for:** Risk Management Specialists, Compliance Investigators

## WTCAC Forestry Committee – Growing the Future – Paul Koll

February marked a milestone for the WTCAC Forestry Committee, celebrating five years promoting sustainable forestry. Though the committee was proposed and discussed as early as 2013, the actual inception was not until February 18th, 2016, with the first official meeting, held a few months later in July. From the very beginning, the committee has been dedicated to promoting sound, sustainable forest management across the lands of the eleven Federally-recognized Tribes in Wisconsin through educational training, consolidation of knowledge, and facilitated collaboration with agencies such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), United States Forest Service (USFS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), and organizations such as UW-Extension and the American Bird Conservancy (ABC).

Lacey Hill-Kastern, the wildlife biologist for the Bad River Tribe at the time, and Paul Koll, the tribal forester for the Stockbridge-Munsee Community, were chosen as co-chairs of the committee. Lacey has since moved on from the tribe but is employed by WTCAC, allowing her to remain a driving force for the committee. Participation has been exceptional from the very beginning, with active members from all eleven tribes helping create excellent learning, collaboration, and networking environment.

Much of the committee's success can be attributed to the joint development of clear goals that outline what the group needs and how to accomplish them.

*Goal 1: Maintain the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council Forestry Committee operations by obtaining a cooperative agreement with the USFS and BIA.*

WTCAC has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with the NRCS, and it was apparent the committee also needed to develop formal relationships with the USFS and BIA to be viable. In early 2017 and again in 2019, the BIA allocated end-of-year funds to show their commitment to the committee. Similarly, work began on an agreement with the USFS, and through a ton of work, lead by Mary Rasmussen, an MOU was signed in late 2019. These two agencies' commitment shows how necessary this partnership is and sets the groundwork for a mutually beneficial relationship that will help achieve our other goals.

*Goal 2: Provide a forum for sharing information, networking, and consolidating knowledge.*

*Goal 3: Coordinate technical support and training.*

Due to staff and funding limitations, the task of tribal forest management often falls on biologists, general natural resource professionals, or agriculture professionals with limited formal training in forestry. This need for expertise inspired the creation of the committee and is still its bread and butter today. The committee created a forum for agencies to interact with tribes on a myriad of forestry-related topics, including WDNR's Brad Hutnik demonstrating timber marking techniques, learning about habitat typing from John Kotar (the man who wrote the book), and the ins and outs of the emerald ash borer invasion from experts around the country. These educational experiences are helping to bring all of the tribal professionals together and to the forefront of the industry.

Educational Experiences to Date:

- 2017 January – Marking Techniques with WDNR's Brad Hutnik
- 2017 September – Young Forest Initiative with Ruffed Grouse Society/American Bird Conservancy/NRCS
- 2018 January – Wildfire Discussion with Dave Pergolski and the Ho-Chunk Nation
- 2018 May – Wetland and Water Quality Considerations with BIA/US-Extension/WDNR/NRCS/USFS
- 2018 August – Habitat Typing with John Kotar
- 2019 April – Forest Management Plan Consolidation with BIA/NRCS/WDNR/USFS
- 2019 July – Hazard Tree Assessments with USFS State & Private Forest James Jacobs
- 2019 November – Oak Wilt with USFS/WDNR/MTE/Menominee Co
- 2021 January/February – Emerald Ash Borer Web Series with numerous tribes, various universities, state DNRs, USFS, S&P, R&D, GLIFWC, APHIS, PPQ, and many more

Story continued on page 7...

## WTCAC Forestry Committee...Continued from page 6

*Goal 4: Determine and communicate funding opportunities*

Diversified workloads and varied expertise are not the only limiting factors facing forestry in Indian Country. Funding has always been an issue, like any area of natural resources, but few knew of many programs, and fewer yet were taking advantage. The committee is a perfect forum for the agencies to advertise their opportunities and help tribes begin taking advantage. Since the committee's inception, tribes have been utilizing programs like NRCS EQIP and USFS S&P more than ever, even helping to develop new practices and payment scales for some programs. The entire network is working together to ensure sustainable forestry reaches the ground

*Goal 5: Develop tribal youth capacity to fulfill future forestry positions*

The committee has been trying to help promote opportunities to tribal youth and encourage the career path in the hope of a qualified and knowledgeable workforce in the future. One of the underlying problems with tribal forestry programs is the lack of engagement and recruitment of the youth. So many

programs exist to promote tribal youth and encourage careers in natural resources, but often they are unknown, under-advertised, or overlooked. At large, the committee and WTCAC have been working with the USFS, BIA, and NRCS to hire interns each summer. Earlier job announcements, training on applying, and added outreach are beginning to show success, with more and more students entering the program each year. If done correctly, the current employees will be gone long before our forests, and preparing a capable workforce is critical to sustainable forest management.

The WTCAC Forestry Committee and 11 participating tribes have a lot to celebrate on this 5th anniversary while striving to achieve these goals. Much success was seen with the most recent EAB Web Series, despite using the unfamiliar platform. The committee is excited to see how it can continue to expand with this new resource and explore new topics, as sharing information, networking, and

knowledge of sustainable forestry are the foundations of the committee. Every member and collaborator should be proud of what an amazing group this has become.

*"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." – Helen Keller*





## I Am Back—Joey Billboy

Hello, my name is Joey Billyboy from the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe tribe. I am so grateful to get this opportunity to work with WTCAC again; they have given me guidance and opening doors for me to move forward with my career. Working with WTCAC last year inspired me on what I wanted to do for my bachelor's degree, and the support I got from the staff was amazing. We have a few cases on my reservation of Oak Wilt, and I'm looking forward to making a difference

to stop these invasive species. My supervisor, Lacey Hill Kastern, has gone above and beyond to get this program going and took a chance on me. She has inspired me to get my bachelor's degree while balancing to be a full-time mother, student, and employee of WTCAC. Last year was a challenge for sure because of Covid-19. I'm excited to be able to do more in the public and face-to-face educational outreach.

Check out the WTCAC YouTube page for some great presentations!

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCB0RNshay\\_FOGXMOpHksmCA/](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCB0RNshay_FOGXMOpHksmCA/)  
featured



### Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council

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## Thank-You WTCAC—Lacey Hill Kastern

Ten years ago, I was a young wildlife professional looking for a way to find funding to build bat houses to help save the bats before white-nose syndrome made its way to Wisconsin. The Bad River Tribe was hosting the WTCAC meeting, and the Bad River Tribe just appointed me to be the primary representative on the WTCAC board. I walked in that meeting carrying a heavy bat nursery box, not knowing what to expect. I was met by a room full of smiles and friendly faces. At the meeting, NRCS walked away with the plans and cost estimates for the bat house. It wasn't long and the bat house became a national Environmental Quality Improvement Practice (EQIP) for wildlife habitat enhancement. That was amazing to witness. That is just one example of many ideas that have happened over the years sitting around a room discussing resource concerns and what can be done to address them.

Two years ago, I decided I wanted to help the organization more, and became a member of the staff. The pest survey program has been a success so far, even with the hurdles that the pandemic has been throwing our way. We were still able to deploy twenty-seven multi

funnel traps and seventy-one purple prism traps and submitted one-hundred-thirty-one samples for identification.

It has also been fun to watch the organization's technical committees grow in capacity! These committees are the future of WTCAC. The EAB web series was a fun and informative online event. WTCAC has also developed a social media presence on Facebook and YouTube to continue to spread the word.

Now it is time for me to announce my next adventure. I have accepted a position with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) as the Lake Superior Lakewide Action & Management Plan (LAMP) Coordinator. I am incredibly excited about this opportunity, and hopefully, our paths will cross again in the future. WTCAC has played a large part in my career over the past ten years, and I have made many friends. I promise that I will not become a stranger and am looking forward to seeing how WTCAC will continue to grow. Thank you, everyone!

~Lacey