



NRCS Native American Heritage Month Poster, 2003

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Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council

The Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WTCAC) was organized in March 2001 to identify tribal conservation issues and to advise the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service on more effective ways to deliver USDA programs and assist the Indian Nations of Wisconsin. This Conservation Advisory Council, authorized in the 1995 Farm Bill, was the first such council formed in the country. In its first year, the Council drafted a Tribal Conservation Title and presented it to legislators for consideration in the 2002 Farm Bill. The Council is working through a number of avenues to secure assistance and programs to meet the conservation needs of the Tribal people and lands in Wisconsin. In 2003, the Council provided guidance on allocation of Tribal funds from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and reviewed tribal conservation budget requests. The Council identified potential barriers in EQIP that could affect tribal participation in the program, and raised those issues to USDA in Washington for resolution.



One of the responsibilities of the WTCAC, at the request of the NRCS State Conservationist, is to review and recommend funding for conservation proposals from the 11 federally recognized tribes in Wisconsin. The WTCAC was allocated up to \$440,000 for this effort during Fiscal Year 2003 (FY 03). WTCAC has a webpage on the NRCS Wisconsin website, as well as a table top display and brochure describing the role and responsibilities of the Council.

Oneida Nation – Tony Bush, Oneida Tribal Liaison 920-490-8004

Oneida Nation Farm:

As part of the overall strategy to reduce pollutants entering surface and groundwater, and improve fish habitat, the Oneida Nation Farm will utilize the new NRCS 590 standard on 3122 acres of cropland. EQIP will provide \$65,562 in incentive payments spread over three years for this project. They will also receive \$9,660 in EQIP funding to establish a managed grazing system on 92 acres of cropland for their black angus beef operation at the farm's headquarters.

Tsyunhehkw^ Community Farm:

Tsyunhehkw^ will place 29 acres of organic white corn, hay and vegetable under a nutrient and pest management plan. An additional 30 acres of pastureland will be placed under a managed grazing system for their beef operation. EQIP incentive payments for these projects will total \$2,586.

Both farm operations will employ certified crop advisors to develop their nutrient and pest management strategies.

Conservation Reserve Program

Although contracts have expired on many tracts, an additional 135 acres of tree plantings were placed into CRP in 2003, bringing the total to 887 acres.

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program

The Oneida Nation has two contracts totaling 94 acres to establish prairie and restore wetlands in partnership with the BIA Circle of Flight Program. A native prairie seeding has been completed on 22 acres under one contract. Another 24 acres on the second contract will be completed this year.

As part of a project to improve fish habitat, the Oneida Nation has contracted to have large woody debris placed along a 500-foot stretch of a Trout Creek tributary. They have been awarded \$3,300 in WHIP funds to assist with this project.

Great Lakes Buffer Project Initiative

A partnership was established between the Oneida Nation, Outagamie County Land Conservation Department and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to target three sub-watersheds for conservation buffer implementation. The project was awarded a \$75,000 grant from the Great Lakes Basin Commission to install buffers along watercourses and concentrated flow areas in crop fields. These buffers will address sediment load delivery to critical northern pike spawning areas of streams draining towards Green Bay. Glacierland RC&D serves as the Fiscal Agent for the grant funds, and the NRCS Tribal Liaison is responsible for conservation plans and contract development. Along with 63 acres formerly contracted with the Oneida State Farm an additional 20.2 acres of buffer were planned and contracted in 2002. The partnership has been awarded a second grant of \$30,000 to continue their efforts.

NRCS Environmental and Education Outreach

The Oneida Nation was awarded two Environmental Education Outreach grants in 2001. Funds from one grant were used to develop an informational marketing brochure and conduct public meetings for landowners, developers, and government officials on designing subdivisions using the principles of conservation. Funds from the second grant were used to complete three projects concerning tribally important plants including an interpretive nature trail, a native plant demonstration area and a medicinal plant garden.

Tsyunhehkw[^] (Joon-heh-kwa) 2501(g) Small Farmer Outreach and Training

The Tsyunhehkw[^] Community Farm received \$67,000 from USDA as part of a 2501 Grant to develop a community outreach program. The program is designed to instruct Tribal members on sustainable organic vegetables and herbs production, and establish links between community organic farmers, schools and businesses to market farmers' produce through the retail function of Tsyunhehkw[^].

Oneida Community Store and Farmers Market

Received \$230,000 from USDA to develop and establish an Oneida Nation Community Grocery Store and Farmers Market. The Store will sell general staples and traditional foods, while farmers participating in the Tsyunhe'hkw^ Outreach and Training Program will sell vegetables, crafts and other produce at the Farmers Market.

Other Assistance

The Oneida Sustainable Resource Advisory Council (Tribal Land Conservation Board) meets regularly to provide direction and assistance to NRCS for the protection and enhancement of natural resources within the Oneida tribal lands. An Oneida Business Committee member serves as the official Tribal representative to the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WTCAC).

Bad River Tribe -- Tom Cogger, Bad River Liaison (715) 682-9117

Forest Restoration Project: Plant white pine, red pine, balsam fir, and white spruce on 1,120 acres of tribal lands that, left untreated, would regenerate to aspen. This is the first step in promoting and restoring forest biodiversity on lands cut-over in the 1920's. Total cost of the project is estimated at \$53,700. EQIP will provide \$40,000 in cost share assistance.

Bad River Well Decommissioning Project: The Bad River Tribe has a number of abandoned wells on the Reservation that are a potential source of groundwater contamination. The Tribe proposes to have the Bad River Natural Resources Department decommission the wells according to NRCS technical standard 351. Total cost of the project is estimated at \$7,400, with EQIP provided \$5,550 in cost share assistance.

Other NRCS Assistance

- Developed a draft Study Plan and Memorandum of Agreement for a Cranberry Restoration Project on the Kakagon/Bad River Sloughs that will outline a project with the Rose Lake Plant Materials Center (PMC). Wild cranberries were traditionally harvested by numerous tribal members according to anecdotal information provided by members and elders. Presently, few if any cranberries are harvested because of diminished plant populations. A collection of several plants from the Kakagon Sloughs was made in 2002. The plants were transferred to and successfully propagated at the PMC. The planned project will involve additional plant collection, propagation and a testing of re-introduction techniques into the Kakagon/Bad River Sloughs. Propagation and re-introduction protocols will be transferred to the Bad River Tribe. Eventually, the Gititganing Garden Committee will take over cranberry propagation and the Bad River Natural Resources Department will assist in re-introduction efforts.
- Community and Organic Gardening: NRCS is developing a gardening class syllabus for organic gardening training for tribal members. Worked with the Gititganing Garden Committee VISTA employee to coordinate vegetable and fruit tree orders and distribution and planting plans for the 2004 growing season.

- Assisting VISTA workers in exploring heirloom vegetable seed sources and production methods. A focus of the community garden will be to grow heirloom vegetables and produce heirloom seeds. A long-term goal is to have enough seed production to allow for the sale or trade of seeds in the Chequamegon Bay region.
- Assisting Gititganing Garden Committee VISTA staff in the development of 10 different grants to fund various aspects of the Tribes community garden project. Helping VISTA staff explore several other grant sources and preparing for possible submission of grants.
- Lead development of a Project Work Plan for VISTA workers to insure timely completion of grant applications and coordination of projects for the community garden.
- NRCS engineering staff are helping tribal staff to rehabilitate and expand the tribes' fish ponds. NRCS will complete a topographical survey and a plan for the project in 2005.

Red Cliff Tribe -- Tom Cogger, Red Cliff Liaison (715) 682-9117

Secured funding through WHIP to address the replacement of failing rip-rap on Red Cliff Creek. Improperly installed rip-rap is allowing sediment to enter the stream. WHIP and Tribal funding will be used to install new streambank protection measures to control erosion. Red Cliff Creek is a priority stream for restoration of stream habitat to benefit Coaster Brooke Trout and other aquatic resources important to the Tribe.

NRCS assisted in development of an Integrated Resource Management Plan (IRMP) for the Reservation. A "Fragile Areas" map for the Red Cliff Reservation identifies fragile riparian/lakeshore areas and zones that have a high potential for erosion on the reservation. The Land Use, Zoning and IRMP Committees are using the map as a planning tool in the development of reservation wide plans.

NRCS is working with tribal staff to develop a comprehensive plan for the newly purchased property that will be used as a tribal farm and community garden.

Great Lakes Indian Fish And Wildlife Commission

The fifth and final year of the Purple Loosestrife EQIP Project has been completed. Chemical control of Loosestrife in the Chequamegon Bay Watershed is beginning to curtail the spread of this exotic pest plant. Beetles that feed exclusively on Purple Loosestrife were grown and were released on a number of sites as a long term control measure. Field assessments indicate that the beetles have established themselves at the release sites.

The Northwood's Weed Initiative (NWI), a partnership including: NRCS, GLIFWC, The Nature Conservancy, USFWS, USFS, WDNR, UWEX and private citizens, is working to slow the spread of Leafy Spurge and other invasive plants that have been identified in the area. The first efforts to control and contain Leafy Spurge were begun on private lands within the Ceded Territory.

Ho-Chunk Nation – Greg Yakle, Tribal Liaison 608-782-0180

Wetland Restoration and Interpretive Trail

Learning about wetland ecosystems, the tribal history of the Ho-Chunk People and their traditional use of native plants are just a part of the White Otter Wetland Restoration and Educational Trail. With a \$15,000 educational grant from NRCS, this interpretive trail and observation deck will help explain other conservation practices that make this property unique.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provided funding and technical help for environmental enhancements, including stream crossings, streambank restoration, trout, habitat improvement and extensive oak savanna and prairie restorations. As the project is completed this area will host environmental education classes for tribal and non-tribal youth.

Nux Ma Ruha Ni Xete Soil Series

As NRCS soil scientists were working on the update of the Richland County Soil Survey, they sampled a property owned and operated by the Ho Chunk Nation of the Winnebago Tribe of Wisconsin. This Bison Ridge Project is located near Muscoda on the Wisconsin River and has cultural significance for the tribe. The soil survey classification indicated that this landform is situated in a very unique position and it was discovered to be a new soils series. The new series was named by Ho Chunk Elder, Jim Funmaker as Nux Ma Ruha Ni Xete, literally translated as "Ice Land Moving River." NRCS created a soil monolith and an interpretative display for the Ho-Chunk that is on exhibit at the Executive Building in Black River Falls, Wisconsin.

Conservation Planning: NRCS District Conservationists have been asked to develop or update the conservation plans for the tribal holdings in their counties.

Cultural Resources-- The Ho-Chunk have assisted NRCS with the archeology and cultural resource work involving the repair of PL 566 structure in Vernon County.

Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe --Mike Koehler, LCO Liaison (715) 532-7629

Cranberry Marsh Study

In the summer of 2001, two interns collected water samples and conducted running water quality tests on the marsh. Samples have been sent to labs for analysis. Monitoring equipment was purchased, along with other needed supplies. Water quality was monitored throughout the summer. The project was funded through a USDA grant to fund the interns, supplies and equipment and pay for analysis. The grant was extended to allow for completion of a written report. When test results come back, data will be analyzed and summarized. A report will be published on the results and the recommended best management practices for the cranberry marsh. A draft report has been completed and will be finalized soon.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Eleven wells on tribal lands have been properly sealed and abandoned; another 20 remain. These are planned to be completed this summer.

Chippewa Flowage Shoreline Erosion Control Projects. The long-term agreement has been completed, and \$75,000 contracted in 2001. Surveys and designs have been completed on several islands for shoreline stabilization. Construction of shoreline stabilization was completed on Skull Island and Middle Three Sisters Island using AJAX blocks for armoring of 305 feet. This will protect a Tribal burial ground on Skull Island.

An additional \$150,000 will be funded and contracted in 2002 for shoreline stabilization work. In 2004, an additional 1137 feet of shoreline on 3 more islands was completed. A total of \$131,686 has been paid out so far. More work is scheduled for this coming summer.

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program This project will help re-establish wild rice on the Chippewa Flowage and nearby lakes. One site is complete on Billy Boy Flowage, with about 7 acres seeded. This was very successful and now covers over 20 acres. Seed has been limited so no additional acres were seeded last year. The Tribe plans to harvest its own seed from Billy Boy Flowage this fall and seed more areas. A new contract for \$3600 was funded for additional wild rice establishment.

LCO Community College

The college has received funding for a student internship program, potentially located with NRCS in Ladysmith, for a student interested in conservation.

St. Croix Tribe -- Tom Fredrickson, St. Croix Liaison (715) 635-8228

- **Conservation Reserve Program** -- warm season grasses are well-established on an 8.2 acre CRP field in Eastern Burnett County. A wildlife food plot is planted to sunflowers and soybeans.
- **St. Croix Grade Stabilization Structure:** An eroded area just upstream of the confluence of the Yellow River and the St. Croix River is impairing wild rice beds downstream on the St. Croix River. The Grade Stabilization Structure will have a total cost of \$25,000, with EQIP funds totaling \$18,750.
- **Waste Storage Facility:** This storage facility will be installed to deal with effluent generated from the aquaculture facility. The facility will deal with waste only, no offal from the fish processing will be routed through this system. Total cost of the system is \$61,660. EQIP will provide \$43,162 in cost share assistance.

- Aquaculture Facility Well: The well will provide water for the rearing of food fish and walleye and perch fingerlings for restocking efforts. Total estimated cost is \$19,918. EQIP will provide \$2,000 in cost share assistance.
- Work continues on Big Sand Lake EQIP project in Burnett County to stabilize eroding shoreline. Three wells were sealed and properly abandoned to protect groundwater quality.
- Through the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, a walleye spawning reef will be installed on Big Round Lake in Polk County, \$10,000 costshare from NRCS.

***Sokaogan Chippewa Community (Mole Lake) --Pete Lindgren, Tribal Liaison
(715) 362-5941***

- Environmental Education Outreach Grant, \$15,000 completed with training for tribal environmental department on GIS, ArcView, with purchase of hardware and software for tribal planning activities.
- Stream Corridor and Wetland Restoration Project: The natural flow has been altered in Swamp Creek, providing suitable conditions for a cattail stand at the mouth of Swamp Creek to increase in size. This acts as a false bank deflecting stream flow from its natural channel through Rice Lake. This in turn limits nutrient cycling and water flow in Rice Lake. As a result, yellow pond lily has been increasing, and wild rice beds important to the Sokaogan Chippewa have decreased in size. Wetland restoration including the removal of nuisance plant species and the reseeding of wild rice, removal of debris from stream banks and beds, and an access road for tribal use are planned for this project. The total cost of the project is \$64,710. EQIP will provide \$47,780 of this amount.
- Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program contract completed for wild rice re-establishment on 34 acres one Rice Lake., 2004-2009, including control of exotic/invasive species.

***Lac Du Flambeau Chippewa Community -- -Pete Lindgren, Tribal Liaison (715)
362-5941***

- Shoreland Protection: Three erosion prone areas will be treated including two located on Flambeau Lake and one located on Pokegama Lake. Undercutting and sloughing of banks is occurring due to wind and wave action. The erosion is causing sedimentation, adverse effects on water quality, as well as aquatic and riparian habitat damage. Streambank and shoreline stabilization, critical area planting, tree and shrub establishment, grade stabilization structure, and heavy use area protection will protect these sites. Total project

cost is \$53,350, with EQIP providing \$40,000.

- Well Abandonment: Six abandoned wells will be sealed according to NRCS standard 351, protecting groundwater resources. Total cost is estimated at \$13,400. EQIP cost share is \$10,026.

Forest County Potawatomi Community -- Pete Lindgren, Tribal Liaison (715) 362-5941

Erosion Control on Forest County Potawatomi Lands. Erosion control projects are: stabilization of an eroding bank at Bug Lake which is contributing sediment to waters important to the tribe; critical area planting of native grass species to reduce runoff, stabilize soil, and improve wildlife habitat; treatment of erodible areas contributing sediment to Devils Lake, and provide access to important tribal waters for subsistence food-gathering. The total project cost is \$53,050, with EQIP providing \$39,787 in cost share funds.

Menominee Nation -- Sherrie Zenk-Reed, Tribal Liaison (715) 799-3896

- NRCS Tribal Liaison Sherrie Zenk Reed taught a 3-credit course in Environmental Science at the College of Menominee Nation, Spring and Fall 2002, Spring 2003, and Spring 2004.
- Two College of Menominee Nation students secured a summer buffer internship through NRCS in cooperation with the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin-Environmental Services Department and the Menominee County Conservationists.
- Provided technical assistance and engineering designs for shoreline stabilization projects with the Menominee County Conservationist. These projects are cost-shared through support from DATCP as a response to the Menominee County Land and Water Resource Management Plan.
- Lumberjack RC&D completed an Uncommon Forest Products Workshop with the Menominee in October 2003, attended by over 40 members of the tribal community and area residents.
- Assisted the County Conservationist with the plan development of 5 acres of Karner Blue Butterfly habitat with the financial assistance of the USFWS.
- Garlic Mustard Control: The Menominee Nation wants to gain control of an infestation of garlic mustard, before this invasive species becomes unmanageable. It is currently limited to small areas on the Reservation north of Neopit. Approximately five acres will be treated at a total cost of \$845. EQIP costs are \$549.

- Little W. Branch Trout Stream Improvement: This project will remove woody vegetation along both sides of the stream to allow grassy vegetation to dominate on the streambanks. This should result in the growth of aquatic plants and increase the abundance of aquatic invertebrates, and eventually, a narrower and deeper channel, with a bare gravel bottom. Total cost of this project is \$15,000. EQIP will cost share \$11,250.

Stockbridge-Munsee -- Sherrie Zenk-Reed, Tribal Liaison (715) 799-6380

- A grant for \$15,000 was received from NRCS for an interpretative trail around the tribal clinic. Work on the trail began in June 2002 and all project goals were met by the end of FY 2003. A virtual tour of the trail can be taken at the Stockbridge-Munsee web site.
- As a result of the 2003 CRP sign-up, the Stockbridge-Munsee will be planting 216 acres of hardwoods trees. The Tribal Liaison will be providing conservation planning and technical support for this practice.
- Currently in the planning stages of a wildlife scrape using the continuous sign-up for CRP. The scrape will be a great addition to the biodiversity of the area.
- Prairie Establishment: The Stockbridge-Munsee propose the establishment of permanent warm season grasses and forbs on fields that lie in areas of high ground water nitrate concentrations. This will ensure no further addition nitrates to these fields. Upland habitat management will be utilized to implement this proposal. EQIP will provide \$14,940 towards this project.
- Prairie Establishment using WHIP funds: The Stockbridge-Munsee will be planting 17 acres of prairie using WHIP funds to establish a permanent corridor between two water bodies.