

Natural Resources Conservation Service Southeast American Indian Workgroup



Assisting Leadership in Indian Country Today

Updated December 23, 2016

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Chapter 1

Role of the NRCS in the Southeast American Indian Workgroup



Our Vision

Productive Indian lands that use effective traditional and innovative conservation techniques to sustain the natural resources.

Our Mission

To provide leadership that creates opportunities for information exchange and training between workgroup members, American Indians and other organizations that results in increased conservation of natural resources on American Indian Lands, increased employment of American Indians by USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and sustains the preservation of cultural resources and traditional values.

Background

NRCS has over 80 years' experience in working with private landowners across the nation to provide technical and financial assistance in conserving their natural resources. As an agency, NRCS has led the way to assist Indian Tribes by establishing offices in Indian Country as defined by the U.S. Congress, the President of the United States, and NRCS policies. Native American governments are sovereign nations existing within the boundaries of the United States, and have special legal and political relationships with the United States. NRCS is striving to establish effective relationships with these sovereign governments by consulting with Indian Tribes on a government-to-government basis, and making agreements for the betterment of natural resources, economic development, health and educational needs.

The Southeast American Indian Workgroup was created in 1996 to ensure the delivery of those same services to American Indians in the eleven southeast states and Puerto Rico. Originally, the members of the workgroup included one NRCS staff person from each state who was appointed by the NRCS State Conservationist to serve as either the state Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM) or as an American Indian Liaison to one or more Tribes within the state.

Leadership was provided by the Regional Conservationist, a staff person from the Regional Office and a State Conservationist who served as a "Workgroup Champion." The workgroup continues to operate with representatives from each state, with leadership provided by the workgroup champion, and guidance from the Elder Advisory Council.

The NRCS Southeast American Indian Workgroup includes the following states and territory:

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1) Alabama | 2) Arkansas | 3) Florida |
| 4) Georgia | 5) Kentucky | 6) Louisiana |
| 7) Mississippi | 8) North Carolina | 9) Puerto Rico |
| 10) South Carolina | 11) Tennessee | 12) Virginia |

The Southeast American Indian Workgroup has developed into a strong and effective networking group who shares information, organizes regional meetings, recruits employees and provides assistance to American Indians in conservation of their natural resources.

Our Values

1. The workgroup will ensure that USDA program delivery is provided to all American Indians, including but not limited to, federally recognized, state recognized, community-based Tribes and individual American Indian landowners.
2. The workgroup will respect the cultural and traditional values of each Tribe through guidance provided by the Southeast American Indian Advisory Council.
3. The workgroup will strive to improve quality, accountability, effectiveness, and consistency of conservation assistance to sustain and improve Tribal natural resources.

Customers		Services		Products	
⇒	Elders	⇒	Leadership in Indian Country	⇒	SEAIWG Plan
⇒	Tribal Governments	⇒	Conservation Technical Assistance	⇒	Conservation Plans
⇒	Tribal Members	⇒		⇒	Conservation Contracts
⇒	Tribal Organizations	⇒	Government to Government Consultation	⇒	Educational Programs
⇒	USDA Agencies	⇒		⇒	USDA Program Information
⇒	National, Regional & State Leadership	⇒	Tribal Outreach	⇒	Best Management Practices
		⇒	Tribal Engagement	⇒	
⇒	NRCS Employees	⇒	USDA Program Financial Assistance	⇒	

Value of Workgroup to the Chief and Agency Leadership

1. Establishes a formal network for communications between NRCS and the numerous American Indian Tribes, community based organizations and American Indian individuals.
2. Provides a feedback mechanism on how well policies and requirements are being implemented.
3. Improves accountability by providing information on agency performance and evaluating effectiveness and efficiency of NRCS programs, activities and operations in Indian Country.
4. Increases the knowledge and skill of the staff working with the American Indians.



James Tillman, NRCS Southeast Regional Conservationist, and Kurt Readus, Mississippi NRCS State Conservationist and Workgroup Champion

Chapter 2

Southeast American Indian Elders Advisory Council



Early in the process, it was realized that the workgroup would benefit from following an Indian tradition of seeking advice and guidance from Indian Elders. Currently, each state is invited to have an Elder representative who serves on the Southeast American Indian Advisory Council.

Appointment of an Elder is usually done in consultation between the NRCS State Conservationist and the NRCS staff person serving on the workgroup. The Elder is chosen due to their knowledge of American Indian affairs in that state. They may be a chief or assistant chief; however, that is not a requirement. The invitation should be discussed with the Elder first, and then formalized in a letter from the NRCS State Conservationist.

Expectations of Elders

- Knowledgeable about American Indian affairs in the appointing state.
- Provide guidance to the workgroup representative and the NRCS State Conservationist on NRCS programs and services and how they impact the American Indians.
- Attend some of the monthly teleconferences of the workgroup.
- Review material and provide input to the workgroup representative.
- Participate in the American Indian Program Delivery Initiative Meetings sponsored by the workgroup.

The Elders are an integral part of the workgroup and are invited to all meetings and teleconferences. They are treated with respect for their knowledge and wisdom and for the many hours that they have volunteered to assist NRCS.

Current Elders Serving on Southeast American Indian Advisory Council

Elder	Tribe	State
Mr. Billy Smith	Poarch Band of Creek Indians	Alabama
VACANT		Florida
Principal Chief Marian McCormick	Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe	Georgia
VACANT		Louisiana
Ms. Virginia Willis	Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians	Mississippi
Mr. Jerry Wolfe	Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians	North Carolina
VACANT	Catawba Indian Nation	South Carolina
Chief Walt “Red Hawk” Brown	Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe	Virginia

Elders Advisory Council Recognition

In past years, Tribal Elders were presented with a certificate of appreciation from NRCS State Conservationists for serving as their state’s Elder Representative on the SEAIWG. Their continuous dedication, support, contributions as a facilitator, guide and teacher of Tribal cultures to USDA agencies and their employees, continues to help ensure a strong relationship is established, maintained, and enhanced as we work to implement USDA programs and activities in Indian Country. We commend and need their participation in Local, State, Regional, and National meetings providing a voice for Tribes and American Indian landowners to address Tribal issues with USDA programs. It is because of their voice that we hear, listen, and implement changes within USDA to remove barriers that limit participation in USDA programs and hopefully make USDA more accessible to Tribes and American Indians landowners. We congratulate these Elders in their efforts to help Tribes and American Indian landowners “Help the Land.”

Current Elders Serving on Southeast American Indian Advisory Council



Elder Billy Smith addresses NRCS employees at the AIANEA meeting at the Poarch Creek Band of Creek Indians in November 2014.



Elder Jerry Wolfe



Pictured Left to Right: Denise Lenoir-Giles (FSA), Chief Walt "Red Hawk" Brown, Yamika Bennett (NRCS), Derek Thompson (RD), Mary Hammock (NRCS), and Jason Osterbind (RD).

Elder Recommendations and Comments to the Workgroup

The following recommendations and comments were provided to the workgroup during previous interviews of the Southeast American Indian Advisory Council Elders. These suggestions provide needed directions to the workgroup in achieving its goals.

A. Tribal Natural Resource Concerns:

- Protection and enhancement of water quality and quantity
- Wetlands protections to ensure native cultural properties are not being inundated
- Pesticide and nutrient applications
- Forest management activities
- Cultural properties preservation
- Erosion on Tribal lands
- Ensuring education for future generations

B. Ensure Tribal Participation in NRCS and all other USDA Programs:

- Provide USDA program training meetings to all Tribal Leaders, Elders and Tribal members and landowners
- Holding meetings in the Tribal Communities
- Hold the American Indian Program Delivery Initiative Meetings
- Partner with agencies and Tribal organizations to get USDA program information distributed throughout Indian Country
- Ensure Tribal Leaders have opportunity to be engaged in program rules and regulations
- Advertise in the Tribal newsletters, websites that you are holding a meeting for American Indian farmers to acquaint them with NRCS programs

C. Identify American Indian landowners who would benefit from NRCS programs:

- A potential list of Tribal member agricultural producers can be obtained from Tribal leadership headquarters
- Tribal Census
- The Tribes are able to send out surveys to their members. This would be an excellent way to obtain the Tribal members who are farmers or producers
- Hold conservation tours to show completed conservation practices and have success stories given by participants

Chapter 3

Workgroup Structure



NRCS Staff Serving American Indians in the Southeast

The NRCS Southeast American Indian Workgroup consists of members who are appointed by their respective NRCS State Conservationists to represent the state. Leadership is provided by the Workgroup Champion who is appointed by the Southeast Regional Conservationist. State Conservationists within the Southeast Region serve as advisors to the workgroup.

Current Southeast American Indian Workgroup Members

Person	Workgroup Position	Work Title	State
Kurt Readus	Workgroup Champion	State Conservationist	Mississippi
David Elliott	Member	Tribal Liaison - FT	Alabama
Steve Lloyd	Alt. Member	AIAN-SEPM	Alabama
Alvin Peer	Member	Outreach Coordinator	Arkansas
Vacant	Member	AIAN-SEPM	Florida
	Alt. Member		Florida
Debbie Henry	Member	Tribal Liaison - PT	Georgia
Daniel Westcot	Alt. Member	District Conservationist - Outreach	Georgia
Sheila Keeling	Member	AIAN-SEPM	Kentucky
	Alt. Member		Kentucky
Randolph Joseph	Member	ASTC-FO	Louisiana
Aubra Lee	Alt. Member	State Cultural Resources Specialist	Louisiana
Tim Oakes	Member	Tribal Liaison - FT	Mississippi
Amanda Buchanan	Member	AIAN-SEPM	North Carolina
	Alt. Member		North Carolina
Vacant			Puerto Rico
Rich Williamson	Member	AIAN-SEPM	South Carolina
Ann Christie	Alt. Member	DC – Lancaster County	South Carolina
Rebecca Briggs	Alt. Member	Tribal Liaison – Catawba	South Carolina
Carolyn Bartee	Member	AIAN-SEPM	Tennessee
Melissa Allen	Member	AIAN-SEPM/TL - PT	Virginia
Twyla Gendron	Alt. Member	Contract Specialist	Virginia

Current Southeast American Indian Workgroup Advisors

Person	Workgroup Position - Title	State
James E. Tillman, Sr.	Regional Conservationist – Southeast	Washington, DC
Barry Hamilton	National Tribal Liaison	Rosslyn, VA
Ben Malone	State Conservationist	Alabama
Michael Sullivan	State Conservationist	Arkansas
Russell Morgan	State Conservationist	Florida
Terrance Rudolph	State Conservationist	Georgia
Karen Woodrich	State Conservationist	Kentucky
Kevin Norton	State Conservationist	Louisiana
Kurt Readus	State Conservationist	Mississippi
Tim Beard	State Conservationist	North Carolina
Edwin Almodovar	State Conservationist	Puerto Rico
Ann English	State Conservationist	South Carolina
Kevin Brown	State Conservationist	Tennessee
Jack Bricker	State Conservationist	Virginia
David Elliott	AIANEA SE Representative	Alabama

Current Elders Serving on Southeast American Indian Advisory Council

Elder	Tribe	State
Mr. Billy Smith	Poarch Band of Creek Indians	Alabama
VACANT		Florida
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VACANT		Louisiana
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Mr. Jerry Wolfe	Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians	North Carolina
VACANT	Catawba Indian Nation	South Carolina
Chief Walt “Red Hawk” Brown	Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe	Virginia

Chapter 4

Workgroup Goals



Summary of Goals

- Goal 1** Increase the conservation of natural resources on American Indian lands.
- Goal 2** Sustain and establish, where needed, working relationships with American Indians so they are familiar with the services available and know where to go to receive assistance.
- Goal 3** Enhance the knowledge of NRCS leadership about the conversation needs of American Indians and the unique definition of responsibilities to provide services.
- Goal 4** Improve the knowledge and skills of NRCS employees who work with American Indians.
- Goal 5** Increase awareness of and provide training to NRCS employees in their responsibilities to identify, protect and conserve tribal cultural properties.

Detailed Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal 1 Increase the conservation of natural resources on American Indian lands.

Objective A: Tribal Liaisons, AIAN-SEPM's and Outreach Coordinators provide support to field staff in how to assist American Indians.

Objective B: Host American Indian Program Delivery Initiative Meetings for American Indian Tribal officials and NRCS staff to improve working relationships and knowledge about effective conservation strategies.

Strategy 1 Include success stories to show American Indians commitment to conservation

Strategy 2 Provide training to NRCS field staff on how to improve services

Strategy 3 Include USDA officials to sustain and improve the working relationship with Tribal Leaders

Strategy 4 Support attendance by Tribal Elders by including them on the program

Strategy 5 Gain insight from Tribal Elders by having them provide words of wisdom and guidance during opening sessions

Goal 2 Sustain and establish, where needed, working relationships with American Indians so they are familiar with the services available to them and know where to go to receive assistance.

Objective A: Strengthen the involvement of the Southeast American Indian Workgroup and Advisory Council.

Strategy 1 Ensure Elder participation on workgroup teleconferences

Strategy 2 Involve Elders on State Technical Committees

Strategy 3 Invite and include Elders in NRCS Leadership meetings

Objective B: Provide each Federal, State Tribes, Community Based Organizations and individual American Indian landowners with current information about NRCS programs.

Strategy 1 Provide information through mail, email and website concerning NRCS programs

Strategy 2 Host meetings for the Tribes

Strategy 3 Attend Tribal natural resources meetings

Strategy 4 Attend Tribal College and Career Fairs and special events when invited

Detailed Goals, Objectives, and Strategies (cont.)

Objective C: Provide all federally recognized Tribes with a NRCS Tribal Liaison to ensure government-to-government consultation.

Strategy 1 Tribal Liaison communicates regularly with Tribal representatives on natural resources issues

Strategy 2 Tribal Liaisons prepare NRCS Leadership and employees on how to work effectively with Tribal Governments and American Indian landowners

Strategy 3 Ensure all Tribal Liaisons receive adequate training in working with Tribal Government

Objective D: AIAN-SEPM'S establish contacts with and provide information to state recognized Tribes and Community Based Organizations.

Goal 3 Enhance the knowledge of NRCS leadership about the conservation needs of American Indians and the unique definition of responsibilities to provide services.

Objective A: Provide reports to the NRCS Regional Conservationist regarding activities of the Southeast American Indian Workgroup.

Objective B: Offer training for NRCS leadership at the American Indian Program Delivery Initiative meetings.

Objective C: Write up success stories and share with appropriate NRCS leadership.

Goal 4 Improve the knowledge and skills of NRCS employees who work with American Indians.

Objective A: Host regular teleconferences for Southeast American Indian Workgroup members to network and share information.

Objective B: Southeast American Indian Workgroup members provide information to NRCS employees within their state on how to effectively establish relations and work with American Indians.

Objective C: Increase membership involvement with the National American Indian/Alaska Native Employees Association (AIANEA).

Objective D: Ensure Southeast American Indian Workgroup members attend NRCS training courses and other classes on establishing and sustaining effective working relationships with Tribes.

Detailed Goals, Objectives, and Strategies (cont.)

Goal 5 Increase awareness of and provide training to NRCS employees in their responsibilities to identify, protect and conserve tribal cultural properties.

Objective A: Establish and maintain relationships with Tribal Historical Preservation Officers (THPO), State Historical Preservation Officers and State Cultural Resource Specialist.

Objective B: Provide cultural resource training to all NRCS employees.

Objective C: Ensure consultation with federally recognized tribes.

Chapter 5

NRCS Staff, Tribal Information, Maps



The states committed to this workgroup are shown below, along with NRCS staffing that ensures NRCS programs are made available to all tribes, individual American Indian landowners and Tribal Community Based Organizations.

NRCS Staff Serving Tribes

State	Federal Tribes	State Tribes	Tribal Community Based Organizations	AIAN-SEPM	Tribal Liaison	Outreach Coordinator
Alabama	1	8		1	1 - FT	1
Arkansas				1		1
Florida	2	4		1	1 - PT	1
Georgia		3		1	1 - PT	2
Kentucky			1	1		1
Louisiana	4	10	8	1	1 - PT	1
Mississippi	1		1	1	1 - FT	1
North Carolina	1	8	4	1	1 - FT	1
Puerto Rico				1		
South Carolina	1	8	7	1	1 - PT	1
Tennessee			6	1		1
Virginia	1	10	2	1	1 - PT	1
TOTAL	10	52	29	12	7	12

- AI/AN SEPM = American Indian/Alaskan Native Special Emphasis Program Manager, which is a collateral duty.
- Tribal Liaisons are assigned to specific Tribes and are either part-time or full-time in that capacity.
- Outreach Coordinators serve many types of underserved customers including American Indians.

Federally Recognized Tribes in the Twelve Southeast States

State	Name of Tribe	Number of Members	Approximate Acreage in Reservation	Approximate Acreage in Tribal Land
AL	Poarch Band of Creek Indians	3029	192	16,361
AR	No Federal Tribes			
FL	Miccosukee Tribe of Florida	600	75,000	
FL	Seminole Tribe of Florida	6,350	89,000	
GA	No Federal Tribes			
KY	No Federal Tribes			
LA	Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana	1,300	445	555
LA	Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana	865	1,048	5,916
LA	Jena Band of Choctaw Indians	327	64	104
LA	Tunica-Biloxi Indian Tribe of Louisiana	1,200	416	
MS	Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians	8,760	35,000	2,600
NC	Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians	14,000	56,875	
PR	No Federal Tribes			
SC	Catawba Indian Nation	2,700	711	333
TN	No Federal Tribes			
VA	Pamunkey Indian Tribe	100		1,200

***All numbers and acreages are estimated and not exact figures.**

State Recognized Tribes in the Twelve Southeast States

State	Name of Tribe	Number of Members	Approximate Acreage in State Reservation	Approximate Acreage in Tribal Land
AL	Echota Cherokee Tribe of Alabama	33,000		100
AL	Cherokee Tribe of Northeast Alabama	4,900		10
AL	Ma-Chis Lower Creek Indian Tribe of Alabama	5,000		10
AL	Star Clan of Muscogee Creeks	350		20
AL	Cher-O-Creek Intra Tribal Indians	350		5
AL	MOW A Band of Choctaw Indians	9,000		25
AL	Piqua Shawnee Tribe	250		
AL	United Cherokee Ani-Yun-Wiya Nation	500		1
AR	No State Tribes			
FL	Perdido Bay Tribe	245		10
FL	Santa Rosa County Creek Indian Tribe, Inc.	1,000		28
FL	Muscogee Nations of Florida	260		10
FL	Choctaw Nation of Florida	77		
GA	Lower Muskogee Creek Tribe	3,000		80
GA	Georgia Tribe of Eastern Cherokee	450		
GA	Cherokee of Georgia Tribal Council	450		30
KY	No State Tribes			
LA	Addai Caddo Tribe	612		

State Recognized Tribes in the Twelve Southeast States (cont.)

LA	Biloxi-Chitimacha Confederation of Muskogee	2,545	
LA	Choctaw-Apache Community of Ebarb	2,237	32
LA	Clifton Choctaw	500	
LA	Four Winds Tribe Louisiana Cherokee Confederacy	1,687	15
LA	Grand Caillou/Dulac Band	1,200	
LA	Isle de Jean Charles Band	600	
LA	Louisiana Choctaw Tribe		
LA	Pointe-Au-Chien Indian Tribe	680	
LA	United Houma Nation	17,000	
MS	No State Tribes		
NC	Coharie Intra-Tribal Council		
NC	Meherrin Tribe		
NC	Haliwa-Saponi Tribe		
NC	Lumbee Tribe of NC.	40,000	
NC	Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation		
NC	Sappony		
NC	Waccamaw-Siouan Tribe		
SC	Wassamasaw Tribe of Varnertown Indians	1,500	
SC	Beaver Creek Indians	2,000	
SC	Edisto Natchez-Kusso Indians		
SC	Pee Dee Tribe of South Carolina	2,000	
SC	Pee Dee Nation of Upper South Carolina		
SC	Santee Indian Organization	381	
SC	Waccamaw Indian People		
SC	Sumter Band of Cheraw	82	
TN	No State Tribes		
VA	Mattaponi Reservation	450	150
VA	Nansemond Tribe	200	
VA	Chickahominy Tribe	840	110
VA	Eastern Chickahominy Tribe	164	41
VA	Rappahannock Indian Tribe	500	132
VA	Upper Mattaponi	575	32
VA	Monacan	2,100	180
VA	Patawomeck Indian Tribe	1,500	
VA	Nottaway Indian Tribe	120	
VA	Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe	272	100

***All numbers and acreages are estimated and not exact figures.**

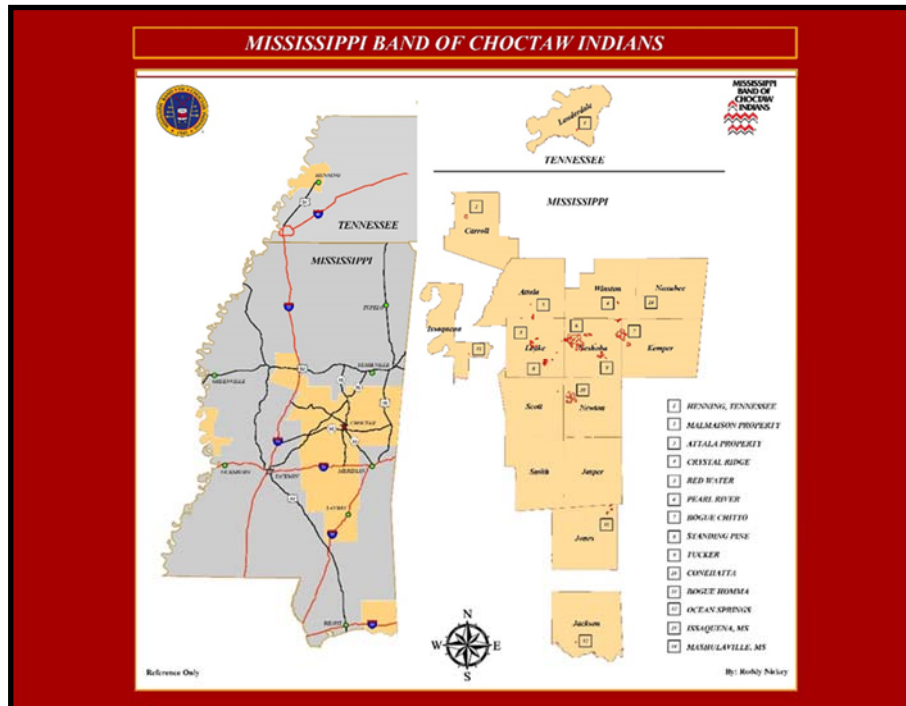
State Maps Highlighting Tribes within the Southeast



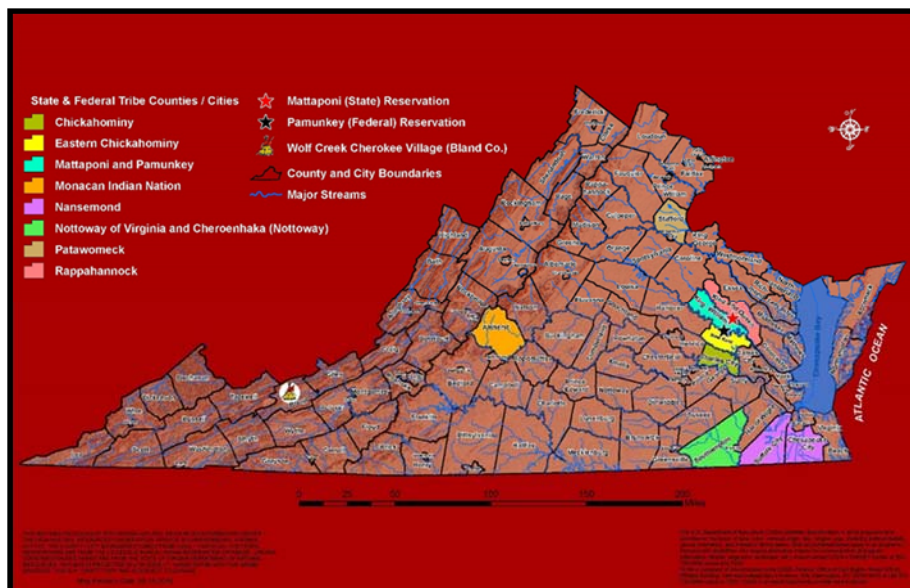
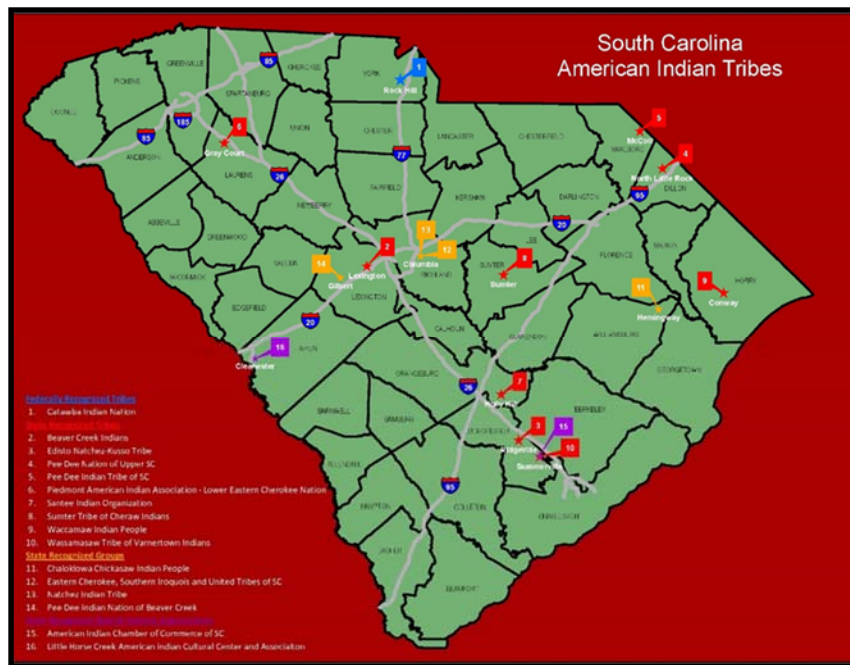
State Maps Highlighting Tribes within the Southeast (cont.)



State Maps Highlighting Tribes within the Southeast (cont.)



State Maps Highlighting Tribes within the Southeast (cont.)



Chapter 6

Workgroup Accomplishments/Success Stories



- A. NRCS Program Funding in Indian Country in the Southeast**
- B. NRCS National Office Long Range Plans**
- C. American Indian Program Delivery Initiative Meetings hosted by Southeast Workgroup**
- D. Alabama Success Story – David Elliott Awarded 2015’s Jerry L. Johnson Award for Public Service**
- E. Kentucky Success Story – NRCS Kentucky Leadership Team Visits Cherokee Trail of Tears Park and Heritage Center in Hopkinsville, Kentucky**
- F. Louisiana Success Story – Bayou DuLarge Ridge, Marsh and Hydrologic Restoration Project**
- G. Mississippi Success Story – Choctaw Fresh Produce Continues to Expand Organic Operations**
- H. South Carolina Success Story – NRCS Staff Works Closely with Native American Tribes**
- I. Virginia Success Story – USDA Agencies Forge Working Relationship with Pamunkey Indian Tribe of Virginia**

A. NRCS Program Funding in Indian Country in the Southeast

NRCS programs have provided many opportunities for the Tribes within the Southeast American Indian Workgroup boundaries to enhance, improve, and preserve their natural resources. Several Tribes are now participating in USDA and NRCS programs as result of fostering strong relationships between NRCS and Tribal leaders. We have focused on programs administered by NRCS, but many other USDA Agencies have provided funds as well. Through these programs Tribes as well as individual American Indian landowners have been able to address their resource concerns on cropland, pastureland, and forestlands to preserve, enhance and maintain for future generations.

The following is an overview of funds. The information below is official data from the Resource Economics Analysis and Policy (REAP) Division for the fiscal years 2012-2015 that includes funding through the following programs: Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), Environmental Quality Incentive Program Regional Conservation Partnership Program (EQIP-RCPP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) in the Southeast Region.

A. NRCS Program Funding in Indian Country in the Southeast

Southeast Region Funding for Tribes – 87 Contracts for a total of \$8,807,002.

Southeast Region Funding for American Indians/Alaskan Natives – 505 Contracts for a total of \$12,532,866.

Since fiscal year 2009 NRCS has obligated over 797 contracts for a total of \$35,319,205 with Tribes and individual American Indian Landowners within our Southeast workgroup area.

B. NRCS National Office Long Range Plans

1. Increase conservation assistance to Tribes and American Indians/Alaska Natives, working through Community Based Organizations.
2. Increase conservation assistance to Tribes and American Indians/Alaska Natives by engaging Technical Service Providers to work closely with these groups.
3. Increase conservation assistance to Tribes and American Indians/Alaska Natives who have conservation plans and participate in NRCS programs.
4. Increase conservation by conducting on farm demonstrations in Indian Country.

C. American Indian Program Delivery Initiative Meetings hosted by Southeast Workgroup

In previous years, the Southeast American Indian Workgroup hosted American Indian Program Delivery Initiative meetings to develop and improve working relationships with the Tribes and USDA agencies throughout the Southeast. The meetings were all hosted by a Tribe on Tribal lands where two-way communication about USDA offered programs and services needed by Tribes to effectively manage their natural resources could be discussed. The last meeting occurred in May 2010 at the Seminole Tribe of Florida in Hollywood, FL.

The stated objectives of these meetings are to:

- Communicate with Tribal leaders about how to access USDA programs and services to American Indian producers and landowners.
- Provide a listening forum to surface concerns that southeastern Tribes have in accessing USDA conservation programs and services.
- Demonstrate ways that NRCS employees can work more effectively with American Indians and American Indian Tribal ways of government.
- Encourage the formation of Tribal conservation districts.
- Provide opportunities for input on the Farm Bill.

D. Alabama Success Story – David Elliott Awarded 2015's Jerry L. Johnson Award for Public Service

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Alabama today announced that David Elliott has been named 2015's Jerry L. Johnson award winner. Elliott was recognized at the 73rd annual Alabama Association of Conservation Districts (AACD) conference in Orange Beach, Alabama on November 16, 2015.



From left to right: Laslie Hall, President Alabama Association of Conservation Districts; Shannon Weaver, Alabama ASTC-Technology; Dr. William Puckett, Executive Director, Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee; James Tillman, NRCS Southeast Regional Conservationist; Nell Wiggins, Escambia County Alabama SWCD Supervisor; Joy Elliott; David Elliott; Tim Albritton; Alabama NRCS State Forester; Frank Nalty; Chairman Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee; Charlie Ramsey, Alabama ASTC-West Team.

This award is given to an Alabama NRCS employee for “Excellence in Public Service through One’s Family, Employment, Profession and Community.” The nominated employee who exhibits the characteristics of Jerry Johnson’s spirit and concern for his family, fellow employees, the environment and his community will be recognized.

The award’s 10th recipient was in south Alabama in Escambia County and lives on his family’s 120 year old farm with his wife. This background in agriculture gave Elliott the perfect foundation for what later became his life’s work in conservation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Alabama. Elliott’s life goal has been and continues to be working with people and to leave this a better place for our children and the next generations that will follow.

D. Alabama Success Story – David Elliott Awarded 2015’s Jerry L. Johnson Award for Public Service (cont.)

He currently serves as a Liaison for NRCS on the Poarch Band of Creek Indians reservation in Atmore, AL and has helped to build a very strong relationship with those he represents. He helps them preserve, maintain, and enhance their natural resources for future generations.

“David Elliott has dedicated the past 36 years to conservation and serving his community. The selection committee was proud to present him with this year’s award because he has without a doubt, positively impacted lives statewide,” said Ben Malone, State Conservationist for NRCS Alabama.

For over 30 years, Jerry L. Johnson served conservation in Alabama. As NRCS State Staff Forester, he worked with the conservation partnership to assist landowners with natural resource concerns. His work and dedication positively impacted the forest, wildlife, and water resources of our state. He passed away December 31, 2003 after a lengthy battle with cancer, only a few months after retiring from the agency. Nominations for the Jerry L. Johnson award are accepted each year in August.

E. Kentucky Success Story – NRCS Kentucky Leadership Team Visits Cherokee Trail of Tears Park and Heritage Center in Hopkinsville, Kentucky

The NRCS Kentucky Leadership team as well as our local work unit visited the Trail of Tears Park and Heritage Center in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, in October, 2016. Christina Atkins-Scott, Park Interpreter, presented the history of the event and the park that included a tour of the grounds and burial sites of Chief Whitepath and Chief Fly Smith.



From left to right: Sheila Keeling, Cora Kreischer, Alan Atkins, Lacey Gaw, Frank Yancey, Karen Woodrich, and Tony Nott

Between 1830 and 1850, the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole, and Cherokee people (including Native Americans, and the African freedmen and slaves, who lived among them) were forcibly removed from their traditional lands in the Southeastern United States, and relocated farther west. Those Native Americans that were relocated were forced to march to their destinations by state and local militia.

The Cherokee removal in 1838 (the last forced removal east of the Mississippi) was brought on by the discovery of gold near Dahlonega, Georgia in 1828, resulting in the Georgia Gold Rush. Approximately 2,000-6,000 of the 16,543 relocated Cherokee perished along the way.

F. Louisiana Success Story – Bayou DuLarge Ridge, Marsh and Hydrologic Restoration Project: A Partnership between the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service

In July 2012, the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast State Act (RESTORE Act) established the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council). The RESTORE Act dedicates 80 percent of all administrative and civil penalties related to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill to a Gulf Coast Restoration Trust Fund and outlines a structure by which the funds can be utilized to restore and protect the natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wildlife habitats, beaches, coastal wetlands and economy of the Gulf Coast region.

In the fall of 2015, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service developed and submitted the Bayou DuLarge Ridge, Marsh and Hydrologic Restoration Project on behalf of the federally recognized Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana for potential inclusion on the Funded Priorities List. The reason this was a perfect fit was because NRCS and the Chitimacha Tribe had worked in the past in a government to government relationship on vegetative plantings and cultural resources protection in the Bayou DuLarge area.

On December 9, 2015 the Initial Funded Priorities List was approved by the RESTORE Council. The Bayou DuLarge Project was included on this list making it the only tribally proposed project to be funded. The funds provided will cover the engineering and design phase of the project. Ridge, marsh and hydrologic restoration projects along the coast of Louisiana have been instrumental in preserving and restoring critical habitat and help protect Louisiana’s coastal communities. Hydrologic restoration projects such as this, attempt to return sites of altered hydrology to a more natural condition. By controlling the water level and flow of water, projects have reduced expanses of waterlogged marsh and reduced saltwater intrusion.



Initial cultural resources investigation of the Bayou DuLarge project area with (l) Quin Kinler, NRCS Resource Conservationist, (c) Dr. David Palmer, former Deputy Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana and (r) Kimberly S. Walden, Cultural Director/Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and Tribe Member of the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana.

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F. Louisiana Success Story – Bayou DuLarge Ridge, Marsh and Hydrologic Restoration Project: A Partnership between the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (cont.)



Kimberly S. Walden (2nd from right), Cultural Director/Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and Tribe Member, with her family and Department of Interior Secretary Sally Jewell. Secretary Jewell visited the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana on June 21, to announce funding to the Tribe’s Youth Conservation Corps (Summer Youth Program), from the BP civil penalties, the first in the nation to receive the funds. Secretary Jewell worked with the youth to clean up the portion of Bayou Teche which is the northern boundary of the reservation. The Chitimacha, and tribal corps from five other federally recognized tribes with ties to the Gulf Coast, will receive \$100,000 to fund their programs for two years. Kimberly S. Walden is the tribal government representative for RESTORE.

The Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana is the only tribe in Louisiana to still occupy a portion of the aboriginal homeland. The Tribe’s lands once encompassed the entire Atchafalaya Basin, land westward toward Lafayette, Louisiana, southward to the Gulf of Mexico and eastward to the New Orleans area. Through the centuries, the Chitimacha Tribe has seen great prosperity; fought battles against the French and English to defend their land and people; faced encroachment by the Spanish; suffered the bonds of slavery; and faced extinction.

Although no longer living in Terrebonne Parish, the Chitimacha Tribe supports this project because it will preserve and protect valuable tribal resources and traditions. This project will improve parts of central Terrebonne Parish marshes that are aboriginal lands of the Chitimacha, preserving cultural resources for future generations.

G. Mississippi Success Story – Choctaw Fresh Produce Continues to Expand Organic Operations

By now there are many people who are benefiting from the creation of Choctaw Fresh Produce in Mississippi. In April of 2013 the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians were investing in high tunnels, green houses and supplying a needed demand for central Mississippi. USDA-NRCS Tribal Liaison, Timothy Oakes, who works hand in hand with Choctaw people, assisted with the conservation resource management plans for this project. The development of farm related plans and agreements between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Choctaw real-estate program is just part of the work to assist the Tribe.

"A farm management plan must be in place to receive a long term lease agreement for the use of agricultural lands held in trust by the Tribe," stated Oakes. "There are plans to include additional houses in field locations on Tribal land."

With more than 16 High Tunnels and green houses to keep running these type of projects produce a fresh source of food for all of Mississippi. The Mississippi Choctaw are creating job opportunities as well as health opportunities. Putting local Tribal members to work as well as providing a source for fresh produce for local homes, businesses and restaurants is a much needed enterprise in this area.



From left to right, Daphne Snow, Choctaw Fresh Produce Field Coordinator, Miles McEvoy, Jessie Buie, and Timothy Oakes

Recently the USDA Deputy Administrator of the National Organic Program, Miles McEvoy, visited the Tribe. "The Tribe's organic high tunnels are an exciting project for providing fresh organic produce to local Choctaw communities and providing economic opportunities to tribal members. There may be opportunities to provide support/information to these operations as well as reach out to other tribes interested in organic production."

H. South Carolina Success Story – NRCS works closely with Native American Tribes

On February 25, 2016, Dick Yetter and Ann Christie met with the Catawba Indian Nation Environmental Staff. Dick is the State Biologist in the SC NRCS state office, and Ann Christie is the District Conservationist in Lancaster County as well as interim Tribal Liaison to the Catawba. Scott Hansen and Darin Steen were the two members of the Catawba Environmental Staff who requested the conservation technical assistance.

They were eager to inventory the health and quality of the 18 miles of stream surrounding the reservation. The Stream Visual Assessment Protocol (SVAP) tool is an NRCS tool which evaluates physical characteristics of streams. This tool can be utilized by the staff to properly obtain hard data to develop a baseline condition. The Catawba planned to record the data using the SVAP and apply for a 319 project, to address water quality issues.

NRCS uses the SVAP to identify resource concerns with in water courses. The tool helps document and score reaches of water courses to include limited aquatic organisms, incised banks, and degraded riparian areas. Dick and Ann discussed and demonstrated the tool on Haggins Creek to Scott and Darin.

A joint training with NRCS and the Catawba was discussed and Mr. Hansen is in the process of lining up volunteers for the SVAP project. The environmental staff were grateful for the training and onsite evaluation. Scott discussed notifying Dick and Ann once he was able to schedule days for the assessment. NRCS together with Catawba Environmental staff and their volunteers will evaluate streams on the reservation and educate individuals on the implementation of the SVAP.

I. Virginia Success Story – USDA Agencies Forge Working Relationship with Pamunkey Indian Tribe of Virginia

In July 2015, the federal government granted federal recognition to the Pamunkey Indian tribe of Virginia – the first tribe in Virginia to be granted federal recognition. In April 2016, Virginia representatives from FSA, NRCS, and RD met with Chief Robert Gray and Assistant Chief Brad Brown. The meeting provided an opportunity for agency representatives to begin forging a relationship with the Pamunkey Indian tribe. Chief Gray and Assistant Chief Brown posed detailed questions and expressed specific ideas on ways to make their tribal community self-sustainable. Each agency representative presented information on key programs to assist the tribe with these ideas.

Diane Lenoir-Giles, FSA Public Relations/Outreach Specialist provided a summary of FSA programs. NRCS Assistant State Conservationist Keith Boyd and District Conservationist John Dille offered information on NRCS programs focusing on how NRCS could support Pamunkey agriculture ventures. RD State Director Basil Gooden, Assistant to the State Director Janice Stroud-Bickes, and Community Programs Director, Jim Maras attended the meeting. Jim Maras presented information on RD's Community Facilities Loans which provide low interest loans for structures deemed to be an essential community facility including but not limited to libraries and medical centers. RD's Broadband Program was mentioned as well; the program aims to bring affordable internet access to rural areas. In addition, Janice Stroud-Bickes provided information on RD's Single Family Housing Program which provided low interest loans to purchase and repair homes in rural areas. Both Chief Gray and Assistant Chief Brown expressed interest in the Broadband and Single Family Housing Programs, but informed the group that it would likely be some time before the Pamunkey Indian Tribe could explore participation in these programs due to their tribal lands being held in trust by the Commonwealth of Virginia. A process to convert these lands to Federal Trust Land is underway, but it could be a couple of years before the process is complete.

Overall all parties agreed the meeting was very informative and look forward to continuing to build a working relationship with the Pamunkey Indian Tribe.

Chapter 7

Background Material for Plan Development



The following information provides an overview of the workgroups strengths and highlights opportunities available.

Strengths of Workgroup

- Elder's Advisory Council members contribute to knowledge base.
- Regional coverage of twelve states.
- Great working relationship with understanding and concern for American Indian values and involvement in NRCS program implementation.
- Workgroup has built an incredible trust with Tribes.
- Good working relationships between workgroup members.
- Recognized nationally by NRCS and Indian groups.
- Plays a big role in USDA program delivery to Southeast Indian Country.
- Provide wisdom, knowledge, and direction for NRCS to be more effective and efficient when working within Indian Country.
- Workgroup has a direct relationship and good support from NRCS State Conservationists and direct connection with Regional staff working as liaisons to Tribes.
- Initiate consultation with Federally Recognized Tribes on a government-to- government basis.
- Provide quality guidance to leadership on Indian issues, i.e., conservation, cultural, environments, policies and politics.

Upcoming Opportunities for Workgroup

- Group is a working prototype for other regions across the country.
- Opportunity to help other Tribes, whether in our region or not, to have the relationship we share in our region.
- Successful projects will add to our validity as a workgroup.
- Increase Tribal leadership involvement within NRCS and USDA.
- More Tribal participation from Tribes and American Indian landowners.
- Effectively promote partnerships between Tribes and NRCS.
- Look at more partnership opportunities with agencies, organizations and Tribes.

Threats to the Workgroup

- **Need for increased NRCS management support.**
- **Lack of support and participation from some states.**
- **Lack of NRCS funding for American Indian Program Delivery Initiative Training.**
- **Reduced opportunities for face-to-face meetings and relationship building, which is a very important part of Native American culture.**

Action Plan Summary

The Southeast American Indian Workgroup is proud of the accomplishments that have been accomplished within Indian Country in the Southeast. While these accomplishments are commendable, it is the goal of our workgroup to continue to see NRCS, Tribes, and American Indian landowners reach new heights as we work together to protect, maintain, and enhance our natural resources.

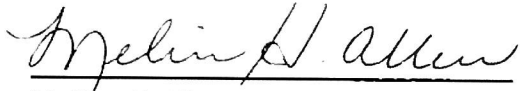


Former Environmental Director Ralph McCullers provides information on the community garden and hoop house at the Poarch Band of Creek Indians reservation. Also pictured Debbie Henry, Steve Lloyd, ??, and Darrell Hollinger.



The newly installed hoop house provides vegetables for the community garden at Poarch Band of Creek Indians reservation.

The 2017 Southeast American Indian Workgroup Plan was approved on December 23, 2016. All previous versions are obsolete.



Melissa H. Allen, Acting SEAIWG Chairman



Kurt Readus, Workgroup Champion

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Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

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