



National Association of  
Conservation Districts

## November 2017 Update NACD Tribal Outreach and Partnership Resource Policy Group (RPG)

**Southwest/Pacific Region Meeting, Tucson, AZ**

Michael Crowder, Chair

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### **Tribal RPG Face-to-Face Meeting**

The NACD Tribal Outreach and Partnership Resource Policy Group (RPG) held its second face-to-face meeting on September 12, 2017, held in conjunction with the 2017 NACD Southwest/Pacific Region Meeting, in Tucson, AZ. RPG members discussed progress in the RPG's tribal outreach and partnership initiative, and laid a course for future direction and priorities.

In advance of the meeting, Sadie Lister, RPG member from the Central Little Colorado River Soil and Water Conservation District, AZ, extended an invitation (including scholarships) for local tribes to attend and participate in the Tribal RPG meeting. Eight tribes accepted her offer and participated in the day-long RPG meeting. Tribal invitees contributed many important ideas and suggestions to the work of the RPG at this meeting.

RPG members and staff provided reports on RPG presentations made at various NACD Region Meetings in 2017, noting that region meeting attendees responded favorably to the description of the RPG's work and objectives. A number of attendees identified potential partnership success stories and examples for preparation of additional articles for NACD publications *e-Resource* and *The Resource*.

Chair Michael Crowder shared information about his request to NRCS Regional Conservationists, enlisting their assistance in the RPG engaging NRCS Tribal Liaisons directly in the work of the RPG. The RPG looks forward to engaging with these essential NRCS personnel in its outreach and partnership efforts.

RPG members agreed on several key points for future direction:

- a) Continue action to solicit and publish tribal outreach and partnership success stories from regions and their conservation districts.
- b) Sponsor local conservation district and tribal partners in presenting one or more success story examples to audiences at the **2018 NACD Annual Meeting** (Nashville), if possible.
- c) Repeat RPG presentations at the **2018 NACD Region Meetings**, including presentation of success story examples to region audiences, in order to describe how local partners communicated, formed partnerships and worked together.
- d) Engage with tribal associations and organizations to promote outreach and partnership efforts.
- e) Explore development of a web page for the RPG, including links to tribal groups and local success story contacts, as well as examples or templates on model agreements and contracts that can be adapted by tribes and conservation districts as they develop working partnerships.
- f) To understand what further tools the RPG can develop to assist those districts and tribes who wish to (or maybe should) collaborate, reach out to tribal organizations and groups to find out what is needed from their perspective.

- g) Share with tribes **the value of locally-led**, and its place in understanding roles and responsibilities in a system often confused by the "*government-to-government*" relationship involving tribes and the federal government. Demonstrate to tribes the **benefits of engaging at the local level** with a conservation district or tribal conservation district, including improving access to the NRCS "model" for program participation, working across land ownership boundaries, complementing funding and technical resources, and taking advantage of the landowner and land user trust secured locally by conservation districts and tribal conservation districts.
- h) As NACD participates in the development of the next Farm Bill conservation title, the RPG should consider how to contribute an understanding of the need to provide greater opportunities for tribal participation in conservation funding and program services.
- i) Indian **trust lands** pose a particularly vexing problem when it comes to application for NRCS conservation programs. The fractionated land "ownership" issue of Indian lands does not easily fit current program application requirements. Some answer for this problem must be found if tribes are to participate fully in conservation programs.

Finally, following recent devastating hurricanes with impacts in states and territories, the RPG expressed interest in determining which tribes in those areas have been impacted by the storms, and in reaching out to them about their needs for natural resources recovery.

### **Morsels**

- The Southeast Region is considering establishing a small southeast work group to explore interest in tribal partnerships and to identify potential tribal partnership success stories. What about **your** region?
- The Southeast Region includes at least one local RC&D that collaborates with a tribal partner, suggesting that the RPG should consider inviting a national RC&D representative to participate in the RPG. What do **you** think about that idea?