

Hoopa Valley Tribe Food Security Efforts

Background

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The Hoopa Valley Tribe is located in the far Northern portion of California roughly 7 hours North of Sacramento and two hours South of Oregon. The Hoopa Valley is rich in traditional foods and natural resources that have sustained the people of the valley since time immemorial.

Hoopa tribal people have been a secure food nation for thousands of years pre-contact. Since contact and the establishment of the Hoopa Treaty in 1868, the Hoopa people have seen declines in food sovereignty.

The resiliency of the Hoopa people in the past few decades has awoken the need to address food insecurities on the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation. The Hoopa Valley Tribe's nonprofit organization, the Klamath Trinity Resource Conservation District(KTRCD), has initiated agricultural and food security efforts in Hoopa since its formation in 2007. This organization has worked with the USDA agency to support and provide technical assistance for tribal producers.

The KTRCD has been able to work alongside USDA NRCS California to create a million-dollar set aside for tribes. This set aside has benefitted many tribes throughout California and has initiated Statewide tribal advisory council meetings semi-annually with the NRCS State conservationist. These meetings have created tribal traditional ecological practices that tribes are using to provide resources for managing their natural resources on their tribal lands. Tribes in California have used these practices for tens of thousands of years. These efforts have been a guide for NRCS nationwide, and the KTRCD partnership with NRCS is highlighted as to how to effectively work with tribes throughout USDA.

The KTRCD works with the Hoopa Valley Tribe's education programs to get youth involved in food security projects and the Klamath Trinity Joint Unified School District. These pre-K and K12 projects consist of seeding plants, planting, conservation practices, harvesting, and prepping and preserving the foods grown. The KTRCD has overseen the Hoopa community garden and used it as a demonstration garden.

The KTRCD also works with tribal producers to develop conservation planning on their property and provide resources for purchasing seeds, starts, irrigation supplies, and more. These producers are provided information if they want to seek out USDA programs such as EQIP NRCS and FSA Micro Loan programs. The KTRCD listens to the needs a vision of tribal producers on their lands.

Also, the KTRCD provides nutrition and food preservation classes to the Hoopa community. These classes teach how to use foods grown in Hoopa year-round and preserve these seasonal foods. The KTRCD also provides traditional foods classes that teach community members how to properly and sustainably harvest traditional foods.

Finally, the KTRCD has a local farmers market that provides an avenue for tribal producers and value-added producers to sell their products to the Hoopa community. The market starts beginning of June and ends at the end of October yearly. The KTRCD successfully obtained a USDA RD Community Facilities grant and purchased tables, chairs, and pop-ups. These items help producers and have been of great value to the community. The KTRCD also can accept

EBT benefits. The KTRCD was able to secure this through USDA FNS and provide a market match and a voucher for tribal elders and SSI/SSID recipients.

Empowering Tribes in Technical Assistance, Outreach, and Capacity Building

- Background
 - The census definition of a farm is any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year. The definition has changed nine times since it was established in 1850. **This ruling has exited out many tribal producers, tribal traditional food gathers, and tribal subsistence farmers.**
 - USDA dates back to 1862, a period that includes federal government sanctioned removal and Homestead Acts transferring Tribal lands to white settlers.
 - Although Native people have been farming this land since time immemorial, Tribal governments and producers were never envisioned as stakeholders in the Department.
 - For example, the average Native farm size is 978 acres and more than twice the average size of white farms (431 acres). However, white farms are more than 3 times as profitable as Native farms despite being less than half the size (total value of production for Native farms is \$58,885 compared to \$193,132 for white farms).
 - This can be attributed to the historical and systemic lack of access to capital, lack of access to USDA programs, and lack of access to technical assistance. These concerns also align with what Tribal producers are saying during the pandemic.
- To address these issues, USDA must not only take steps to address barriers within the building but also empower Tribal governments and Tribal organizations.
- Issues with Rural Development
 - USDA RD offers many grant and loan programs to support rural communities, however Indian Country remains underserved.
 - Tribes often lack large scale planning resources but are in critical need of the resources USDA RD offers.
 - Tribal Nations encounter difficulty accessing credit through lending institutions which currently have very little incentive to extend credit and capital services onto tribal lands.
 - Implement the Tribal Technical Assistance Office at Rural Development provisions from the 2018 Farm Bill to support Tribes and Tribal entities have access to the agency Rural Development (RD) programs as well as provide need support and connection with partner organizations on training and guidance within RD on Tribal business structures and entities to clear up any misunderstandings of ineligibility.
 - Rural Development community facilities grants are a benefit to agriculture economic development in tribal communities. The problems faced by tribes is the reimbursement rate. It is a barrier for tribes to purchase all items of the grant upfront and wait for reimbursement. USDA RD could alleviate this barrier, if they would allow for partial reimbursements.
- FSA Credit Access
 - FSA needs to address cultural sensitivities when dealing with tribal members. Often tribal producers enter FSA office only to be told they would not qualify from the start. FSA employees need to be trained to understand that a tribal producer

walking into a federal agency is a cultural barrier and there are cultural traumas tied to these encounters.

- FSA field office are geographically inaccessible to tribal producers. The nearest distances to office are barriers to rural tribal producers. USDA FSA could assist tribal producers remotely.
- NRCS and Conservation
 - To support a focus on healthy and productive agriculture lands, both DOI and USDA-NRCS must update their accepted conservation practices and processes. While most of the currently acceptable practices support the deployment of the conservation practices, many of the enhancements no longer apply, limiting producers ability to adapt and modernize their conservation practices to fit their needs. Standardization of GIS data across the departments is also essential to facilitate the enrollment of Indian Land in programs. In addition, a uniform system of NRCS funding allocation must be adopted that sets aside funding for tribal conservation efforts based on land-base.
 - NRCS funding allocations are nearly as disjointed as the BIA practices. South Dakota as a positive example, allocates NRCS program dollars by the proportion of tribal land within the state. Other states, such as Nevada and Arizona take decidedly different approaches. An analysis of the most effective approach taken by State Conservationists for getting conservation dollars on Indian land is needed, and that approach needs to be adopted across the nation.
 - NRCS payments, and other cost payment schedules for reimbursement, need to be updated to fund projects as many currently do not align with actual costs.
 - Setting standards between BIA and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) regarding compliance, practices, and length of time for conservation practices, including the respective approval processes for easements.