



2023 CAUCUS REPORT



Intertribal Agriculture Council, PO Box 958, Billings, MT 59103

indianag.org

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EASTERN REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 1

NRCS Funding: USDA EQIP Program funding can be accessed but not adequate utilization NRCS-NC does not have set aside for the Eastern Band of Cherokee. EBCI compete w/ countries counties for funding.

IAC regularly works to advocate for additional NRCS funding as well as tribal set asides. While conversations have been had with NRCS, especially with a pilot program to address this issue, there is no guaranteed set aside for EBCI at this time. IAC will continue advocacy in this space.

CAUCUS ISSUE 2

FRTEP: Only half the tribes in the region have access to extension services or agents in the FRTEP extension program

IAC regularly works to advocate for additional FRTEP resources and programming. While advocacy has taken place over the last year with recent Farm Bill legislative advocacy efforts, there is unlikely to be any increases or changes with funding at this time. IAC will continue advocacy in this space and will rely on other partnerships and connections to provide innovative solutions and approaches.



EASTERN REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 3

Youth Programming: Youth programming has been hindered because of COVID protocols

IAC has a strong focus on youth programming across the organization. There are many opportunities through IAC's youth programming including internships, participation in regional and national events/summits, scholarships/essay programming, and outreach efforts. The focus on Native youth and professional development will continue to expand.

In the Eastern Region, specific accomplishments were made in 2023 including hosting 5 interns through the Earth Team Volunteer program, development of relationships with local 4-H programs, youth engagement with IAC's "Food 4 Families" program, and Native youth participation in IAC's regional summits and partner events.

CAUCUS ISSUE 4

Eastern Region is facing an increase of invasive vectors in the wake of climate change

Climate issues continue to impact all regions and IAC's focus across the nation is to provide tailored solutions, resources, and information to assist producers and tribes with the topics most pertinent to their areas. IAC's natural resources and technical assistance teams regularly partner to provide detailed and relevant information and resources for Tribal producers. Additionally, IAC has partnered on 4 Climate Smart Commodities projects to address climate issues throughout the country, inclusive of work in invasive vectors, soil health, and regenerative agriculture.



EASTERN REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 5

Farm Bill: Eastern region wants more representation and opportunity to have discussions about what Tribal Nations need in 2023 Farm Bill

Accurate representation from all Tribes in the Farm Bill process has been a strong priority for IAC. Three events were hosted by IAC to involve more Tribes in the northeast and southeast, especially with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. In addition to these meetings, an eastern representative was nominated as a candidate for a consequential USDA Tribal Advisory Committee.

CAUCUS ISSUE 6

Buffer Zone Resolution: Needing support for tribal resolutions that would moderate a buffer zone between farms growing ancestral corn and nearby leased land growing GMO

IAC's TA Network and Natural Resources department have engaged with Tribal producers in the region and the Traditional Native American Farmers Association to provide resources and tribal resolution templates for creating buffer zones to help protect ancestral seed varieties.



EASTERN REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 7

Horticulture Working Group: Given the amount of small scale vegetable producers in IAC's network, there is a need for an IAC horticulture working group

As the IAC TA Network has recently expanded to better serve the Eastern Region, a horticulture working group is an identified priority to explore for 2024. IAC plans to provide resources and information through the TA Network and Natural Resources departments to support the foundations of a horticulture working group.

CAUCUS ISSUE 8

Maine Tribe Inclusion: Advocate for Maine tribes specific inclusion in the Farm Bill which is hindered due to Maine Settlement Act

Maine producers have been engaged and represented in IAC's work around the Farm Bill and in providing services to stakeholders, but assessment on the full impact of the Maine Settlement Act is a priority item for 2024.



EASTERN REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 9

BIA Representation: Lack of BIA presence at IAC conference despite how relevant they are in issues and conversations

IAC recognizes the key role that the BIA has in many aspects of agriculture across Indian Country and as such, engagement, advocacy, and innovation in this space continues to be a high priority for IAC. One clear space for engagement is at the annual national conference, in which IAC's Legal & Policy team as well as field staff, have put forth a lot of effort to solicit BIA engagement across the country which has been met with a large degree of success for 2023. Similar efforts will continue in 2024 and beyond.

CAUCUS ISSUE 10

Protecting Tribal Sovereignty: There is legislation being passed that benefits non-Native communities but negatively impacts Indian Country

IAC is a staunch proponent of Tribal Sovereignty and supports efforts in many ways ranging from resources and networking for individual producers to advocating for 638 authority for USDA programming. Additionally, IAC's National Intertribal Food Business Center and Intertribal Land, Capital, and Market Access Program grant programs were instituted to specifically address food sovereignty activities across Indian Country beginning in 2024.





EASTERN REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 11

Funding flexibility: Increase funding that is not from the federal government. More flexibility than ever so how are we taking advantage of that

IAC regularly compiles and communicates non-federal funding opportunities for producers and Tribes through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming. IAC as an organization regularly relies on private foundation and non-governmental funding sources to diversify field-based and administrative funding sources.

CAUCUS ISSUE 12

Acknowledging Traditional Crops: Lack of research and economic data on traditional food and that prevents producers from being able to "prove" certain things that determine eligibility for USDA programs

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming efforts, IAC provided information and resources on seed saving and traditional crops in 2023. On a policy and advocacy level, IAC has continued to work to expand eligibility for USDA programming across the board. Additionally, IAC has a multi-year agreement to increase the number and expertise of crop insurance agents to ensure greater inclusion of crop varieties.



MIDWEST REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 1

Disaster relief payments not enough for wild rice: Fond du Lac first band to get crop loss insurance for wild rice, it was a challenge. All bands can file for insurance crop loss, pot of money is too small at FSA. Payments worse than beads and blanket money. Natural product is double cultivated cost not paying enough back for insurance claim, disaster relief. Wild rice yields differ all over the state so formula solution won't work

IAC has continued to work to expand eligibility for USDA programming including crop insurance and disaster relief. IAC has a multi-year agreement to increase the number and expertise of crop insurance agents to ensure greater inclusion of crop varieties.

CAUCUS ISSUE 2

Rural broadband inhibiting market access/electronic pay: Want to talk to Tina Smith about broadband access in rural area. Asks if group has particular agendas to talk with government representatives in rural areas. Access to electronic payment systems for market access and SNAP/ EBT Could establish new markets and use SNAP/EBT, get Senator Smith to listen

While broadband is a clear issue for many Tribes, IAC has not focused efforts here outside of partnerships and networks with organizations that have expertise in this area. IAC's Stakeholder Services continually focus on in-person meetings with Tribal producers and Tribes where they are at and development of hard copy resource materials to ensure broadband access is less of a barrier.



MIDWEST REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 3

Funding timeline for TCAC (Tribal Conservation Advisory Council) equivalent and grants too short: “No continuation of programs” barrier at NRCS; for ricing tribes, need funding from NRCS for Tribal conservation committees. Local USDA says there is money but Tribes aren’t using it Bureaucracy wants us to do the outreach they should be doing

IAC regularly works to advocate for additional NRCS funding and programming. IAC will continue outreach and resource sharing to increase program access across USDA. IAC works with numerous states to support capacity and Tribal engagement with NRCS Tribal Conservation Advisory Councils. Further support may be offered in 2024 to refine understanding of this specific issue for the Region.

CAUCUS ISSUE 4

EQIP Barriers: EQIP is hard to access due to requirement of 50% upfront, funding for fencing and crop protection

IAC regularly works to advocate for additional NRCS funding and program alignment. IAC will continue advocacy in this space while supporting partners who specialize in these areas. IAC’s Technical Assistance Network helps producers think strategically about how to best utilize NRCS programming to realize specific conservation-related objectives. Another key strategy has been to explore supplemental local, regional, and national funding sources that may be leveraged to cover up-front practice implementation costs to offset impacts to individual producers.



MIDWEST REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 5

Tribal CDFI in Minnesota. Leech Lake has housing CDFI but no Tribal Ag CDFI:

IAC has engaged with Leech Lake this past December 2022. This issue is ongoing with the hopes of continued dialogue with Leech Lake in 2024 to strategize on solutions relative to stated goals and capacity.

CAUCUS ISSUE 6

Issue between FRTEP and 1994 Land Grant Institute: 1 FRTEP person, 1994s need more money, NOT by partnering with FRTEP because majority of money goes to University and not FRTEP

IAC regularly works to advocate for additional FRTEP resources and programming. While advocacy has taken place over the last year with recent Farm Bill legislative advocacy efforts, there is unlikely to be any increases or changes with funding at this time. IAC will continue advocacy in this space and will rely on other partnerships and connections to provide innovative solutions and approaches.



MIDWEST REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 7

SNAP language: A grandmother is raising grandkids, grandmother is eligible for SNAP, as soon as she was able to provide for kids, no longer eligible for SNAP

IAC regularly works to advocate to expand eligibility for and access to USDA programming across the board. One of IAC's recent efforts has been advocating for 638 contracting of certain USDA programs such as SNAP/EBT. IAC has engaged in state-based activities to expand categorical eligibility requirements and is expecting national impacts from these efforts.

CAUCUS ISSUE 8

Tribal Infrastructure build out: Every time we (USA) send billions of dollars to other countries, would like to see 5 - 10% of that dollar go to tribes for infrastructure work Bathrooms/ running water, homes, etc.

IAC's policy and advocacy work has supported the build of essential tribal infrastructure to support Tribal food systems and general food access. For example, IAC's Meat & Poultry Processing Technical Assistance activities have offered support to communities across the Great Lakes Region. IAC will continue advocacy in this space and rely on other partnerships and connections to provide innovative solutions and approaches. IAC continues to make inlays with USDA-Rural Development that may aid further with essential community infrastructure needs in the future.



MIDWEST REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 9

**Burning as a conservation/
regenerative practice: Not BIA
funding or NRCS funding for burning
as a conservation practice and a way
to regenerate subsistence crops**

IAC regularly works to advocate for additional NRCS funding and programming and will continue advocacy in this space. IAC has contributed to NRCS practice and planning improvements that have increased responsiveness to traditional management strategies through input into the Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity for Indigenous Stewardship Methods Evaluation rolled out in late 2022. IAC will continue outreach and resource identification across USDA to support traditional/regenerative practices relevant to subsistence crops.

CAUCUS ISSUE 10

**Seed Rematriation: Restoring seed
and protecting that knowledge,
funding for seed keepers and seed
programs**

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, IAC provided information and informational resources and networking specific to seed saving and traditional crops and will continue to advance supportive efforts into the future.



YOUTH & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

EMPOWERING NATIVE YOUTH

Over the past year, the Youth Programs Department concentrated on creating pathways for young individuals to thrive. The 2022 IAC Annual Conference generated renewed interest in Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) youth programs—after a hiatus due to the pandemic—from young participants, professionals, and partners alike.

During spring 2023, IAC conducted an open call for applicants to apply for the Robert Miller Memorial Scholarship and the IAC Summer Internship programs, attracting significant attention from youth across the country. In collaboration with the IAC Technical Assistance Network and the Natural Resources programs, the Youth program also developed programming for various regional events nationwide. These events offered valuable professional development opportunities for youth to give presentations and to network.

The 2023 Youth Essay Contest for the IAC Annual Conference received over 100 submissions, showcasing a diverse pool of applicants. The selected group, representing various Tribes and regions, embodied the essence of the IAC mission, showcasing their knowledge and passion for conservation and agriculture.

Over the year, our IAC Youth Program actively engaged in regional summits and conferences, sparking inspiration in the ways that we nurture aspirations, empower voices, and build a community dedicated to shaping the future of conservation and agriculture.

EASTERN OKLAHOMA REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 1

Final Rule on FDA Traceability on Produce: No mention of tribes or tribal producers in latest rules issued by FDA on traceability.

IAC is working with partners like the Indigenous Food & Agriculture Initiative to bring this to the attention of FDA and continue to offer resources and information to Tribes and producers when requested.

CAUCUS ISSUE 2

Tribal Producer Data Collection: Tribes are not utilizing data on Tribal producers. Need tribes to gather this data to understand who produces and what they produce.

IAC produced a document for Tribal Leaders to provide information on why data is important for the benefit of both parties. IAC may support access to publicly accessible producer data for use by Tribes through a longstanding partnership with the National Agricultural Statistics Service. IAC has worked heavily with Village Earth to inform the Tribal Land Information System that utilizes public data sources to explore topics of interest to Tribes.



GREAT PLAINS REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 1

LFP and ECP Programs: Issue with how some programs are being implemented and serviced, specifically with LFP and ECP programs

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, producer-relevant information and resources on USDA programming are continually shared. On a policy and advocacy level, IAC has continued to work to expand eligibility for and access to USDA programming across the board including LFP and ECP in the Great Plains Region.

In a wider scope, IAC has continued to be a liaison on disaster specific funding and how it affects producers' needs. IAC has engaged on a number of outreach efforts that support implementation at the local level.

CAUCUS ISSUE 2

Rainfall monitors: Regulation rainfall monitors

IAC's policy & advocacy work has supported a bi-partisan bill to address the lack of distribution of rainfall monitors in rural areas. There is an effort to include this topic in the Farm Bill. Additionally, this topic is addressed during our local advocacy and outreach efforts with state officials.



GREAT PLAINS REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 3

CREP Program: Issue with miscommunication on how the tribal CREP program will be implemented.

CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program) programs have been implemented on three of the largest land base Reservations within the Great Plains Region (Oglala Sioux Tribe, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, and the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe). IAC has been working with USDA and FSA to host informational meetings. IAC has a CRP/CREP monitoring project running in the region in partnership with regenerative monitoring and assessment firm “UVE” to address some of the pain points brought up during the informational meetings. IAC plans to utilize feedback from the Great Plains region to inform programming across other regions as well.

CAUCUS ISSUE 4

Need TA for Great Plains Region: Need a representative that isn’t stretched thin and can focus on ALL of the Tribes in the area

IAC has plans to expand our Technical Assistance team in North Dakota specifically in 2024. Continued investment of resources are slated to aid field staff capacity to serve the Great Plains region. .



GREAT PLAINS REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 5

NRCS Programs low cost shares: The NRCS programs cost share are so low in comparison to what supplies cost now

IAC regularly works to advocate for additional NRCS funding and programming. IAC will continue advocacy in this space and educating producers on procedures to inform the agency on the differential between actual costs and regionally-established payment rates.

CAUCUS ISSUE 6

Need to have regional meeting: Need for regional meeting

IAC hosted a regional summit for the Great Plains Region in Pierre, SD on June 6-7, 2023. In attendance were 107 Tribal Leaders, Tribal producers, Tribal entities, USDA Agencies (at the National, State, and local levels), and other IAC regional partners.



GREAT PLAINS REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 7

Membership drive for producers and tribes: Need more membership for producers and tribes in the Great Plains Region

In 2023, IAC developed more outreach materials to communicate voting membership benefits and function to educate Tribes on the importance of maintaining their voting membership in good standing or to establish voting membership (www.indianag.org/membership). IAC leadership and board continue to have a strong role in soliciting membership and supporting field staff in this important outreach.

CAUCUS ISSUE 8

Hemp Production in Great Plains: Increase coordination of hemp production and land use in Great Plains region

IAC has had discussions with the board regarding the issue of hemp due to the legislative and/or jurisdictional barriers between Tribal, State, and Federal Government. The IAC Board of Directors is receptive to learning more about specific Indian Country hemp production priorities and will be connecting on this matter in 2024.



GREAT PLAINS REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 9

Increase youth interest in region

IAC's Youth and Professional Development Program continued to engage with youth in the Great Plains Region and across the country through Native youth events, scholarships, the Food 4 Families program for 4-H, FFA, and Tribal show participants, and a host of internship opportunities in 2023. These efforts will continue to expand to accommodate more Great Plains regional youth engagement.



ROCKY MOUNTAINS REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 1

BIA lack of presence: BIA needs to be held accountable and present at the discussion.

IAC recognizes the key role that the BIA has in many aspects of agriculture across Indian Country and as such engagement, advocacy, and innovation in this space continues to be a high priority for IAC. One clear space for engagement is at the national annual conference, in which IAC's policy and advocacy team as well as field staff, have put forth a lot of effort to solicit BIA engagement across the country. These efforts have been met with a large degree of success for 2023. Similar efforts will continue in 2024 and beyond..

CAUCUS ISSUE 2

Bring back FRTEP to the Northern Cheyenne Tribe. IAC advocacy for 2023 Farm Bill - include mandatory funding for at least 100 FRTEP Agents

IAC regularly works to advocate for additional FRTEP resources and programming. While advocacy has taken place over the last year with recent Farm Bill legislative advocacy efforts, there is unlikely to be any increases or changes with funding at this time. IAC will continue advocacy in this space and will rely on other partnerships and connections to provide innovative solutions and approaches. IAC also continually finds ways to support local and state-based initiatives facilitated by FRTEP through on-the-ground partnerships, resource leveraging, and ongoing outreach coordination.



ROCKY MOUNTAINS REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 3

FSA LIP Program Include Newer Disease: Change language in FSA's LIP program to include newer disease affecting our livestock

IAC continues to assist producers in the region with accessing FSA's LIP program successfully..

CAUCUS ISSUE 4

Increased Funding for FRTEP Ext. Agents: Advocacy for increased funding for FRTEP extension

IAC regularly works to advocate for additional FRTEP resources and programming. While advocacy has taken place over the last year with recent Farm Bill legislative advocacy efforts, there is unlikely to be any increases or changes with funding at this time. IAC will continue advocacy in this space and will rely on other partnerships and connections to provide innovative solutions and approaches.



ROCKY MOUNTAINS REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 5

**Limited Amt. of Native Appraisers:
There is a limited amount of Native
appraisers.**

IAC has worked with Tribes and producers to access training to become appraisers and will continue to advocate and provide resources. IAC's Regenerative Economies program houses the Building Resiliency initiative to train Tribal insurance agents and adjusters, these efforts are targeted at capacity needs in Indian Country, appraiser training is an interest for the future (carries implications for an IAC-led assessment of need).

CAUCUS ISSUE 6

**Separate AUM Leasing Rates: BIA
needs to separate the leasing rates
for AUM's.**

IAC recognizes the key role that the BIA has in many aspects of agriculture across Indian Country and as such engagement, advocacy, and innovation in this space continues to be a high priority for IAC. IAC created an internal working group focused on BIA to better understand the multiple aspects of the USDA/BIA relationship within Tribal Ag and to identify opportunities for improvement and leverage points to affect change. Another clear space for engagement is at the national annual conference, in which IAC's Legal & Policy team as well as field staff, have put forth a lot of effort to solicit BIA engagement across the country which has been met with a large degree of success for 2023. Similar efforts will continue in 2024 and beyond.



ROCKY MOUNTAINS REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 7

Fast Track Ag. Water Functions: Fast track for agriculture related water functions

IAC is engaged with Fort Belknap who is participating in the CREP program concentrating on improvement of water availability throughout range units and tribal lands. IAC regularly works to advocate for additional NRCS funding and programming. IAC will continue their advocacy in this space. IAC will continue their outreach and resource sharing in program access across USDA.

CAUCUS ISSUE 8

Incorporating EQIP and contact \$s: How to incorporate EQIP and compact dollars to [sentence ends here]

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ROCKY MOUNTAINS REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 9

Increase of Feral Horses: Feral horses increase every year on the Wind River Reservation.

The feral horse topic continues to be a priority item for IAC's Legal & Policy team. Talks in partnership with the National Tribal Horse Coalition has resulted in action during Farm Bill efforts and a continued path forward in addressing the myriad of factors involved in this complex issue across many Tribes..

CAUCUS ISSUE 10

Adequate Local FSA and NRCS Facility: Adequate local facility for FSA and NRCS staff on the reservation.

IAC continues to meet with FSA and NRCS to address the lack of adequate facilities while also serving a role as collaborator and resource provider for producers and Tribes in accessing services and programs. IAC has entered into a cooperative agreement with NRCS to make funds available to Tribal producers to participate in Tribal Conservation Advisory Committee meetings and other key meetings and listening sessions. IAC staff continue to prioritize being physically present at community meetings and regularly bring partners, Tribal leaders, and producers to events that contribute guidance on priority topic areas.



ROCKY MOUNTAINS REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 11

Consistent Lease Rates: Consistent and tribal lease rates on range units.

IAC recognizes the key role that the BIA has in many aspects of agriculture across Indian Country and as such engagement, advocacy, and innovation in this space continues to be a high priority for IAC. One clear space for engagement is at the national annual conference, in which IAC's policy and advocacy team as well as field staff, have put forth a lot of effort to solicit BIA engagement across the country which has been met with a large degree of success for 2023. Similar efforts will continue in 2024 and beyond.

CAUCUS ISSUE 12

30 Day NRCS Staff Replacement Requirement: NRCS - Staff replacement needs to be required within 20 days.

IAC regularly works to advocate for additional NRCS funding and programming. IAC's Technical Assistance Network and Natural Resources programming may support resource identification and navigation to bridge field office staffing issues. IAC will continue advocacy, outreach, and resource sharing in this space.



ROCKY MOUNTAINS REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 13

No \$ for feral horse round up: No funding for feral horse roundups and transport

The feral horse topic continues to be a priority item for IAC's Legal & Policy team. Talks in partnership with the National Tribal Horse Coalition has resulted in action during Farm Bill efforts and a continued path forward in addressing the myriad of factors involved in this complex issue across many Tribes.

CAUCUS ISSUE 14

RMA Premium Reduction for socially disadvantaged producers: RMA needs to reduce premiums for socially disadvantaged producers .

Through IAC's Regenerative Economies and Technical Assistance Network programming, producers are supported in assessing insurance options including plans offered through USDA-RMA programming. On a policy and advocacy level, IAC has continued to work to expand eligibility for and access to USDA programming across the board especially through the Native Farm Bill Coalition.



ROCKY MOUNTAINS REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 15

Little Shell Tribe Outreach: The Little Shell tribal producers need to be engaged with programs

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, the TA Network reached out to Little Shell Tribe specifically to provide resources and information in 2023. Continued engagement is planned for 2024 including regional summit activities.

CAUCUS ISSUE 16

Trust Land Right of Ways: Create Right of Ways on Trust Land

IAC recognizes the key role that the BIA has in many aspects of agriculture across Indian Country and as such engagement, advocacy, and innovation in this space continues to be a high priority for IAC. One clear space for engagement is at the national annual conference, in which IAC's policy and advocacy team as well as field staff, have put forth a lot of effort to solicit BIA engagement across the country which has been met with a large degree of success for 2023. Similar efforts will continue in 2024 and beyond.



ROCKY MOUNTAINS REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 17

APHIS Communication/Bison disease: Better communication with APHIS/ Bison disease infecting tribal ranches

IAC provides resources and information on these topics and engages in communication and partnership on the topic with USDA-Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Tribes/producers. IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, specifically the TA Network may act as a switchboard to connect producers with key contacts at APHIS to raise concerns and identify possible solutions..

CAUCUS ISSUE 18

Continued Support from IAC and IFAI: They would like to keep the support and communication with Intertribal Agriculture Council and also the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative

IAC continues to engage with Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative as one of IAC's strongest partners and has coordinated to provide workshops, meetings, and support in the Rocky Mountain Region. Outreach and educational activities will continue in 2024 and beyond. .



ROCKY MOUNTAINS REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 19

Little Shell Tribe Outreach: The Little Shell tribal producers need to be engaged with programs

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, the TA Network reached out to Little Shell Tribe specifically to provide resources and information in 2023. Continued engagement is planned for 2024 including regional summit activities.

CAUCUS ISSUE 20

Return of Ag. Law Enforcement \$: Blackfeet Tribe wants execution fees back from US designated for Ag. Law enforcement.

IAC has raised the issue with BIA that there is not an adequate enforcement of regulatory requirements concerning agricultural issues and have called upon BIA to provide greater accountability with set deadlines related to enforcement.



ROCKY MOUNTAINS REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 21

Notification/Outreach for USDA Food Sovereignty Grants/Programs: Notification of future USDA food sovereignty grants and programs

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, IAC continues to provide USDA and supplemental resources information that directly supports Tribal food systems and food sovereignty. On a policy and advocacy level, IAC has continued to work to expand eligibility for and access to USDA programming across the board.



REGENERATIVE ECONOMIES

PROMOTING REGENERATIVE GROWTH

The Regenerative Economies program has been partnering with the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) in an ambitious study to better understand the financial implications of regenerative agriculture practices on tribal lands. Over the past year they have been collecting financial data from those enrolled in the study to shed light on both the financial benefits and hurdles associated with these approaches. The findings of this project are expected to offer crucial insights to tribal producers, potentially paving the way for financial solutions that make transitioning to these practices more profitable.

Simultaneously, the team launched the Underserved Agent/Loss Adjuster Training Program Pilot called Building Resiliency. This unique initiative aims to diversify representation within the crop insurance realm by reaching out to minority-serving institutions. In 2023 the program started insurance training for individuals, with plans for crop adjuster trainings.

With a look toward 2024 the Regenerative Economies program is gearing up for various educational programs, training sessions, and partnership initiatives. This includes plans to collaborate on Climate Smart Commodities initiatives and build relationships with Native Agriculture Financial Services, offering opportunities for direct and participation loans, along with financial literacy assistance. Through these multifaceted efforts, IAC remains committed to empowering tribal farming communities, promoting sustainable practices, and ensuring financial resilience among producers.



SOUTHERN PLAINS REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 1

USDA Deadlines: Tribal producers being unaware of funding deadlines for governmental programs such as FSA and USDA

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, IAC has provided information and resources on USDA programming throughout the Southern Plains Region. A regional summit took place in November 2023 to support regional networking and resource identification. Local outreach and educational efforts are ongoing and a key function of the Technical Assistance Network. On a policy and advocacy level, IAC has continued to work to expand eligibility for and access to USDA programming across the board.

CAUCUS ISSUE 2

ARMP Development Assistance: The tribes of SPR are asking for assistance in ARMP development

IAC has worked to develop an ARMP template and resource information in collaboration with Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative and Indian Land Tenure Foundation. These efforts will continue to provide resources and connections to support tribes in developing ARMPs in collaboration with Tribal producers.



SOUTHERN PLAINS REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 3

Farm Bill Knowledge: Tribal representatives do not feel like they have a working knowledge of the Farm Bill

IAC has conducted an immense amount of outreach around the Farm Bill this year including fly-in events and field staff outreach to specific Tribal representatives. The Tribes in the region were receptive and appreciative of the outreach and information on the Farm Bill. IAC also provides regular updates through Native Farm Bill Coalition publications and organizational newsletter.

CAUCUS ISSUE 4

Navigating the Management of Highly Fractionated Allotted Lands: Tribes having difficulty managing lands with highly fractionated ownership to the highest and best use because of the difficulty of getting approval.

IAC recognizes the key role that the BIA has in many aspects of agriculture across Indian Country and as such engagement, advocacy, and innovation in this space continues to be a high priority for IAC. One clear space for engagement is at the national annual conference, in which IAC's policy and advocacy team as well as field staff, have put forth a lot of effort to solicit BIA engagement across the country which has been met with a large degree of success for 2023. Similar efforts will continue with specific grant funding to address BIA and fractionated lands in 2024 and beyond. IAC is the lead on the Intertribal Land, Capital, and Market Access Program that may provide direct assistance in this area as well..



SOUTHWEST REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 1

Request for Feral Horse Issue: Feral horses in community and other tribes/pueblos are creating havoc on the environment and their windmills. Supporter of Safe Act HR 3355

The feral horse topic continues to be a priority item for IAC's Legal & Policy team. Talks in partnership with the National Tribal Horse Coalition has resulted in action during Farm Bill efforts and a continued path forward in addressing the myriad of factors involved in this complex issue across many Tribes.

CAUCUS ISSUE 2

Request for Infrastructure/Irrigation System: Infrastructure is need for Kewa Pueblo to improve current irrigation systems

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming the TA Network has provided many informational resources and education at outreach events and individual Tribal visits to address infrastructure and irrigation needs throughout the Southwest region. The leveraging of training and resource identification assistance will continue to be a key priority for IAC in the Southwest Region..



SOUTHWEST REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 3

TA and Education assistance for Pueblo grazing management plans: Request for technical assistance and education for developing grazing management plans for Pueblos

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming IAC has provided many resources and outreach events focusing on grazing management plans and resource identification. IAC will continue grazing management assistance in more areas throughout the Southwest region in 2024. IAC has also provided internal professional development opportunities on grazing management to ensure internal capacity to meet the needs of Tribes and producers is continually strengthened.

CAUCUS ISSUE 4

Request for feral cattle management: 150 feral cattle captured in 3 years. Hundreds of feral cattle in forest lands. There is nothing in place to address this issue

IAC has been in partnership with the local Tribes and the U.S. Forest Service to aid in determining solutions for the feral cattle issue in this region.



WESTERN REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 1

Farm Bill Priorities: Drought assistance/relief, water infrastructure, energy projects & development, on-reservation offices FSA, NRCS, and other USDA, EQIP projects.

IAC's work as part of the Native Farm Bill Coalition (NFBC) has provided advocacy and support for drought and water related infrastructure. Additional policy and advocacy activities include testifying for increased eligibility and funding within existing USDA programs in drought relief. IAC's expansive Stakeholder Services offerings continually provide outreach and program assistance for disaster relief programs to producers and Tribes while building networks and understanding within state and regional offices.

CAUCUS ISSUE 2

Network for food supply: Establish a network for food supply during shortages such as COVID-19

IAC has advanced efforts targeting the development of accessible and sustainable food systems in 2023. Recently, IAC was named the lead of the National Intertribal Food Business Center which will offer resources and technical assistance to Tribal food businesses. The Meat & Poultry Processing Technical Assistance program is in its 2nd year of supporting meat processing infrastructure development and expansion. Focus will continue to be placed on hosting IAC's regional and national conferences and providing direct assistance to Tribal producers and tribes to support Indian Country food system networking.



WESTERN REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 3

Food, Ag, NR Tribal Legislation: IAC provide support of food, Ag, and natural resources tribal legislation

The IAC is one of the founding co-stewards of the Native Farm Bill Coalition and is a leading voice in advocating for legislation at the federal level to advance support around Tribal food, agriculture, and natural resources. Examples of these efforts are available at www.nativefarmbill.com

CAUCUS ISSUE 4

New Technology Outreach: More pilot programs and funding for small farms to look into conservation practices and new technologies

IAC is active in the space of new technologies through Stakeholder Services offerings including, for example, outreach on NRCS CIG grants, establishing partnerships with technology firms to work with producers, and providing outreach materials on specific topics like virtual fencing. Additionally there is work being done with the Climate Smart Commodities grant to explore technology-based opportunities. Internally, IAC has implemented data visualization tools to better engage with collected data to identify gaps and opportunities for serving Tribal producers in this space.



WESTERN REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 5

Hay Availability Board Postings: Hay availability/board posting for availability for drought conditions

Producers and tribes were able to connect on hay availability through IAC's regional events and meetings in 2023. These meetings and events continue to provide a space for networking, collaboration, and identifying resources.

CAUCUS ISSUE 6

Funding resources for independent producers: Funding for independent producers funding support & NRCS- AZ issues

IAC has been involved with navigating the relationship between NRCS offices and individual producers in the Western Region. There is need to continue to engage in areas where IAC can advocate for innovative solutions and resources for individual producers with the NRCS and Tribal departments.



WESTERN REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 7

Grant Writing Support: IAC provide grant writing support

IAC's Stakeholder Services offerings, including the TA Network, frequently help producers, tribes, and organizations navigate grant opportunities, applications, and grant writing resources. IAC's recent implementation of more detailed tracking of the phases of support offered to Tribal producers allows IAC to identify ways in which staff can be supported internally to meet regional and national needs.

CAUCUS ISSUE 8

Need For More Rain Gauges Across Reservation: For drought assistance payments and relief there is a need for more rain gauges across the reservation that better reflect rainfall conditions

IAC's policy & advocacy work has supported a bi-partisan bill to address the lack of distribution of rainfall monitors in rural areas. There is an effort to include this topic in the farm bill. Additionally, this topic is addressed during local advocacy and outreach efforts with state officials.



WESTERN REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 9

More Resources for All USDA Programs: More resources for all USDA programs

As part of the Native Farm Bill Coalition IAC has been a staunch advocate for more resources and revised formulas for accessing USDA programming. Additionally, IAC's Stakeholder Services programming regularly provide resources and assistance with navigating and accessing existing resources. Specific activities include providing USDA Resource Guides to FRTEP Offices and Tribes and contributing to the creation of a resource guide for food producers with the Arizona Food Systems Network.



NATURAL RESOURCES

ENHANCING NATIVE LAND STEWARDSHIP



The Natural Resources program has a diverse scope of work and outreach opportunities for tribes. One such project they worked on in 2023 monitors and tracks biodiversity, soil health, and ecosystem functions such as the water cycle, mineral cycle, energy flow, and community dynamics. This initiative launched in South Dakota and Oklahoma in collaboration with partners from UVE aims to assess the environmental and economic impacts of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The project, which involves holistic strategies that monitor, assess, and evaluate Tribal project sites, employs the Ecological Outcome Verification (EOV) monitoring protocol to produce valuable data enabling the USDA to evaluate the effectiveness of CRP/CREP activities in Tribal land management and guide future strategies to enhance program participation.

In 2023, the team also worked to create new outreach materials with a look ahead for continued growth as they diversify activities, expand outreach, and fine-tune material to meet the needs of Tribes. They are also addressing emerging concerns such as climate-related issues, youth engagement, water quality, and fire management.

As an example of the work they do in the field, the team developed a workshop and demonstrations for producers and Nevada Agriculture Agencies including soil health, water quality, noxious weeds management, fire risk mitigation, and Riparian ecological functions assessments for agriculture-grazing lands. This field day was planned in collaboration with Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe Department of Natural Resources.



NAVAJO REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 1

Increase & Sustain Funding for SNAP Benefits: Better nutrition for Navajo people. Less processed foods and more fresh & healthy food access through increased SNAP funding

Through Stakeholder Services programming IAC continually provides assistance on USDA program access and supports interface with the various agencies. On a policy and advocacy level IAC has continued to work to expand eligibility for and access to USDA programming across the board. One of IAC's recent efforts has been advocating for 638 contracting of certain USDA programs such as SNAP/EBT. IAC is aware of several local ordinances that have passed to support less processed foods on the Navajo Nation.

CAUCUS ISSUE 2

Farm Bill/Food Distribution (Increase & Expand Eligibility): Many Navajo people are ineligible and funding is limited. IAC to advocate.

One of IAC's recent policy and advocacy efforts has been advocating for 638 contracting of certain USDA programs such as SNAP/EBT. This could enable greater responsiveness to eligibility nuances to increase access.



CAUCUS ISSUE 3

**638 Program Funding for SNAP/EBT:
Program Funding for SNAP/EBT - need
advocacy and policy.**

IAC has placed focus on Farm Bill advocacy in this area over the last year and will continue to engage moving forward. This is noted as a key priority with regard to SNAP/EBT across the country.

CAUCUS ISSUE 4

**IAC Wool Buying Program: IAC to
support and provide a wool buying
program to increase opportunities.**

Through IAC's American Indian Foods programming there are efforts to increase market access for all agricultural products, including wool. IAC also foresees increased opportunities through the implementation of the National Intertribal Food Business Center initiative.



NAVAJO REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 5

**Local Cattle Market Opportunities:
Producers travel long distances
to sale barns and pay high fees/
commissions**

IAC has supplied resources and assistance through the MPPTA (Meat and Poultry Processing TA) initiative and Meat 2 Market programs which specifically support meat processing facility research and construction along with direct to market transitioning respectively. From the policy and advocacy standpoint, IAC has discussed these issues through being active with the Packers and Stockyards Act legislation.

CAUCUS ISSUE 6

**Rural Development/Farm Bill
Implementation: Internal to Navajo
- review of requirements to access
NHA program**

As part of the Native Farm Bill Coalition IAC participated in hosting round table discussions, one of which was located in Navajo. Topics surrounding the Navajo Housing Authority program were not brought up during those discussions. IAC is happy to engage and support as necessary while serving the organization's mission.



CAUCUS ISSUE 7

Scholarship Support: Eligibility issues with tribal scholarships. Need more tribal scholarships funded/supported by IAC.

IAC offers extensive resources for Tribal representation and Tribal producers to attend events and access resources. For the 2023 conference IAC is providing well over 200 full travel assistance opportunities, 100 discounted producer registrations, and fully supported youth programming. The Southwest regional conference had travel support as well. IAC is in partnership with the American Indian College Fund to offer more scholarships specifically for Native students in agriculture.

CAUCUS ISSUE 8

Continued Support for FRTEP: Farm bill advocacy for FRTEP

IAC regularly works to advocate for additional FRTEP and programming. While conversations have been had in this space with the Farm Bill efforts, there is unlikely to be any increases or changes with funding at this time. IAC will continue advocacy in this space and will rely on other partnerships and connections to provide innovative solutions and approaches.



NAVAJO REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 9

Support Eligibility for All USDA Programs: Open the doors of eligibility for all USDA programs

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, IAC continually provides Navajo Region producers with information and resources on USDA programming. On a policy and advocacy level, IAC has continued to work to expand eligibility for and access to USDA programming across the board. One of IAC's recent efforts has been advocating for 638 contracting of certain USDA programs to promote tribal sovereignty.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

CONNECTING WITH PRODUCERS



The Technical Assistance (TA) Network is composed of Indian Country producers and individuals with a variety of Tribal food systems expertise. These Technical Assistance Specialists operate across twelve regions providing national coverage. The primary focus of the TA Network is to increase access to USDA programs and services to individual Tribal producers and Tribal governments. Formally established in 2011, the TA Network has steadily expanded to engage between 20,000-25,000 contacts involving over 200 Tribal communities per year. These efforts are designed to eliminate barriers to key resources that grow Tribal agricultural operations. TA Regional summits are initiated annually to support relationship development and USDA program support. Beyond maintaining a dedicated staff, the IAC leverages hundreds of partnerships through the activities of the TA Network to further access to producer resources.

A recent initiative housed under the TA Network is IAC's Meat & Poultry Processing Technical Assistance initiative. This multi-year effort is focused on supporting the development of Tribal meat & poultry processing infrastructure through establishing training opportunities, networking sessions, USDA program application support, and resource navigation tools. Another important focus for this team has been application development and agency engagement support for the Discrimination Financial Assistance Program (DFAP) in coordination with IAC's Legal & Policy teams. The TA Network is also involved in IAC's Climate Smart Commodities agreements that focus on regenerative and climate-focused solutions. The dynamic and diverse teams housed under the TA Network offer comprehensive assistance to Tribal operations.

PACIFIC REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 1

USDA Farm Definition Adjustment: The USDA defines a farm as any place that produced and sold- or normally would have produced and sold- at least \$1,000 of agricultural products during a given year. The definition does not qualify a subsistence farmer as a farmer due to not selling their produce/poultry/meat. This excludes many traditional Tribal farmers/ traditional gatherers from USDA farmer programs and from being counted for as a farmer during the Census of Agriculture.

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, IAC has supported USDA agencies' exposure to traditional agriculture examples to inform local application of existing programs. On a policy and advocacy level, IAC has continued to work to expand eligibility for and access to USDA programming across the board, including definitions of a farm and of a producer which appear to be contributing to agency movement in this area.

CAUCUS ISSUE 2

Resource Conservation Districts Not Staffed by AI/AN: Resource Conservation Districts are not commonly staffed by NA/AI and do not seek advice from Tribes in their District Boundaries when putting together grants to address resource concerns around Tribal lands and through Tribal lands. This caucus issue carried over from 2021. The issue was originally raised by Meagen Baldy from the Hoopa Valley Tribe and requested to be carried over to 2022 caucus issues by Meagen Baldy.

IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, specifically the TA Network, offers direct assistance with networking, partnership development, RCD training, switch boarding, resource identification, liaising between stakeholders, government-to-government intermediary, and other forms of assistance that directly support diversification and increasing responsiveness. These central strategies increase capacity, knowledge, and cultural sensitivity to better serve Native producers.



CAUCUS ISSUE 3

Modify Rural Development Community Cost Reimbursement Structure: Modifying Rural Development Community Facilities Cost Reimbursement Structure and request that more rural development grants be provided as opposed to loans. The current reimbursement amount is a barrier for Tribal Nations and Tribal organizations to participate in programs due to not having the funds in advance. This caucus issue carried over from 2021. Issue was originally raised by Meagen Baldy and Colleen Rossier from the Karuk Tribe and requested to be carried over to 2022 caucus issues by Meagen Baldy.

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, IAC has raised this issue through local and state channels specifically, and seeks to make greater inlays with Rural Development on a national level in 2024. IAC was recently named the lead of the National Intertribal Food Business Center which will act as a conduit for increased resource leveraging through contributing to a diversification of funding streams through partnership networks and funding sources. This will enable strategic opportunities to further the impact of USDA resources and services.



PACIFIC REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 4

Morrill Act Amendment: Land grant institutions created through the Morrill Act of 1862 (as well as others) established endowments through the sale of stolen Native lands. Thus we recommend amending the Morrill Act of 1862 so that any institution of higher learning with an endowment fund that was authorized by federal or state statute be authorized and strongly encouraged to donate a portion of their accumulated endowment wealth to an Indian Tribe to begin to compensate for the wealth that was transferred and subsequently accumulated over time from those stolen lands. This caucus issue carried over from 2021. The issue was originally raised by Colleen Rossier from the Karuk Tribe and requested to be carried over to 2022 caucus issues by Meagen Baldy.

IAC is supporting this issue on a policy front through the Native Farm Bill Coalition to advocate for issues like amending the Morrill Act. IAC also supports partners working in this space and works regularly to connect resources and participate in conversations to advance this issue. IAC also has Intertribal Land, Capital, and Market Access Program grants available for the acquisition of land that was previously fractured or acquired through treaties.



CAUCUS ISSUE 5

US Forest Service Fire Management Changes: Concerns regarding the US Forest Service Chief announcing a national stance on promoting a return to full fire suppression and against managed wildfire in August 2021, and banning prescribed burning at the regional level in California. Managed wildfires, as well as prescribed and cultural burning, are of the utmost importance for Tribal communities that use fire as an essential tool to manage lands, protect life and property, and cultivate foods and cultural/ceremonial materials. Thus, restricting its use is both a sovereignty issue and a safety issue as preventing managed wildfire and proactive prescribed and cultural burning creates a greater risk of catastrophic wildfire. Although many USFS personnel are called away for fire suppression activities in late summer, under management and co-management authorities, Tribal personnel should not be banned from carrying out cultural and prescribed burns within their homelands. This caucus issue carried over from 2021. The issue was originally raised by Colleen Rossier from the Karuk Tribe and requested to be carried over to 2022 caucus issues by Meagen Baldy.

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, IAC has supported USDA agencies' exposure to traditional agriculture examples to inform local application of existing programs. On a policy and advocacy level, IAC has continued to work to expand eligibility for and access to USDA programming across the board, including definitions of a farm and of a producer which appear to be contributing to agency movement in this area.



PACIFIC REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 6

Request to Understand the Proactiveness of Federal Agencies Returning Ownership of Tribal Ancestral Homelands to Tribes: Request to understand the proactiveness of federal agencies in returning ownership of Tribal ancestral homelands to Tribes and in expanding tribal management and co-management authorities based on the joint Secretarial Order from Secretary Holland and Secretary Vilsack for the USDA and DOI to commit to expanding Tribal Self Determination. This caucus issue carried over from 2021. Issue was originally raised by Colleen Rossier from the Karuk Tribe and requested to be carried over to 2022 caucus issues by Meagen Baldy.

IAC has shared the USDA-USFS's 'Strengthening Tribal Consultations and Nation-to-Nation Relationships a USDA Forest Action Plan' which was developed in February 2023 that has indicated the progress to date. IAC will continue to actively participate in approaches to this issue with partner organizations of USDA resources and services.

CAUCUS ISSUE 7

USDA Tribal Set Aside: Tribal set aside streamlined across the board for USDA programs Reggie Premo (Duck Valley) raised the concern of Nevada NRCS not having tribal set-aside funding available for Nevada Tribes.

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, IAC continues to expand capacity to offer assistance to engage USDA programming. Year to year, efforts have been executed in the state of Nevada to raise concerns about the state-level remedy of a Tribal set aside for NRCS programming, given the success of this previously. With new staff joining the team recently, building relationships to support exploration of Tribe-specific funding formulas will be a priority in 2024 and beyond.



CAUCUS ISSUE 8

Capacity Building for Food Sovereignty Nationally: Capacity Building for Food Sovereignty Across the Region and Indian Country

IAC is a staunch proponent of Tribal Sovereignty and supports efforts in many ways ranging from resources and networking for individual producers to advocating for 638 authority for USDA programming. Additionally, IAC's National Intertribal Food Business Center and Intertribal Land, Capital, and Market Access Program grant programs were instituted to specifically address food sovereignty activities across Indian Country beginning in 2024.

CAUCUS ISSUE 9

Support for Existing Capacity to Continue Food Sovereignty Efforts: Support existing capacity for Food Sovereignty efforts across the Pacific region and Indian Country

IAC is a staunch proponent of Tribal Sovereignty and supports efforts in many ways ranging from resources and networking for individual producers to advocating for 638 authority for USDA programming. IAC worked with eligible entities to complete ultimately successful applications for 638 pilot programs through the Forest Service and Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. Additionally, IAC's National Intertribal Food Business Center and Intertribal Land, Capital, and Market Access Program grant programs were instituted to specifically address food sovereignty activities across Indian Country beginning in 2024.



PACIFIC REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 10

Foreign Ag Service Assistance W/ Export of Food Products: Foreign Ag Service has capacity to export resources internationally and Tribes cannot access those funds to be used to export from Tribal Nation to Tribal Nation

IAC has included this topic as part of the Native Farm Bill Coalition. Additionally, IAC's American Indian Foods programming, funded by USDA-Foreign Agricultural Service's Market Access Program offers training to enter into exporting to diversify income streams and plays a role in connecting with international marketing opportunities, key agencies, and resources.

CAUCUS ISSUE 11

Natural Disaster Funding Increase: More funds for Tribes for natural disasters preparedness and restoration post-natural disaster

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, IAC assists Tribes and Tribal producers to navigate USDA disaster programming on a regular basis. On a policy and advocacy level, IAC has continued to work to expand eligibility and access to USDA programming across the board with a special focus on expanding disaster related resources.



CAUCUS ISSUE 12

Immediate Payout Assistance for Rancher Livelihood Impacts: Access to disaster insurance for Tribal producers who face loss of livestock

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, IAC assists Tribes and Tribal producers to navigate USDA disaster programming on a regular basis. On a policy and advocacy level, IAC has continued to work to expand eligibility and access to USDA programming across the board with a special focus on expanding disaster related resources. Maintaining contact with IAC field staff expedites information sharing and navigation of critical and time-sensitive disaster resources.

CAUCUS ISSUE 13

NACD Cooperative Agreements & Communication with TCDs: The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) needs to enter into cooperative agreements to fund Tribal Conservation Districts and seek regular guidance from Tribal Conservation Districts with regard to fulfilling NACD's deliverables in Indian Country.

IAC has continued to advocate for NACD's enhanced service to Tribal Conservation Districts. IAC has engaged on an ad-hoc basis to facilitate NACD's reach into Indian Country, however, more reliable and streamlined presence and participation in Indian Country is needed. IAC commits to continuing to engage with NACD to encourage their engagement with and input from Tribal Conservation Districts.



AMERICAN INDIAN FOODS

MADE / PRODUCED BY AMERICAN INDIANS



The American Indian Foods (AIF) Program is a cornerstone for promoting agricultural products and preserving Tribal culture. For individuals, tribes, or organizations seeking participation in the program, verifying their status as federally recognized Tribal members or entities is a pivotal step. Documentation substantiating this status or demonstrating a controlling share interest of 51% or more is essential for eligibility.

A testament to the breadth of support offered by the AIF Program is its diverse range of initiatives tailored for Native American and Alaskan Native agribusiness owners and entrepreneurs. From newcomers venturing into agricultural endeavors to seasoned exporters aiming for market expansion, the program offers comprehensive resources at every stage of their journey.

Fostering Growth and Market Expansion

The AIF program offers export services on a global platform for showcasing products and cultural heritage through international trade show activities and buyer missions. Emphasis is placed on enhancing export readiness and exposure to international markets, empowering Indigenous businesses to connect with a broader audience.

YEAR IN REVIEW 2023

The AIF Program plans to diversify its services to support member companies. Over the past year, there was an increase in trade shows and events, opening more avenues and opportunities for networking. Across various efforts (Export, Domestic, Retailer Partnership, Trademark), there has been tremendous growth with new members, planning workshops, and expanding partnerships. The AIF team has also expanded to develop new curriculum's, conduct market assessments, and engage in trade shows and training activities.

This past year, the AIF program exhibited trademark businesses at FoodEx Japan trade show in March of 2023 in Tokyo. One such business, Yopun Tea, was introduced to the Japanese market at this event. Yopun Tea is a sustainably sourced agricultural product harvested by traditional methods in North America. The Japanese market was very intrigued by the brand story, a traditional Native American tea grown only in the USA. They appeared particularly interested in the history of the plant—especially with its rich history in American Indian culture and the importance it once held for the Native American people.

While the Japanese have a sophisticated palate and taste for tea, Yopun Tea was honored to hear positive feedback from all who frequented the booth, including the most prominent Japanese tea company, Japan Green Tea Co. (founder of the Yerba Mate Association). Currently, Yopun Tea is in discussions for export and a potential partnership to enter the Japanese Market. Overall, Yopun Tea found the event worthwhile, and the U.S. trade teams, U.S. embassy, USDA, and staff were beneficial and highly informative. Following a great response to the show, the company decided to participate in the USDA Agriculture Trade Mission to Japan. Because of this FoodEx Japan experience, Yopun Tea has pivoted its sales strategy to micro-focus on exports in key Asian territories. Japan is a primary focus due to its initial high interest and potential demand for American Indian-made tea products.

Looking ahead, the AIF team aims to expand its reach to meet producers' market needs, including future trade shows and organizing an Indigenous Trade Mission to Vancouver. Insights from the field highlight a greater need for domestic market support, revisions in trademark guides for clarity, and specific challenges seafood producers face.



NORTHWEST REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 1

Transparency/Streamlined Process - IAC to Monitor the USDA Process: IAC to monitor and oversee tribal funding to tribes from USDA and other Ag related departments

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming, IAC has maintained active presence on the roll out of Tribe-specific funding streams and continues to provide informational resources and direct USDA technical assistance programming. On a policy and advocacy level IAC has continued to work to expand eligibility for and access to USDA programming across the board. Recent successes include Meat & Poultry Processing Expansion Program and the Indigenous Animals Grant.

CAUCUS ISSUE 2

BIA Leasing: BIA leasing, including soil health managements

IAC recognizes the key role that the BIA has in many aspects of agriculture across Indian Country and as such engagement, advocacy, and innovation in this space continues to be a high priority for IAC. One clear space for engagement is at the annual national conference, in which IAC's policy and advocacy team as well as field staff, have put forth a lot of effort to solicit BIA engagement across the country which has been met with a large degree of success for 2023. Similar efforts will continue in 2024 and beyond.



NORTHWEST REGION

CAUCUS ISSUE 3

Matching Funds for Grants: Many tribes unable to meet the requirements for matching grants funding

IAC's Stakeholder Services programming regularly provides resources and connections to available sources for matching grants. Additionally, IAC serves in an advocacy role with agencies that require match monies to reduce or remove those match requirements. IAC was recently named the lead for the National Intertribal Food Business Center which will be charged to leverage various funding mechanisms to support Tribal food businesses.

CAUCUS ISSUE 4

Feral horse management from USDA secretary of Ag: USDA secretary of Ag to form a committee for feral horses

The feral horse topic continues to be a priority item for IAC's Policy and Government Relations team. Talks in partnership with the National Tribal Horse Coalition has resulted in action during Farm Bill efforts and a continued path forward in addressing the myriad of factors involved in this complex issue across many Tribes.



NORTHWEST REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 5

Excused absences from School for agriculture-related activities: Many schools do not allow for excused absences from school for youth to participate in non-school related agriculture activities, (ie. Fairs, shows, livestock sales, rodeos, agriculture forums or meetings, etc.) Many times youth are excused from school to participate in sporting events, family vacations, or school related events such as FFA contests or conferences, which are school-related. But many times, youth are not excused to participate in 4-H activities or other agriculture activities or events. Denying excused absences from school often forces families to choose not to allow participation in the agriculture event. Working with schools to nationally recognize the value of agriculture activities might help to generate more agriculture interest and promote more youth agriculture participation opportunities.

IAC's Youth and Professional Development Program staff have conducted outreach and advocacy on this issue especially with FRTEP and in connection with 4-H and FFA.



CAUCUS ISSUE 6

Funding for Tribal Youth Fairs and Livestock Shows: Funding and resources are lacking to host tribal youth fairs and shows on Indian Reservations. Tribal youth would benefit from participating in a tribal-focused fairs or shows on their home reservation, without the need to travel off reservation to exhibit their 4-H or FFA projects. 4-H & FFA focused programs should receive priority for this funding, as these youth development programs have strong educational components. 4-H & FFA teach life skills that tribal youth can use and demonstrate as they mature into caring and contributing citizens of their communities

IAC's Food 4 Families program offers a coupon that covers the cost of livestock processing fees or an add-on amount to the sale price of the livestock. IAC's Stakeholder Services, specifically the Technical Assistance Network, regularly provide outreach about this program to the Northwest Tribes. IAC also hosted a youth field day in the region which featured this resource. The program was highly successful this year and plans are in place for its continuance.



NORTHWEST REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 7

Educational Funding and Resources for youth to learn about Traditional Foods and Medicines: Our traditional knowledge is being lost as we lose our tribal elders. We need more resources to help educate our youth on identification and use of traditional foods and medicines. These items are very well guarded by all tribes, but in order to preserve the knowledge and carry it into the future, we need to develop ways to ethically teach young people these techniques. Tools and materials could include: educational videos, booklets, coloring books, curriculum, podcasts, posters, etc.

IAC maintains a Mighty Networks platform, available for free on the IAC website, where educational topics of Traditional Foods, land management, and youth-appropriate videos, presentations, and documents are available. IAC also maintains an active YouTube channel that features many traditional foods and land management topics. IAC also provides a paid internship opportunity available every Summer to help support youth engagement in these areas. IAC recently expanded its Youth Council to advise IAC's Youth Programs and to support the implementation of innovative solutions to address Native youth priorities in food and agriculture.



CAUCUS ISSUE 1

NRCS Pay Schedule Update: NRCS pay schedule for reimbursement needs to be updated to fund Alaska projects appropriately

IAC, as part of the Native Farm Bill Coalition, hosted listening sessions to identify priorities for Alaska specifically. NRCS funding and allocation continues to be a topic that IAC advocates on. While funding is not likely to increase this year IAC is working with partners to explore innovation solutions in these spaces. Upcoming opportunities through the National Intertribal Food Business Center will support identification of unique funding opportunities and strategies for Tribal food businesses.

CAUCUS ISSUE 2

CDFI Reps to Attend Alaska Conferences: Requesting that CDFI Reps attend Alaska conferences to provide program outreach, loan application assistance, and consultation for Alaska producers.

IAC is conducting research to build connections with Alaska CDFIs. IAC's key partner, Akiptan CDFI (a Native CDFI serving producers across the nation) participated in the November Alaska regional summit to provide information to Alaska producers.



ALASKA REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 3

AK Access to CDFIs, Opportunity Zones, Tribal Bonding: Caucus members would like to see Alaska have better access to tools such as CDFIs, Opportunity Zone Investments, and assistance in Tribal Bonding.

IAC has conducted research to build connections with Alaska CDFIs to best practices in the lower forty-eight. IAC has designated TA Network leadership to participate in Alaska's House Food Security Task Force to advocate for increase access to capital for Alaska's producers which includes a recommendation for increasing capital available in Alaska's revolving loan fund. The IAC Alaska Summit included a presentation and information from Akiptan, a primary national CDFI partner.

CAUCUS ISSUE 4

USDA Project Application Assistance: Assistance in applying for USDA funded projects for building TCD capacity.

IAC's field staff attended the AHTNA TCD Conference to build connections with Alaska TCDs. IAC has a cooperative agreement with NRCS Alaska that includes pass through funding provide support for administrative costs incurred by TCDs. Alaska TAS has provided individual application support and resource identification to various TCDs in Alaska when requested.



CAUCUS ISSUE 5

IAC Alaska Regional Conference: Caucus Members in Alaska would like for there to be an IAC supported Alaska Regional Conference to help support the work occurring throughout the state

IAC hosted the first Alaska Regional Summit in November with over 100 tribal partners, producers, and agency representatives attending. There are plans to include a regional youth conference in 2024.

CAUCUS ISSUE 6

USDA Funding to Alaska Tribes: Increase USDA funding to Tribes in Alaska.

IAC continues to advocate for increased provisions and resources for Tribal producers including specifically for Alaska. IAC worked with Native non-profit organizations and Alaska Native Corporations to discuss how funds can be utilized to serve multiple Tribes. IAC has advocated for more support internally for Alaska field staff. ITAN Director has participated on both Alaska Food Security Task Forces, multiple recommendations from that work includes multiple opportunities for increased funding.



ALASKA REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 7

Increase # of Gardens, Farms, Ranches: Increase number of gardens, farms, and ranches for local grown food.

IAC provided technical assistance to a village's application for RurAL CAP and were awarded the Thriving Communities grant program to build a greenhouse and provide fresh, locally grown produce for the community in addition to hiring staff to manage the operation. IAC Natural Resources hosted four field days in Alaska (with seven more scheduled for 2024) and shared topics on: gardening, hydroponics, hoop houses, composting, companion planting, regenerative agriculture, and Alaska soil health. IAC, in partnership with NRCS, hosted an intern from Alaska who is focused on Ethical Harvesting.

CAUCUS ISSUE 8

Sponsoring Alaska Key Leaders Attendance to Lower 48 Events: Consider sponsoring attendance for Alaskan key leaders to attend lower 48 regional events.

IAC sponsored Tribal representatives to attend the IAC MPPTA Oklahoma trip to provide resources and connections for supporting Tribally owned meat processing facilities. IAC has also extended travel support to attend the regional summit to tribal producers and to the national conference again this year. IAC continues to make that funding available to producers.



CAUCUS ISSUE 9

Collaboration Between Tribes, Regional Healthcare Corporations, and Regional Tribal Corporations: Focus on collaborations between tribes, regional healthcare corporations, and Regional Tribal corporations to support economies of scale around agricultural initiatives.

IAC's role in Alaska is strongly focused on participating in the myriad of task forces and committees to address the region's agricultural needs. These committees and task forces have resulted in a strong network of tribal foods advocates who cross collaborate allowing for exponential results in efforts. ITAN Director facilitates Alaska Food Policy Council's Indigenous Foods Committee, which is a statewide stakeholder group that includes tribes, regional healthcare corporations, and Regional Tribal corporations

CAUCUS ISSUE 10

Protein Rich Food Research: Research foods that are protein rich for cultivation in Alaska due to loss of traditional protein food sources.

IAC has been contributing to fresh foods networks generally to help with food security in areas impacted by climate change. IAC is supporting efforts to extend growing season, develop community gardens, grow indoors, etc. IAC engages with partners like the Reindeer Herders Association and connected resources through Meat & Poultry Processing TA to continue to support cultivation of healthy foods with a focus on protein rich foods. Also supporting organizations like the Space Farm Institute that are focused on traditional foods and in partnership with the Alaska Native Medical Center are working on hydroponic propagation and cultivation of traditional Alaska plants for food use in hospitals and schools.

ALASKA REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 11

TA Assistance Associated to Laws Related to Food Production on Native Land Allotments: Develop and/or identify materials that provide information and technical assistance associated to the laws related to food production on Native Land Allotments

IAC has participated in conversations with FSA about establishing a campaign around getting the allotments enrolled as farms based on the harvesting practices that occurred. IAC has brought awareness to this opportunity to stakeholder groups throughout the year as a way to increase the number of tribal farms and farms in the state, which also helps to potentially bring in more funding from the USDA using the allocation matrix based on number of farms. Right now, many tribes or tribal producers don't consider themselves producers based on the way they self identify in the language that the USDA uses. A foundation has been laid for a potential campaign on this in the coming year.

CAUCUS ISSUE 12

Research/Support for Fertilizer Production: IAC research and support alternative and local fertilizer production.

IAC has done some research on this with some trial ideas for composting in Alaska with a focus for the region around Nome. IAC also brainstormed some ways to bear proof fisheries waste to create fertilizer. IAC has worked directly with tribes to evaluate resources available for soil building within their community.

IAC provided a letter of support to Calypso Farm and Ecology Center as part of a grant application to pursue building of soil using place based materials. The project will be piloted in seven different communities. IAC foresees continued involvement in this project where possible.



CAUCUS ISSUE 13

Fishery Management & Advocacy Support: Fishery management and advocacy support for inclusion of Tribal subsistence priorities.

IAC advocated and provided feedback to USDA OTR for improved Meat & Poultry Processing Expansion programs and the USDA developed the Indigenous Animals Grant that was for Tribal applicants only. The funding included seafood and traditional proteins defined by the Tribe or Village. The Indigenous Animals Grant was a grant opportunity for subsistence priorities. IAC did a training on stream monitoring for healthy fish conditions and riparian management. IAC participated in the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association regional food system partnership working group on the steering committee, which is focused on redistribution of salmon where there's still salmon resources in the Bristol Bay to communities that are experiencing the shortfalls and closures of subsistence fisheries. There was successful distribution this year.



ALASKA REGION



CAUCUS ISSUE 14

Alaska Fisheries Support: Support the long-term sustainability of Alaska's fisheries, which includes but is not limited to: a. Policy advocacy to increase the prioritization of tribal subsistence b. Salmon habitat restoration programming is a priority in California and west coast. c. Value added options around processing infrastructure ? identification and prioritization of processing center to help with decentralizing. d. Advocate for Expansion of USDA self-determination opportunities for Tribes.

Through IAC's Stakeholder Services programming IAC has provided information and resources on seed saving and traditional crops. On a policy and advocacy level IAC has continued to work to expand eligibility for and access to USDA programming across the board. One of IAC's recent efforts has been advocating for 638 contracting of certain USDA programs to promote tribal sovereignty. IAC staff participated in Alaska specific salmon safe farming activities but funding is a barrier. IAC's American Indian Foods program activities focus heavily on opportunities to advance options for value-added producers. IAC's Natural Resources department did a riparian management and monitoring training for ideal salmon conditions in spawning streams. IAC is assisting with resources and information to help support climate controlled storage at the hub communities which would result in remote communities' ability to create product locally.



CAUCUS ISSUE 15

Support Understanding IAC's Delegate Process: Lack of understanding IAC's delegate process Teleconference/zoom/virtual meeting

In 2023 IAC has made strides to more clearly articulate and formalize the caucus and delegate process. A meet and greet session will kick-off the national conference in 2023, this report of the year's caucus issues and progress will be available at the conference, and more formalized structures will support the caucus meetings. Additionally, field staff have been tasked with connecting with delegates and Tribes to become members. Finally, a membership packet has been updated and shared to explain the benefits of voting membership and the role of delegates. In Alaska, the regional summit in November 2023 dedicated time to the role of delegates and the caucus meetings.





2023 CAUCUS REPORT