

Summary Report

2008 Joint Employee Training Conference



*Embracing the Diversity of
the Pacific Northwest:
Culture, Conservation and
Community*

**American Indian Alaska Native Employee Association
(AIANEA)
&
Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO)
Conference**

August 11 – 15, 2008

Spokane, Washington

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Table of Contents

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| Introduction..... | 3 |
| Attendees..... | 3 |
| National Emphasis Program Managers Deliver SEPM Training | 4 |
| Concurrent Sessions-Workshops..... | 5 |
| Cultural Awareness Training..... | 5 |
| General Session Presentations..... | 6 |
| Poster Presentations..... | 6 |
| Training Tours A & B: NRCS Programs in Washington..... | 6 |
| Networking..... | 7 |
| Awards..... | 7 |
| Conclusion..... | 7 |
| Conference Photos..... | 8 |
| Conference Photos..... | 9 |

Summary Report
2008 Joint American Indian Alaska Native Employee Association &
Asian Pacific Islander Organization
Employee Training Conference

Introduction

The 2008 Joint Employee Training Conference, held in Spokane, Washington, from August 11th through August 15th, was the second joint employee training conference held together by two Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employee associations. The American Indian Alaska Native Employees Association (AIANEA) and the Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO) demonstrated their effective planning and partnership skills to produce an excellent joint training conference for NRCS employees.

The joint training conference offered NRCS employees the opportunity to network with other NRCS employees to learn more about NRCS conservation work being implemented across the nation. NRCS employees received training and an opportunity to be mentored by members of the National Leadership Team to help them improve their career advancement. Employees learned more about NRCS programs; received training that provided them with tools to improve their communication skills; cultural awareness training; information and training through workshops, posters and general session presentations that demonstrated successful NRCS partnerships, delivery of conservation to all populations, diversity of the conservation work; and the effectiveness of NRCS services. The AIANEA and APIO planning committee worked effectively with the National Emphasis Program Managers for American Indian Alaska Native and Asian American Pacific Islanders to provide a certified training course for NRCS Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs). In addition to training at the joint conference; the agenda included evening activities such as; live auction to fund diversity scholarships for students seeking degrees related to NRCS careers; association business meetings; awards luncheon to honor the each association's finest members and their student scholarship winners; and networking social events.

The success of this joint training conference could not have happened without the joint and individual association planning committees and the local planning committee; which included NRCS employees in Washington and most importantly the support of NRCS State Conservationist for Washington, Gus Hughbanks.

Attendees

The 2008 Joint Employee Training Conference attendance was approximately 198. Attendees included the following:

NRCS leadership members from National Headquarters; Chief of NRCS, Arlen Lancaster; Dana York, Associate Chief; Sara Schmidt, West Regional Assistant Chief; Katherine Gugulis, Deputy Chief for Management; Thomas Christensen, Deputy Chief for Programs; William Puckett, Deputy Chief for Science and Technology; Leonard Jordon, Deputy Chief for Strategic Planning and Accountability; Wayne Maresch, Deputy Chief for Soil Survey & Resource Assessment; Eloris Speight, Human Capital Officer, Larry Holmes, Director for Outreach NRCS and USDA Director of Outreach and Diversity, Carl-Martin Ruiz.

State Conservationist; Ron Hilliard, Oklahoma; Roylene Rides at the Door, Rhode Island; Joyce Swartzendruber, Maine; JR Flores, North Dakota; Ed Burton, California; Terry Cosby, Ohio, Larry Yamamoto, Director of Pacific Basin; Gus Hughbanks, Washington; Janet Oertly, South Dakota; Ron Alvarado, New York and Acting State Conservationist for New Mexico, Norman Vigil.

National Emphasis Program Managers, Carol Crouch, Oklahoma, for American Indian Alaska Native and Angela Biggs, Vermont, for Asian American Pacific Islander, NRCS employees from across the Nation, AIANEA and APIO members, AIANEA Elders, NRCS partners such as the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC), conference speakers and presenters. Special conference speakers included; Mayor of Spokane Valley, Washington, Senator Chris Mar, Mayor of Spokane, Washington, Mary Verner, AIANEA President, Millie Tittla and APIO President, Kent Matsutani.

Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM) Training

The AIANEA and APIO worked effectively with National Emphasis Program Managers, Carol Crouch, Oklahoma, for American Indian Alaska Native and Angela Biggs, Vermont, for Asian American Pacific Islander to provide SEPM training to AI/AN and APIO SEPMs from across the nation during the conference. On Monday August 11th, 2008, from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, SEPM training was provided to 57 NRCS employees. Attendees included California State Conservationist, Ed Burton.

The SEPM training courses included;

- *Roles and Responsibilities of the SEPM*
- *DN-714 Training*
- *Developing a Business Plan and Budget and Reporting*
- *Barrier Determination*
- *Sharing our Experiences*
 - What is working successfully in your NRCS State?
- *State Conservationist Panel Discussion*
 - Questions & Answers
 - Issues and/or concerns as SEPM.

The attendees had a special opportunity to have a panel discussion with State Conservationist; Ed Burton, Roylene Rides at the Door, JR Flores, Joyce Swartzendruber, Terry Cosby and Larry Yamamoto. SEPMs were able to ask questions and receive answers from State Conservationists regarding their role as SEPMs, share their issues/concerns and received guidance on how they can enhance and excel in their position. Attendees received certificates to certify their completion of the NRCS SEPM training course.

Concurrent Sessions—Workshops

The conference concurrent sessions offered to NRCS employees and conference attendees included the following;

- *Building Recruitment Program for SEPMs*
- *Appreciative inquiry; it's uses in organizational change and community development*
- *Persuasive Speaking and API Leadership Panel; detail Experiences*
- *Elder's Panel and Tribal Issues Listening Session*
- *Update: AA/AI in NRCS*
- *Using Technology for Cultural Preservation*
- *Indian Country Livestock and Ute Ceremonies*
- *Washington Commission of Asian American Pacific Affairs*
- *WWII Victims in Hiroshima and Permanent trellis for Asian Vine Corps in Central California*
- *Welcome Pole and Cultural Resource Management*
- *Great Buffalo Herds*
- *Yuungnaqpiallerput-The Way We Genuinely Live*
- *Heritage Gardens*
- *Sacred Conservation*

Cultural Awareness Training

One of the main highlights of the training conference was the cultural awareness training that was provided to NRCS employees, speakers and AIANEA Elders. Cultural awareness training for attendees at this conference was not always taught in a concurrent session or through a presentation; rather through a cultural experience, verbal exchange of traditions, ceremonies, dancers, music and story telling.

The opening ceremony provided a cultural experience for attendees; songs were played and sung by the AIANEA drum group, a cultural presentation of the AIANEA Eagle staff, and presentation of colors by AIANEA and APIO veterans. The AIANEA drum group performed their traditional drum songs during the opening ceremony so attendees could experience part of American Indian culture. On August 12th from 6:30 to 10:00 PM, conference attendees had the opportunity to hear the AIANEA drum group, American Indian flute music by Norman Lopez, AIANEA Elder and NRCS employee Levi Montoya. The highlight of the evening was the presentation of Asian Pacific Islander culture; presented by the *Kultura Chamoru Performers* led by Heidi Chargulaf Quenga.

From the beginning of the opening ceremonies, to the greeting circle, throughout the concurrent sessions, during the SEPM training, Awards Luncheon, Live and Silent Auctions, Poster Presentations, General Sessions, Tours, and closing circle of culture songs and drumming; cultural awareness was exchanged to all attendees..... ***An accomplishment that both associations are proud of!***

General Session Presentations

General sessions presentations at the conference provided the opportunity for NRCS employees to hear from NRCS leadership members from National Headquarters; Chief of NRCS, Arlen Lancaster; Dana York, Associate Chief; Sara Schmidt, West Regional Assistant Chief; Katherine Gugulis, Deputy Chief for Management; Thomas Christensen, Deputy Chief for Programs; William Puckett, Deputy Chief for Science and Technology; Leonard Jordon, Deputy Chief for Strategic Planning and Accountability; Wayne Maresch, Deputy Chief for soil Survey & Resource Assessment; Eloris Speight, Human Capital Officer, Larry Holmes, Director for Outreach NRCS and USDA Director of Outreach and Diversity, Carl-Martin Ruiz.

NRCS employees and conference attendees had the opportunity to hear presentations such as:

- *Conservation in Washington State and Pacific Northwest* by Gus Hughbanks
- *Special Remarks* by Chief Arlen Lancaster
- *Agricultural History and the Environment of the Pacific Northwest*
- *Cultural Perspectives*
- *NRCS Leadership Panel-NHQ* NRCS Leadership
- *Human Capital Update* by Eloris Speight
- *NRCS Five Year Investment Strategy* by Dana York, Associate Chief
- *Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART)* by Patty Lawrence
- *Air Quality* by Greg Johnson

Poster Presentations

The poster presentation at the conference provided NRCS employees the opportunity to display and share their successful NRCS partnerships; the delivery of conservation to all populations; the effectiveness of NRCS services; and showcase diversity conservation practices being implemented across the nation. There were 27 posters presented during the conference from August 11th through August 14th. NRCS Oklahoma presented four posters, California had six posters with North and South Dakota presenting two posters, Utah had a powerpoint presentation instead of a poster and Delaware and Washington DC had one poster each. These posters showcased; conservation practices being implemented in their states; their strong partnerships; successful delivery of NRCS programs to all populations; special projects; outreach success and illustrated how their state is *Helping People, Help the Land* in Indian Country and for future generations. A special poster was presented by an American Indian youth and AIANEA member, Mowana Koyiyumptewa, from Arizona, which featured the cultural significance of *Corn and her Hopi Culture*. Other poster/displays were presented by the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC), NRCS National Civil Rights Committee and NARFE.

Training Tour: NRCS Programs

The conference provided the opportunity for attendees to take one of two tours on Wednesday, August 13, 2008. NRCS employees and leadership gained firsthand experience to observe the diversity of conservation practices being implemented in Washington as well as the beautiful landscape of the Northwest. Tour A included a tour of the Spokane House which captured the early settlement of Tribes in Washington State, a tour of Spokane Tribal Fish Hatchery, Fort Spokane where tribes gathered to fish and viewing of Living Snow Fence. Tour B included a scenic tour of Spokane Country that included a stop at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge.

Networking

The opportunity to network was an important training element for this joint training conference. Networking sessions provided the opportunity for attendees to share their accomplishments with others, exchange questions and answers and gain insight on how to accomplish a work related task that may be presenting obstacles.

Networking opportunities were provided to conference attendees throughout the conference and began when registration opened. On August 10, 2008; networking opportunities began when both association came together to finalize the conference events. On Monday, August 11, from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM networking opportunities occurred between American Indian Alaska Native (AIAN) SEPMs and Asian American Pacific Islanders (AAPI) SEPMs as they joined together for Special Emphasis Program Manager training and networking continued from 7:30 PM to 10:00 PM with a scheduled networking session for conference attendees.

On Tuesday, August 12, 2008, from 9:00 AM to 10:00 AM, NRCS Chief Arlen Lancaster provided an NRCS update to conference attendees as well as facilitating a networking opportunity that allowed attendees to have a special question and answer session with him. This session was followed by a networking opportunity with Chief Lancaster and the National Council members of the AIANEA and APIO. On August 13th, networking continued while leaders and this diverse group of NRCS employees boarded three buses for training tours from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. On August 14th from 7:00 to 7:50 AM networking occurred at the joint mentoring breakfast with the National Leadership Team, awards luncheon and from 7:30 to 10:00 PM at the joint live and silent auction. The posters presented by both association attendees provided a unique opportunity for networking as poster presenters shared the success stories and culture with each other.

Awards

On August 14th AIANEA and APIO members were honored during the Awards Luncheon. Receiving AIANEA awards included; Carol Crouch, Herb Webb, Deb Clairmont, Felix Nez, Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen, Crystal Leonetti, Yvette Dulle, Jerry Thompson, John McCoy and AIANEA Elder, Norman Lopez was honored with the presentation of the American Indian Science & Engineering Society Sequoyah Fellowship. Receiving APIO awards included; Lawrence Yamamoto, Elizabeth Warner, Wallace Jennings, Carl Hashimoto, Manny Wei, and special achievement award to Maui Coastal Land Trust. APIO lifetime membership award included; Hue Dang, Terry Wang, Dan Curtis, Nick Vira, Shawn McVey and Chansamone Ly. American Indian youth and AIANEA member, Mowana Koyiyumptewa received a \$200.00 scholarship from the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory council for her poster presentation of *Corn and her Hopi Culture*.

Conclusion

The 2008 Joint Employee Training Conference between the American Indian Alaska Native Employees Association (AIANEA) and the Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO) provided NRCS employees with excellent training so they could be better informed when they returned to their job duties. Conference agenda and conference photos album may be viewed at the AIANEA website at www.aianea.com or the APIO website at www.apio.org.

Conference Photos *(Please check AIANEA and APIO website for more photos)*



**Opening Ceremony
AIANEA Eagle staff
AIANEA and APIO Veterans
Presentation of Colors &
AIANEA Drum Group**



**Cultural Awareness exchange
between NRCS employees and
*Kultura Chamoru Performers***





NRCS Leadership in attendance

Conservation Tour



**Special Emphasis Program
Manger Training: AI/AN and
AA/PI**

Poster Presentations

