S. HRG. 106–622

NATIVE AMERICAN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND EXPORT ENHANCEMENT ACT

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

S. 2282

TO ENCOURAGE THE EFFICIENT USE OF EXISTING RESOURCES AND ASSETS RELATED TO INDIAN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND EXPORTS WITHIN THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

JUNE 14, 2000
WASHINGTON, DC

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NATIVE AMERICAN AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND EXPORT ENHANCEMENT ACT

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 2000

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to other business, at 2:39 p.m. in room 485, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Ben Nighthorse Campbell (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senator Campbell.

STATEMENT OF HON. BEN NIGHTHORSE CAMPBELL, U.S. SENATOR FROM COLORADO, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

The CHAIRMAN. We will now turn to S. 2282, the Native American Agricultural Research, Development, and Export Enhancement Act of 2000, the bill that I, along with Senator Inouye and Senator Johnson, introduced on March 23, 2000.

This bill will help the efficient use of Federal agricultural research development and export resources in the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the benefit of Indian tribes across this Nation.

For hundreds of years, agriculture has been a key part of Native American economies and cultures. For many tribes, agriculture continues to sustain their members and their economies.

Indian agriculture is not limited to just farming, but it also includes timber, fish, bison, cattle, wild rice, olives, exotic fruits, cotton, and a whole list of different commodities.

With this rich diversity of products, Indian agriculture is the second leading revenue generator and employer of Native American communities, but has taken a back seat to other more alluring activities, such as gaming.

If enacted, this bill will achieve four long term goals. It will provide food security for Native communities. It will demand discipline and efficiency in the Agriculture Department. It will encourage value-added activities and joint ventures, and increase employment and raise the incomes of Native communities.

Many services are offered for which Indians are eligible through the Agriculture Department, but the Agriculture Department has not lived up to our expectations in its role of assisting Indian farmers in their need to meet the demands of the current market.

I believe that with a level playing field and some assistance we will certainly help Indian-made products and Indian-grown products compete with other goods, no matter how they are raised, or how they are grown, or how they are gathered.

This last November, Indian farmers filed a class action lawsuit against the department, challenging its performance in Indian communities.

[Text of S. 2282 follows:]

II

106TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2282

To encourage the efficient use of existing resources and assets related to Indian agricultural research, development and exports within the United States Department of Agriculture, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 23, 2000

Mr. CAMPBELL (for himself, Mr. JOHNSON, and Mr. INOUYE) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs

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A BILL

To encourage the efficient use of existing resources and assets related to Indian agricultural research, development and exports within the United States Department of Agriculture, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Native American Agricultural Research, Development and Export Enhancement Act of 2000".

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.**

2 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following find-
3 ings:

4 (1) Clause 3 of section 8 of article I of the
5 United States Constitution recognizes the special re-
6 lationship between the United States and Indian
7 tribes.

8 (2) Beginning in 1970, with the inauguration
9 by the Nixon Administration of the Indian self-de-
10 termination era, each successive President has re-
11 affirmed the special government-to-government rela-
12 tionship between Indian tribes and the United
13 States.

14 (3) In 1994, President Clinton issued an execu-
15 tive memorandum to the heads of all Federal depart-
16 ments and agencies that obligated all such depart-
17 ments and agencies, particularly those that have an
18 impact on economic development, to evaluate the po-
19 tential impacts of their actions on Indian tribes.

20 (4) The United States has an obligation to
21 guard and preserve the agricultural and related re-
22 newable resources of Indian tribes in order to foster
23 strong tribal governments, Indian self-determination,
24 and economic self-sufficiency among Indian tribes.

25 (5) Despite the availability of abundant natural
26 resources on Indian lands and a rich cultural legacy

1 that accords great value to self-determination, self-
2 reliance, and independence, Native Americans suffer
3 higher rates of unemployment, poverty, poor health,
4 substandard housing, and associated social ills than
5 those of any other group in the United States.
6 (6) Reservation-based Indians tend to be the
7 most rural of any minority group. They tend to be
8 geographically isolated, resource limited, and the
9 least likely of any farm group to receive payment or
10 loans from the United States.
11 (7) Indian land represents close to 55,000,000
12 acres, or about 2 percent of the United States land
13 base, with nearly 47,000,000 of these acres consist-
14 ing of range and cropland.
15 (8) Indian agriculture constitutes the second
16 largest revenue generator and employer in Indian
17 country and is not limited to farming and ranching,
18 but often includes such products as forestry, bison,
19 wild rice and fruits, cotton, tobacco and other Na-
20 tive-made or grown products.
21 (9) Because of the lack of Federal intra-agency
22 and inter-agency coordination in agriculture pro-
23 grams and policies, the development of Indian agri-
24 culture and related tribal business and economic de-
25 velopment potential has been hindered.

1 (10) It is estimated that about 20 percent of
2 reservation grazing land and about 70 percent of
3 cropland is leased to non-Indian producers.
4 (11) American Indians today use their lands
5 and natural resources for agriculture and agri-
6 business to provide food and other staples for con-
7 sumption, improving their economic self-sufficiency,
8 agriculture income and reservation employment.
9 (12) Although there are many programs within
10 Department of Agriculture for which tribal and indi-
11 vidual Indian producers are eligible, Indian produc-
12 ers have not fully benefited from these programs be-
13 cause of insufficient coordination within the Depart-
14 ment of Agriculture.
15 (13) The United States has an obligation to as-
16 sist Indian tribes with the creation of appropriate
17 economic and political conditions with respect to In-
18 dian lands to—
19 (A) encourage investment from outside
20 sources that do not originate with the tribes;
21 and
22 (B) facilitate economic ventures with out-
23 side entities that are not tribal entities.
24 (14) The economic success and material well-
25 being of Native American communities depends on

1 the combined efforts of the Federal Government,
2 tribal governments, the private sector, and individ-
3 uals.
4 (b) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this Act to—
5 (1) promote the coordination of existing agricul-
6 tural and related programs within the Department
7 of Agriculture to provide the maximum benefit to In-
8 dian tribes and their members;
9 (2) encourage intertribal, regional, and inter-
10 national trade and business development in order to
11 assist in increasing productivity and the standard of
12 living of members of Indian tribes and improving the
13 economic self-sufficiency of the Indian tribes;
14 (3) through improving the administration of
15 Federal program, improve the access of Indian tribes
16 to capital, specialty markets, export promotions, and
17 marketing assistance that non-Indian agriculture
18 producers currently have access to;
19 (4) improve the development and coordination
20 of Indian agriculture and related value-added indus-
21 tries to promote self-sustaining Native economies
22 and communities; and
23 (5) promote economic self-sufficiency and politi-
24 cal self-determination for Indian tribes and members
25 of Indian tribes.

1 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

2 In this Act:

3 (1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term "eligible en-
4 tity" means an Indian tribe, a tribal organization, a
5 tribal enterprise, a tribal marketing cooperative, or
6 any other Indian-owned business.

7 (2) INDIAN.—The term "Indian" has the mean-
8 ing given that term in section 4(d) of the Indian
9 Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act
10 (25 U.S.C. 450b(d)).

11 (3) INDIAN GOODS AND SERVICES.—The term
12 "Indian goods and services" means—

13 (A) goods produced or originated by an eli-
14 gible entity; or

15 (B) services provided by eligible entities.

16 (4) INDIAN-OWNED BUSINESS.—The term "In-
17 dian-owned business" means an entity organized for
18 the conduct of trade or commerce with respect to
19 which at least 50 percent of the property interest of
20 the entity is owned by Indians or Indian tribes (or
21 a combination thereof).

22 (5) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term "Indian tribe"
23 has the meaning given that term in section 4(e) of
24 the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assist-
25 ance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b(e)).

1 (6) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means
2 the Secretary of Agriculture.
3 (7) TRIBAL ENTERPRISE.—The term "tribal en-
4 terprise" means a commercial activity or business
5 managed or controlled by an Indian tribe.
6 (8) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.—The term "tribal
7 organization" has the meaning given that term in
8 section 4(l) of the Indian Self-Determination and
9 Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b(l)).

10 **SEC. 4. NATIVE AMERICAN RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND**
11 **EXPORT OFFICE**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—
13 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established
14 within the Department of Agriculture a Native
15 American Agricultural Research, Development and
16 Export Office (referred to this Act as the "Office").
17 (2) DIRECTOR.—The Office shall be headed by
18 a Director of the Native American Agricultural Re-
19 search, Development and Export Office (referred to
20 in this Act as "Director") to be appointed by the
21 Secretary. The Director shall be compensated at a
22 rate not to exceed that for level V of the Executive
23 Schedule under section 5316 of title 5, United
24 States Code.
25 (b) DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting
2 through the Director, shall ensure the coordination
3 of all programs that provide assistance to Native
4 American communities within the following 7 mis-
5 sion areas of the Department of Agriculture:
6 (A) Farm and foreign agricultural services.
7 (B) Food, nutrition, and consumer serv-
8 ices.
9 (C) Food safety.
10 (D) Marketing and regulatory programs.
11 (E) Natural resources and environment.
12 (F) Research, education and economics.
13 (G) Rural development.
14 (2) ACTIVITIES.—In carrying out paragraph
15 (1), the Secretary, acting through the Director, shall
16 ensure the coordination of, or, as appropriate, carry
17 out—
18 (A) activities to promote Indian agricul-
19 tural programs, including the development of
20 domestic and international trade programs;
21 (B) activities to facilitate water and waste
22 programs, housing, utility and other infrastruc-
23 ture development with respect to Native Amer-
24 ican communities;

1 (C) activities to provide assistance to In-
2 dian tribal college programs;
3 (D) activities to implement rural economic
4 development programs for Native American
5 communities; and
6 (E) activities to promote food and nutri-
7 tion services for Native American communities.
8 (3) INTERAGENCY COORDINATION.—In carrying
9 out Department of Agriculture programs, the Sec-
10 retary, acting through the Director, shall coordinate
11 with other Federal agencies, including the Depart-
12 ment of Energy, the Department of Housing and
13 Urban Development, the Department of the Interior,
14 the Department of Justice, the Department of Com-
15 merce, or any other Federal agency responsible for
16 administering related Indian programs.
17 (4) ASSISTANCE.—In conjunction with the ac-
18 tivities described in paragraph (2), the Secretary,
19 acting through the Director, shall provide—
20 (A) financial assistance, technical assist-
21 ance, and administrative services to eligible en-
22 tities to assist those entities in—
23 (i) identifying and taking advantage
24 of business development opportunities; and

1 (ii) complying with appropriate laws
2 and regulatory practices; and
3 (B) such other assistance as the Secretary,
4 in consultation with the Director, determines to
5 be necessary for the development of business
6 opportunities for eligible entities to enhance the
7 economies of Indian tribes.
8 (5) PRIORITIES.—In carrying out the duties
9 and activities described in paragraphs (3) and (4),
10 the Secretary, acting through the Director, shall give
11 priority to activities that—
12 (A) provide the greatest degree of eco-
13 nomic benefits to Indians; and
14 (B) foster long-term stable economies of
15 Indian tribes.

16 **SEC. 5. NATIVE AMERICAN TRADE AND EXPORT PRO-**
17 **MOTION.**

18 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting through the
19 Director, shall establish and implement a Native American
20 export and trade promotion program (referred to in this
21 section as the "program").
22 (b) COORDINATION OF FEDERAL PROGRAMS AND
23 SERVICES.—In carrying out the program, the Secretary,
24 acting through the Director and in cooperation with the
25 heads of appropriate Federal agencies, shall ensure the co-

1 ordination of Federal programs and services that are de-
2 signed to—
3 (1) develop the economies of Indian tribes; and
4 (2) stimulate the demand for Indian goods and
5 services that are available from eligible entities.
6 (c) ACTIVITIES.—In carrying out subsection (b), the
7 Secretary, acting through the Director, shall ensure the
8 coordination of, or, as appropriate, carry out—
9 (1) Federal programs that are designed to pro-
10 vide technical or financial assistance to eligible enti-
11 ties;
12 (2) activities to develop promotional materials
13 for eligible entities;
14 (3) activities for the financing of appropriate
15 trade missions;
16 (4) activities for the marketing of related In-
17 dian goods and services;
18 (5) activities for the participation of appro-
19 priate Federal agencies or eligible entities in inter-
20 national trade fairs; and
21 (6) any other activity related to the develop-
22 ment of markets for Indian goods and services.
23 (d) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—In conjunction with
24 the activities described in subsection (c), the Secretary,
25 acting through the Director, shall provide technical assist-

1 ance and administrative services to eligible entities to as-
2 sist those entities in—
3 (1) identifying appropriate markets for Indian
4 goods and services;
5 (2) entering the markets referred to in para-
6 graph (1);
7 (3) complying with foreign or domestic laws and
8 practices with respect to financial institutions con-
9 cerning the export and import of Indian goods and
10 services; and
11 (4) entering into financial arrangements to pro-
12 vide for the export and trade of Indian agricultural
13 and related products.
14 (e) PRIORITIES.—In carrying out the duties and ac-
15 tivities described in subsections (b) and (c), the Secretary,
16 acting through the Director, shall give priority to activities
17 that—
18 (1) provide the greatest degree of economic ben-
19 efits to Indians; and
20 (2) foster long-term stable international mar-
21 kets for Indian goods and services.

O

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Inouye had a conflict and had to leave, so we will get right on with it. We would ask our first witness, who is Richard Rominger, deputy secretary, Department of Agriculture, to sit down.

Welcome, Mr. Deputy Secretary, and if you would like to go ahead and proceed. You may abbreviate, if you would like, because your complete written testimony will be included in the record.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD ROMINGER, DEPUTY SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. ROMINGER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the USDA programs and services that benefit Native Americans, and to offer comments on S. 2282.

We appreciate your strong support of Indian agriculture and agri-business, Mr. Chairman, and your continued interest in strengthening USDA programs and services that benefit Native Americans.

American Indians, of course, were the original North American farmers, working the land some 7,000 years before European settlers arrived, and more than 80 percent of the 55 million acres of Indian lands in the United States today consist of crop and range land.

These lands are in the most rural areas of our country. So when we talk about supporting Indian agriculture, we are also talking about supporting rural communities.

The administration is committed to strengthening the ties that bind our nation and making this a land of opportunity for all of our people. Of course, everyone in this room knows that is easier said than done, particularly in Indian country, where unemployment often exceeds 50 percent, where nearly one-half of the young children live in poverty, and where per capita income is roughly one-half the U.S. average. So if we are to change these statistics, we need to get at their roots.

Some are intertwined with the rural way of life: Lack of access to capital, for example. Other roadblocks are unique, such as the lack of understanding and communication across Indian and non-Indian lines.

We have certainly experienced this at USDA, and we are changing the way we do business. We are a more diverse department; one that is better able to serve all the people we are here to serve.

We have implemented close to 100 recommendations for change in the way we handle civil rights issues; from a new foreclosure policy, to ensure people do not lose their land, while discrimination complaints are pending; to a Small Farms Advisory Committee, that is helping us better understand how the pressures of race, economics, and rural life threaten our family farm heritage.

The Department of Agriculture is also making significant progress in increasing program participation in Indian Country. The Department is preparing an update to a February 1999 report to Congress on American Indian and Alaska Native participation in USDA programs and services, which will be available in a few weeks. But I would like to share some of the highlights of that report.

By making outreach to Native American and Alaska Native communities a priority, this Administration has dramatically increased the USDA program activities in Indian Country. For example, in fiscal year 1999, the rural development mission area provided more than $10 million in business programs, loans, and grant assistance to American Indians and Alaska Natives; compared to a total of $13.3 million, during a nine year period, from 1988 to 1996.

Since 1993, the Rural Housing Service has averaged more than $10 million each year in grants and loans to American Indians and Alaska Natives to finance essential services such as schools, hospitals, and fire and emergency service. This is more than 30 times the amount that was given out in the 4 years before this administration.

USDA is also making steady progress in helping tribes bring safe, reliable running water to their people. In fiscal year 1999 alone, the Rural Utility Service obligated more than $48 million to safe and clean water projects in Native American communities and Native Alaskan villages, improving the quality of life and providing more than 1,000 new jobs.

By comparison, the average annual water and waste water tribal investment from 1988 to 1997 was approximately $5.5 million.

The USDA's farm loan programs also show improvement. While Native Americans account for one-half of 1 percent of the Nation's farms, they currently represent 1½ percent of USDA's 103,466 borrowers, and that number is increasing, thanks to the outreach efforts of the Farm Service Agency and its tribal partners.

For example, since the beginning of the Stone Child College Farm Service Agency Ag Credit Outreach Program in January 1998, more than $2.3 million in loans have been made to dozens of tribal members on the seven Indian reservations in Montana, to help purchase farms and ranches, providing operating capital, and for other agri-related projects.

The Department is also helping Indian agricultural producers promote their products in international markets. Since fiscal year 1998, the Foreign Agricultural Service has granted more than $1.1 million to tribal organizations to conduct export readiness seminars, that train American Indian-owned companies on export promotion and foreign trade show participation.

The Department of Agriculture is committed to making sure that Native Americans not only have equal access to all of our programs, but that they also know about all of those programs.

The USDA agencies are stepping up their outreach activities to tribes, and the results are heartening. The number of elected Native American Farm Service Agency county committee members has nearly tripled in the past four years, from 51 in 1996 to 146 in 1999.

USDA agencies regularly conduct outreach meetings with tribes. Just last week, for example, the North Dakota state offices of the Farm Service Agency, Rural Development, and Natural Resources Conservation Service held a three day conference for all Native American producers and tribal government officials throughout the Great Plains Region to discuss USDA programs with the tribes, and to help USDA learn more about tribal customs and cultures.

A similar meeting was held with the seven tribes of Montana last month.

While we are making significant progress in expanding USDA programs and approving services to Indian people, there is still much more work to be done.

I thank this committee for its interest and support in this effort as evidenced by S. 2282, a bill to reorganize the Department's Native American Programs Office.

The Department has had an office in place to coordinate all USDA activities for American Indians since 1973. In 1992, the Department established the position of Director of Native American Programs in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

The Director of Native American Programs has a primary responsibility for coordinating USDA's service to American Indians and Alaska Natives. S. 2282 substantially expands the responsibilities of the Native Americans Programs Office, including establishing a Native American Export and Trade Promotion Program, to help develop tribal economies. In principle, the Department supports efforts to strengthen the roles and responsibilities of this office.

While our agencies are making great improvements in serving Native American communities, there is still a need for a strong central office to ensure department-wide coordination of these important issues. The Department welcomes the opportunity to work out the details of this legislation with committee staff.

Before I close, I would like to welcome USDA's Native American interns, who are part of the audience here today. The Department has more Native American interns under the WINS program than any other Federal agency. We look forward to sharing skills and ideas with them throughout this summer.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for this opportunity to discuss the USDA's programs that benefit Native Americans and Alaska Natives, and for your commitment to economic development and empowerment of tribal communities.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Rominger appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Under Secretary.

Do you have a little bit of time, so you could also stay and hear the testimony of some of the tribal witnesses?

Mr. ROMINGER. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I think you will find it interesting, reading some of the testimony.

The picture that you paint is a very positive picture. If it is actually that positive, I applaud your leadership very much; but from what we are hearing from some of the tribes, it is not quite that positive.

Let me ask you a couple of questions first, before we go to the other witnesses. When you talk about the USDA conferences with the tribes, when you have these meetings, are they general meetings, in which the tribes can attend, or are they specifically set up to deal with tribal agriculture problems?

Mr. ROMINGER. No; they are meetings to discuss with the tribes our programs, to explain our programs, and to hear from the tribes.

The CHAIRMAN. So they are tribally oriented; they are not kind of a general meeting for all farmers and ranchers, but tribes can attend, if they want. These are focused primarily on tribal needs?

Mr. ROMINGER. These are meetings that are focused on the tribes.

The CHAIRMAN. You also spoke about the $10 million in loans. Are those direct loans or guaranteed loans, or how are they administered?

Mr. ROMINGER. We have a combination of direct loans, guaranteed loans, and grants, in some cases. I do not have the figures with me on the breakdown.

The CHAIRMAN. I do not really need figures. But I was wondering, how do they avail themselves? Do they go through coops, or get permission from tribal council, or apply as a direct Indian rancher or farmer to the Department of Agriculture?

Mr. ROMINGER. They apply to our Department of Agriculture Offices in their local area.

The CHAIRMAN. As individual Indian farmers or ranchers?

Mr. ROMINGER. Right.

The CHAIRMAN. That is the way most of them are done?

Mr. ROMINGER. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. I know, living on a reservation right now, and spending a lot of time on them, many times the problem we have with Government agencies who want to help Indians is, a lot of the on-the-ground Indians, the individuals, do not have the knowledge or the skills about how to apply, or how to get through the maze of bureaucratic stuff, to be able to make an application.

Do you have something in place that helps them, or is that what you do at these meetings that you talked about?

Mr. ROMINGER. That is partly what these meetings are, that we talked about. But we understand that that has been a problem. That is why we have put more attention on our outreach and these kind of meetings, explaining to anyone who is interested in our programs, just how to apply and how to get through that red tape.

The CHAIRMAN. As I understand it, the USDA routinely represents that Indian programs are funded at about the $200 million annually, but you mentioned $10 million in loans. What does the $200 million represent?

Mr. ROMINGER. I am not sure what $200 million.

The CHAIRMAN. That is what I understand that the USDA represents that Indian programs are funded at, nearly $200 million. I was wondering about the disparity of the $10 million you say you will give in program loans.

Mr. ROMINGER. Right.

The CHAIRMAN. It does not jive with the other numbers.

Mr. ROMINGER. I can not answer that, right now. I do not know whether Trudy knows the answer. Otherwise, I will get back to you.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay, well, staff tells me that if people avail themselves to all of it, they are eligible for about $200 million in funded programs. But apparently, a lot of people do not apply for them. I guess that is what the difference in the number is. That is fine.

That brings up my other question about eligibility. There might be a lot of people eligible, but some simply might not know how to do it. So if you are working on that, try to make sure that they understand how they can avail themselves to it. I think that would be very beneficial.

Mr. ROMINGER. We are trying to improve that situation, yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Years ago, and I did not own any myself, but I belonged, just as a member, to a group called the American Buffalo Association. They have a headquarters in South Dakota.

I wanted to talk a little bit about buffalo meat or bison meat. As I understand it, it is considered very nutritional and low in cholesterol. It is selling in health food stores, and there are some exotic restaurants that sell it. It is kind of the type of meat that you should eat that is healthy.

Does the Department of Agriculture have a way of grading it, like they do beef? You know, you have choice, and different kinds of meats are eligible for different kinds of classifications.

Mr. ROMINGER. I believe we are not grading bison meat.

The CHAIRMAN. Several members of the committee and some other Senators would like to see the Department include the bison meat as a component of the Food Distribution Program. What would you think of that?

Mr. ROMINGER. Well, we have done some of that.

The CHAIRMAN. You have done that?

Mr. ROMINGER. We have purchased bison in past years. Our Agricultural Marketing Service has bought it with Section 32 funds. In 1998, for example, we bought 2.4 million pounds, valued at $8.3 million.

The CHAIRMAN. Where did you primarily buy that, from private growers, or from tribes, or from other agencies like the Park Service?

Mr. ROMINGER. I think we probably bought it from the Bison Co-op, and perhaps some from individual persons, as well. Then most of that was used in the Food Distribution Program, on reservations.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I will go on to something else. Are you a rancher, Mr. Secretary?

Mr. ROMINGER. Yes; I come from a farm in California.

The CHAIRMAN. Have you ever tried to farm buffalo?

Mr. ROMINGER. I have not, no.

The CHAIRMAN. Do not try it. [Laughter.]

A lot of the Plains tribes have buffalo herds, as you probably know.

Mr. ROMINGER. Right.

The CHAIRMAN. This is just off the subject a little bit, but we have a small ranch. We raise cattle, and some of my friends tried to raise buffalo. They are a handful; do not try it. [Laughter.]

Let me talk a little bit about the Indian competitive advantage, or I think they might have a competitive advantage, because in one respect, they are raising basically hormone-free animals.

Most Indian ranchers do not use any kind of supplements to try to make the animals grow faster. Most of them do not put them in feed lots. Most of them grow at home on tribal land, in many cases, and sometimes on private lands within a reservation, too.

But my question is, does the Department have a program or a long-term kind of a blueprint to help farmers develop and market the goods? You mentioned a little bit about that in your testimony. Could you elaborate on that, just once more?

Mr. ROMINGER. We do have, in the Rural Development Agency, our Rural Business and Cooperative Agency. They do work with cooperatives, in helping them to market products. I am not sure exactly what they have done with the bison cooperative, but I think they have done some activity with them.

The CHAIRMAN. You work with commodities, too, rice, grain, and so on. What would you think, in the last 8 years or so, of the Department's activity with Indians; what would you say is the major accomplishment; what commodity or what segment of Indian farming do you think you have helped the most?

Mr. ROMINGER. That might be hard for me to say. But I think probably the biggest thing that we have done is established offices on the reservations, both Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service, and we have really stepped up our work in helping the Native Americans with their conservation issues on the reservations. Of course, the loan programs have increased pretty dramatically, in the last few years.

The CHAIRMAN. How does the tribe go about getting one of those offices, or how many are there now?

Mr. ROMINGER. I think we have 40-some offices. I think that was in my written testimony. But I think we have 40-some offices on reservations, at the present time, and most of those have just been established in the last few years.

The CHAIRMAN. I mentioned in my opening testimony that Indians have filed a lawsuit, that apparently some Indian tribes are not pleased with the USDA's performance. Would you like to respond to that, or elaborate on that a little bit?

Mr. ROMINGER. Yes; it certainly is true that we have had a class action lawsuit filed against the Department, alleging discrimination, I think in the loan programs, mainly. The Department and the Department of Justice now are evaluating the litigation risks of that lawsuit. We have not made any decisions, yet.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay, well, I appreciate that.

Let us get back just to the bill, and my last question. Has the Department taken a position on this bill?

Mr. ROMINGER. I do not believe we have a formal position, yet, at this time. But we certainly would like to work with the committee on working out the details of the legislation.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay, I would appreciate it if you would.

I thank you. If you can stay around for just a few minutes, we will get right into our second panel.

That panel will be Malcolm Bowekaty, Governor of the Zuni Pueblo; Mary Thomas, our friend who has been here a number of times before, the chair of the Gila River Farms; and Fred Small, who is probably one of my relatives, from the Montana/Wyoming Stock Growers, from the Northern Cheyenne Reservation.

We will proceed in that order. Governor, if you would go ahead and proceed. As with the other witness, your complete testimony will be included in the record. So if you would like to abbreviate that, we would appreciate it.

STATEMENT OF MALCOLM BOWEKATY, GOVERNOR, ZUNI PUEBLO, ZUNI, NM

Mr. BOWEKATY. On behalf of my Zuni people, Honorable Chairman and esteemed Senators, it is a great honor and pleasure that I appear before you today to advocate for S. 2282.

The Pueblo Zunis are in complete agreement with the findings, purpose, and the intent of the proposed bill. The lack of coordination and inefficient use of existing resources and assets by USDA has hindered American Indian and Alaskan Native sustainable economies.

We believe the potential possibilities of S. 2282 are understated. First, the strategic objective of developing the economies of Native American tribes and the stimulation of markets and demands for Indian agriculture products and services are realistic and achievable.

Second, the explicit mandate for comprehensive access to existing departmental resources consolidate policy and direction within the USDA to a single objective.

Native Americans tribes can now have equivalent access to resources that the United States farmers and producers have had all these years. The objectives encompass an operationalized trust responsibility by the United States Department of the Interior to their American Indian constituents.

S. 2282 is critically accurate in emphasizing coordination to maximize success. At a minimum, the creation of the Native American Research Development and Export Office and a Director's position, is vital.

However, we urge this committee to add one more position, because of practical lessons learned elsewhere. Specifically, in the areas of the Environmental Protection Agency, the American Indian Environmental Office is also in existence under EPA. It has a Director's position that is situated not with the Secretary's Office, but in one of the Water Resources Program.

This simple position being classified as a program within an agency does not allow it the peer support and peer endorsement that I believe would be appropriate, if we place this directly in the Secretary's Office.

The other reason why we are emphasizing that is because the duties of coordinating the seven mission areas of the USDA, the Farm and Foreign Agri Services, the Food and Nutrition Services, the Food Safety Agency, the Marketing Regulatory Agency, the Natural Resources and the Environmental, all of those are very, very heavy, in terms of workload.

An astute senior executive may be able to navigate and coordinate the relationships among those seven entities within the Agency.

However, when you ask the coordination to be done by one single individual, with the other Federal departments, for instance, Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Justice, the Department of Treasury, the Department of the Interior, Transportation, I think the workload is escalated. At the outset, the Secretarial support must be there. I believe it will not be successful.

We also rely on different departments, similar to what was discussed by the Deputy Assistant Secretary. For instance, the Bu-

reau of Indian Affairs has an economic development guaranteed loan program, but I think that has been funded only at about $5 million, on the average, for the past year.

Even with that, the USDA's commitment to providing rural economic development has a steady funding stream that we are looking for; but in a similar sense, it is not regionally and locally strong, the way it ought to be.

We must also qualify that, because there are very bright, shiny spots within the United States agricultural agencies. For instance, the Rural Development Office, as the Deputy Secretary has asserted, has been very, very proactive.

Let me give you an example. This particular department was reorganized in 1984, and basically reestablished as the Rural Development Program. The Rural Utilities Services has been the one that has been the shining star within their particular agency.

The project was established in 1994. In 1995, they funded only one project. The loans obligated and the grants obligated were only one. When we compare that to 1998, the projects total funded has been 40. The loans obligated are about 16, and grants obligated are 40.

When we look at the loans in 1999, the loans that were obligated were $20 million. The grants that were obligated is $62 million. That is a big, big difference, compared to an agency that has been in place for decades, and I am comparing this to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

On that note, the Pueblo Zuni has had a very lucrative export program in prior centuries. As the photos that are in your handout also indicate, we used to raise a lot of wheat, a lot of corn, in almost all the areas that our people could cultivate.

They used a lot of runoff irrigation. They basically flooded the fields with gabions, so the water was disbursed over a large area. We called that dry farming.

Today, we do not have that accessibility or capability. The services that are being delivered or will be offered under the Farm Incentives Program, through this particular department, would be an added boon to our reservation economy, which has long sustained the United States Calvary, the Explorers, as well as the Spanish Conquistadors.

That was our Export Program. Those have been verified through trails that we have mapped out, that we have from our archeological archives, where we have actually traded for copper bells, from the interior of Mexico. We have conch shells and sea shells from the Sea of Cortez, as well as buffalo hides from the Plains area.

In that sense, the Pueblo Zuni is endorsing this project, because it allows us an equivalent access to resources that would definitely be an increase to our capability.

Related to that, we have a long-term economic development strategy that was predicated on an antiquated water system. Through the Office of the Rural Utilities Services, we are able to secure clean, safe drinking water for our population of 10,000. The water supply is adequate for over 100 years.

Let me just give you an example. The old system could barely pump 400 gallons per minute from two wells. Now the current one pumps 1,400 gallons per minute.

On that note, the intent of S. 2282 is clear and comprehensively articulated. The United States Department of Agriculture must foster economic self-sufficiency by promoting the coordination of resources and assets of their department to their American constituents. The Pueblo Zuni is strongly in support of S. 2282.

Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Bowekaty appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. That was a very articulate testimony. Certainly, we can put all kinds of programs in place. But if we do not have the leadership and the follow- through, we may have some mediocre results.

I will have maybe a question or two for you, but we will go ahead through the rest of the testimony.

I understand, Mr. Ruiz, you are speaking for Mary Thomas, who could not be here. You may go ahead.

STATEMENT OF ARDELL RUIZ, ASSISTANT COMMUNITY MANAGER, GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY, SACATON, AZ

Mr. RUIZ. Yes; on behalf of Mary Thomas, I would like to apologize for her not being able to make it here today. She has other commitments on this day.

But I would like to say, good afternoon, and it is good to see you, again. Some of you, have I known for quite some time in other circles, the National Congress of American Indians and so forth.

My name is Ardell Ruiz. I am the assistant community manager for the Gila River and community, and formerly the chairman of the Gila River Farms, which is 12,000 to 15,000 acre farm, between Phoenix and Tucson. It is right along Interstate 10, which crosses the Nation, today.

Our reservation was created by Executive Order in 1959, and it covers about 372,000 acres. The farm is comprised of five ranches, which compete against each other for a bonus and for quality production.

Our farm is professionally staffed by a manager and about 137 full-time employees and 250 employees part-time. Our production includes alfalfa, small grain that cater to companies in the Mediterranean, such as the Italian and Turkish governments. Our barley winds up in places like Kuwait. We are a farm that is comprised of a five member board, appointed by a Tribal Council.

The farm alone has been very creative and open minded, and has been diversified in its production. We do, from time to time, graze cattle and sheep. Our water supply has been through the ground water pumping and the Central Arizona Project. To this date, we have invested over $25 million in the development of our farm.

Financing still remains an issue, even though we have had this long experience. We look forward to the passage of this S. 2282. We commend the committee and any others that have been involved in recognizing that such improvement needs to happen within the Indian agriculture. This will only happen dependent upon a partnership between the tribes and the U.S. Government.

This bill, with appropriate measures, can begin this partnership or begin this effort. I see that as very promising, because we have done it in other areas.

Agriculture is the only renewable resource on our reservation, but we still struggle. Even after 2,000 years, and even before the birth of Christ, our tribe has been involved in agriculture. We have been raising crops for our own needs, as well as for export to other tribes, and so forth. Gila River Farms has been involved in the export market.

I do have to make a correction in our written testimony. There is a misprint about some contracts not being followed through and honored. On that note, I would like to ask that our testimony be kept open for supplement or amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. It will be kept open.

Mr. RUIZ. But in order for this partnership and this effort of 2282 to work, we have to look at some of the issues and problems that are involved. In order to do that, we need an individual office, or maybe somebody from your committee who will follow this, and really address those issues.

The USDA, from time to time, has had an office that specifically was there for Native Americans, but it was sometimes very difficult to find. Sometimes it was not equipped to address the needs of the members that showed up from various tribes.

Because we are competing against other mainstream farmers, who have already been established and have already worked with the USDA for years and have benefited from the programs all this time, yet it has seemed like we just now introduced the programs to tribes. Because in the past, we have been told that BIA is there to help us, and that is the agency you should go to.

But in recent years, that has now turned to where all Federal agencies recognize that they have an obligation, as part of the Federal Government, to honor assistance to Indians. That is beginning to happen at USDA.

But at the time when this is happening, subsidy programs are going away, and some of the reduction in force is occurring. Just recently, it has been noted that there should be more presence, and that is beginning to happen. We commend USDA for that, but we need to enhance that.

The partnership that I talk about is that we need to really establish an office with a person that will be a liaison or coordinator for USDA programs on Indian reservations, and will have the authority to work with the Congress in conjunction with USDA to truly give respect and bring to the forefront the government-to-government that Indian Nations have with the U.S. Government.

That office must be given appropriate staff and funding to carry-out the programs that results in improvements at the local level. We have not seen that from that higher levels. It needs to happen.

We have, from time to time, had to go to various offices, and have not been able to get the appropriate answers or assistance that is required for our needs for unique situations on Indian reservations.

S. 2282, I believe, recognizes these things in its language. It would encourage investment from outside sources that will help originate or assist tribes in their endeavors. It will help facilitate economic ventures with outside entities that are non-tribal entities.

These are all achievable if the personnel that are employed by the United States in a trust capacity are able and willing to work with entities that want to invest time and money on reservations.

As the committee is aware, the process that is currently in place to allow for such economic development is hindered by the interpretation of Federal requirements for fair trade and market value, including land appraisals, and the leasing of tribal lands, a lot of times, which causes unnecessary delays in the process.

The investment that sometimes is put forth is curtailed to individuals or tribes due to lack of collateral, due to the Federal trust status of the land, that cannot be used for collateral. This prevents lands from being used as collateral to improvement the trust land.

Many reservation-based Indians are not able to afford or even able to finance the required funds to develop lands or enhance agriculture production. This bill can address that.

The proposed office in the USDA that I talked about should focus on the impediments such as this that I have mentioned which prevent tribes from obtaining agriculture development programs. This will open up the doors, if we have that one person be available.

Gila River Farms has participated in foreign trade missions and is fully aware of the potential for existing markets for Indian goods and services, worldwide. They are aware of the complexity.

However, there is technical and financial assistance required to obtain the ability to carry out those developments with foreign markets, to enable us to successfully negotiate and to successfully create a relationship with not only foreign countries, but with our own USDA agencies and Commerce Department agencies to create that well-rounded circle of economic development that is necessary.

This would enable Indian farmers to compete in a global market, without jeopardizing everything that he or she has worked so hard to earn.

The proposed office at USDA would ideally be able to shed light on these kinds of impediments or recommendations that could assist tribes in entering foreign agricultural markets, and assist tribes as an advocate in dealing with foreign counterparts.

In conclusion, this is an opportunity and potential for all Americans, on and off reservations, to benefit through Senate Bill 2282, by opening new markets, businesses, and improvements in the local agriculture development.

We have farmed our lands for many years, and we look forward to improving our farmlands and enterprises, and to provide food for families across this country, and whatever it takes to take it out into the world.

I thank you.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Ruiz appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Fred, would you like to continue?

STATEMENT OF FRED SMALL, VICE PRESIDENT, MONTANA/WYOMING INDIAN STOCK GROWER'S ASSOCIATION, NORTHERN CHEYENNE INDIAN RESERVATION, LAME DEER, MT

Mr. SMALL. Honorable Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell and members of the committee, my name is Fred Small. I am a member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe located in Southeastern Montana.

I am also vice chairman of the Montana/Wyoming Indian Stock Growers Association.

On behalf of the farmers and ranchers located in Montana on the eight reservations there, I have some good comments here. However, since my glasses are somewhere in a cab in Washington, DC, I will just touch on some of the highlights.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, if you will send them in, we will include them in the testimony, if you can get them copied and sent to us.

Mr. SMALL. One of the things that comes to mind here, since I basically represent the Indian ranchers, we had quite a problem. We knew we had a lot of cattle in Montana. After we had an inventory again, about 25 percent of the cattle in the State of Montana are Indian owned.

I guess what we were trying to do was trying to get some representation on the Cattlemen's Beef Board. It took us 4 years to do that. One of the main reasons that it took 4 years is that we could not get in contact with the right person at the USDA that was overseeing the project on the Cattlemen's Beef Board.

That is one of the reasons why we see a great need for an Indian desk, so we could come here to Washington, DC or make a phone call, and be in touch with the right people, instead of stumbling around like we did for 4 years. We started out with the State of Montana there. We did not get any answers there, and we kept on going.

But it took us 4 years to get our organization certified, so we could nominate someone to be on the National Cabinet's Beef Board. We tried our best to get along with the State Beef Board. We could not make any inroads there. So that is when we went to the national level.

Our farmers participate in a lot of the Farm Bureau programs, and realize the benefit of those subsidies. But Indian ranchers, who depend solely on beef economics, do not have the availability of programs. The only thing we raise is livestock.

Right now, we have no marketing options available to us, other than what our grandfathers had. That is basically selling to livestock markets in Billings, Riverton, Wyoming, et cetera.

With that many cattle in Montana, and we have not done a total inventory of the cattle in Wyoming in two tribes there, but it is substantial, too.

We have been looking at exporting our beef. We have been looking at it for a number of years. But like I say, without having one person we can rely on, and with Marcia, I know, the Montana/Wyoming Indian stock growers have relied on her, to a great deal, for information on who to turn to, where to go, for some of our questions.

But as I reiterated earlier, we need to have one place to go to, a full-time Indian desk, staffed full-time and funded, as part of our answer. I know that there are individuals in the USDA that are very willing to help us, once we get to the right person; but it is just that ability to find that right person, or the timeframe it takes to find that person.

As Senator Nighthorse Campbell alluded to earlier, a lot of our reservations out in Montana and Wyoming cover vast expanses. A lot of what we have there is a lot of grazing. There is some that

is probably high in grazing. It has not been sprayed with any pesticides or anything like that there, so our cattle are pretty much hormone free.

Our cattle our probably are about as good a beef that there is. Yet, we still struggle to sell our cattle. We do not have any specific programs from USDA to help us, other than maybe the Emergency Hay program, or something like that, there.

I guess I have been coming to Washington off and on, representing my tribe, as far as the agricultural issues that confront them there. It is really a hassle for us to come here and to try to find the right people to talk to. It is also expensive and time consuming.

With that, I would really like to answer any questions that you have. We at the Montana/Wyoming Indian Stock Grower's Association fully support S. 2282. We thank you for allowing us to testify.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Small appears in appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. I thank you. I am glad that all you lost in that Washington, DC cab was your notes. The only place more dangerous than being in a Washington, DC cab is trying to cross the street in front of a Washington, DC cab. It is a little different than Lame Deer. [Laughter.]

Mr. SMALL. Oh, yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I thank you all for appearing. I hope that you will make sure that copies of your testimony get to Deputy Secretary Rominger. I think he might be interested in those, if you could do that. Let me ask you each a couple of questions.

First of all, Fred, a long time ago, 20 some years ago, I was active with a group that was called the American Indian Cattlemen's Association. Did this Montana/Wyoming Indian Stock Grower's Association supersede that?

Mr. SMALL. No; we started out and have been in existence for about 9 years now. We are related just strictly related to Montana/Wyoming Cattlemen.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay, so it is basically a cattlemen's association with Montana/Wyoming?

Mr. SMALL. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Are there other stock growers like sheep or goats or something?

Mr. SMALL. No; there are no sheep or goats or anything like that. But we do help the farmers, because a lot of their problems are kind of the same as ours.

We have had a request from the North Dakota Aberdeen area tribes that went down there. They are in the process of trying to get an Indian Stock Grower's Association going. We have been down there twice in the last 6 months, I believe. They are kind of patterning their proposed organization after ours.

I guess we have got a pretty good association together. Like I said, we have been in existence nine years, and I have been there for all those 9 years. It has taken us awhile to get things done, but apparently we are getting attention from other tribes.

The CHAIRMAN. I questioned the deputy secretary a little bit about one or two things that we find a lot in Indian country. That is that some of the programs that we put in place here, the actual people on the ground that are there should be able to avail them-

selves to it, but do not have the data information, or they do not know how to fit into that network.

That seems to be one of your major complaints, that there is not as much information or consultation or interaction between the Indian farmers and the agency. Can you give us an idea of perhaps the incentives or some kind of a means to ensure better communication?

Mr. SMALL. I would have to say that since the inception of our organization, 9 years ago, I guess that was the reason the tribes have gotten together, and we just talked about our problems. What we found was that in working in one area, it was not even addressed, or people did not have that opportunity to get into that problem in another area.

So we started that by, I guess, getting together with the USDA people and trying to work out our problems. Fortunately, in Montana and Wyoming, with the FSA, NRCS, and the various USDA organizations, we have been able to sit down and work out a lot of these problems where there have been some roadblocks there. But I guess we are fortunate in that respect that a lot of other states have looked toward us as to how we have resolved our problems.

I guess we can solve and maybe address a lot of the problems in Montana and Wyoming, but there are still the national issues, and the policy that comes out of Washington, where we do not have the input on it.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, your association apparently has had some success in marketing in Japan and Europe. Did you do that primarily on your own, or was the USDA a help in opening the avenues to export beef to those areas?

Mr. SMALL. We have not exported any, but we did have a chance to attend the Food Expo in Tokyo, Japan, here a couple of months ago. We went through Inter-Tribal Agriculture Council to do that there. We are pretty excited about it. I think we will get a lot of work to do.

I think, as I said earlier in my testimony, we are still selling cattle like our grandfathers did, but we know there is a better marketing opportunity out there. I think with USDA's help, we can achieve that. That is why we are so glad to see this bill here.

The CHAIRMAN. While you were over there, did you hear the term "kobe" beef used at all?

Mr. SMALL. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. I lived in Japan, as you know, for a number of years, and I went to a Japanese university. I was very familiar with how they raised kobe beef. It is totally on the other end of the scale, compared to the way natural fed Indian beef is raised.

As you know, they are raised in sub-light and not bright areas. They are massaged every day. They are fed high malt beer sometimes, with their feed. They end up with a very, very highly marbleized kind of a beef.

In this country, I guess, it might grade out as choice, or something, because it tastes great. But it is probably so full of cholesterol, it would knock you over, too. But that happens to be the taste of Japanese beefeaters. Kobe, and even when I was over there, years and years ago, sells for like $30 a pound to buy kobe

beef. I know that probably Indian ranchers will not start massaging their cattle. [Laughter.]

But I might point out that sometimes you have got to sell what the buyer wants. So if you can sell American range-fed beef to Japanese, that is wonderful. If you have a way to do that, that is terrific.

Mr. SMALL. Yes; I believe that. We spent 1 week there and found out a lot about what the country's trends are. They are pretty health conscious people, even though they like their kobe beef, and it is very expensive.

In fact, I had a chance to go down and tour a major supermarket. I guess I was a little astounded at the prices there. But I kind of figured at that time that we probably could possibly make a little profit there, in that area.

In regards to our buffalo, in Montana and Wyoming, every tribe there has a buffalo herd; with the Crow Tribe, I believe, having around 1,400 head, and the average herd in the others tribes is around about 150 and expanding. So that is another market that we would like to look at, too.

The CHAIRMAN. A few years ago, there was some discussion between the Northern Plains tribes, and I think it was Cheyenne and Crow, with the Park Service, about culling some of the buffalo that were in Yellowstone. What ever happened to that proposal?

Mr. SMALL. I believe it is still being studied, yet. I believe it has a lot to do with the assurances of them being totally disease free, before they will pass that.

The CHAIRMAN. So that is the problem that has held that up?

Mr. SMALL. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay, I thank you.

To Governor Bowekaty, is most of the farming on Zuni done as drying farming?

Mr. BOWEKATY. We have a small farming community called "Ojo Caliente" that is on the southwest portion of the reservation. That is spring fed. The reason why it is called Ojo Caliente is because it is a little bit of a hot spring, but it has got a lot of water. That is actually where we do a lot of our farming, currently, so we have irrigation over there.

But the rest of the community, Zuni proper, has a dam. We are rebuilding that dam through the Safety of Dams projects. We would like increase the cubic storage of that, so we can actually reirrigate the central valley of the Zuni Pueblo proper.

We also have, on the eastern side of our reservation near the Zuni/Ramah Navajo, the community of Ramah. We also have a lake over there. That flows into Pescado Reservoir.

That is currently empty now. That irrigates our Pescado area, simply because the State Fish and Wildlife and Parks and Recreation have withheld the water from being released to our reservation. So currently, our lakes are dry.

The CHAIRMAN. Is that a man-made lake on the reservation?

Mr. BOWEKATY. Yes; they are.

The CHAIRMAN. But you have the water rights, or you own the water rights?

Mr. BOWEKATY. No; in fact, we need to start looking at that. We are awaiting the Department of Justice's analysis, based on that. So we would like to take advantage of that.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, you answered one of my questions about the rural utilities service. Apparently, that has been beneficial.

Mr. BOWEKATY. It has been very, very beneficial. We have been striving, as a tribe, to replace that drinking system, for the past two decades now. We had finally approached the Rural Utility Service about 6 years ago, and they approached us back with a solution that looks at a phased approach.

So we have been able to leverage our U.S. dollars with Indian Health Service dollars, as well as with the tribes. So we have a $12-million project that is being financed by our U.S. dollars, as well as through other areas.

We have about 2 years completed on that. We have one more phase to go, so our community will be looking at clean, healthy water; whereas, if you went down to Zuni, your water would be this color right here, of this walnut. That is how bad our water was.

The CHAIRMAN. Could you tell the committee just a little bit about your sawmill. Is that cut from natural timber, or do you have a tree farm?

Mr. BOWEKATY. Yes; I would be happy to. Our forest areas have been clear-cut back in the 1920's and 1930's. We have tree harvest stands that are what we call small diameter, 24 inches and less. No commercial company will come on board and harvest those trees.

We have a small contract with a small forestry mill from Snowflake, AZ. They are the only ones that actually came onto the reservation, 2 years ago. It took them 2 years to harvest all the small diameters.

But the ones that we have going for our sawmill are basically 24 inches in diameter or less. I do have a small handout that I want to add to the testimony, and add to that. That actually lists our sawmill prices, as well as the board feet that we are actually producing.

We have earmarked a small stand of our timber on our reservations on the southwestern sector of the reservation, as well as the northeastern sectors, where the forest's high country is. We have allocated small tree stands to last us for about 5 years.

We are working with the NRCS's Forest Service component to go into a stewardship agreement to harvest small diameter as a tree thinning operation.

The CHAIRMAN. To harvest small what?

Mr. BOWEKATY. That is small diameter trees, with the southwest region and the Forest Service. We have a stewardship agreement where we go in as a tribe to cut those small diameter trees.

That sort of reduces the fields for the forest fires, as well as assist them in terms of their forest management plans. We would like to see a little bit more of that emphasized.

That actually allows our timber to get a little more healthier on our reservations. So we are going throughout the region to harvest those.

The CHAIRMAN. This is may be off the subject a little bit, but I have yet to find a tribe, or figure out why they do not raise Christmas trees.

That sounds kind of strange; but years ago, I had an opportunity to work in the winter in Christmas trees, at a Christmas tree farm. You know, when you normally cut timber, you get one tree, one stump. But they get 8 or 10 Christmas trees to one stump, in Christmas trees. I do not know if you knew that or not.

But they have this way where the tree grows up a certain number of feet, and they whack off the top. Then the two biggest branches are trying to grow up. Then when the time is right, they cut two more, from that same stump. Then from each of that branch, they grow two more, so they get four more on those two branches.

It is the darndest thing I ever saw. They end up with sometimes 8 or 10 trees from one stump. I always thought that would be an ideal thing for Indian tribes, if they were interested in starting some kind of a tree farm, because you get so much production from one planting.

Mr. BOWEKATY. That is an interesting proposition, because halfway between Albuquerque and Sante Fe, there is a small community called Algodones, NM. They actually have a small tree farm. Part of it is, they have access to the water, as well as the technical areas of New Mexico State University, that provides a lot.

That is where, if we allowed this bill to be passed, we would like to have the education research portion of the USDA actually come down and do a lot more testing, also, but not just with the universities.

We would focus it with the tribes requesting assistance on those, because we do not have the technical people. We do have a very good conservation program, but their primary task is to do the erosion control that has been in place for awhile. We would like to get that up and running, before we expand that.

I, also, at this point in time, would like to also leave with the committee copies of all the products that are available through the value-added processes that we do with the Forest Service, small timber cutting, and all of those. Those are some of the things that our local tribe has tried to do to sustain some of the land practice conservation programs, as well as using products that other entities can not use.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ardell, I know my staff just recently visited your reservation, just last year. They came back with glowing accounts of your farm operation.

I used to go down there, years ago. I used to go to Casa Grande every winter in Sacaton, too. I never could learn the "Chicken Scratch" though, I tell you. That was a dance that was too difficult for me. [Laughter.]

But I used to come down there. I was always very impressed with the farming operation of your tribe, partly because they grew year round alfalfa.

I was living in California at the time, and if we got three cuttings or four, we thought that was wonderful. But I guess that

is the advantage you have over Fred there. Being up in the north, where we have a short growing season, we can not do that.

So there are individual problems that Indian tribes face, that I would hope the Department of Agriculture recognizes that when they are working with the tribes, too.

But let me ask you just a couple of questions about trade missions. You stated that the Gila River community has participated in foreign trade missions, and found the process to be very complex.

I think it is for any American, very frankly, when you talk about international trade and different import duties, restrictions, and quarantines. All that kind of stuff is very, very complicated.

What type of legal regulatory or other issues arose for you, as an Indian tribe, that you think might not be faced by everybody else?

Mr. RUIZ. One thing that we looked at was, if we are a sovereign nation, that maybe there is a possibility that government-to-government exchange would take place. We do have some plans to do a free trade zone on our reservation, which I think is a whole new thing for us. I think it does open up some doors.

I know that some foreign countries do protect their agricultural businesses and farmers. They give subsidies that are enormous.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Mr. RUIZ. But some of the things that we have looked at was that if we went to, say, going into Japan, if we went through Hong Kong and sold to them, who, in turn, would sell to the Japanese, it would be acceptable. But that is a tricky deal.

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Mr. RUIZ. Those are some of the things that we have looked at, but I am not sure what I would recommend.

The CHAIRMAN. Based on your past dealings with the USDA, what recommendations would you make to help improve the delivery of their programs to tribes?

Mr. RUIZ. Okay, I would like to recommend, and this is something that we have discussed about the position, that this position that has been there for a number of years be filled with a Native American, if possible, that is familiar with Indian reservations; and that it be placed at the level under the Secretary of the USDA, or under Deputy Secretary Richard Rominger.

I think you would see some major changes take place. You will see some things that will start occurring, because there is a person that does have some authority; and if given the budget and appropriate staffing, I bet you could create some real movement in enhancing agricultural production on Indian reservations.

Right now, if you went to USDA, you would be right along with the mainstream of farmers that have been farming for a long time. You are competing against them, and you do not have the resources to compete. You never will get to that level, because it is going to be difficult, because of trust land.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask this, and I do not think, Fred, that this might affect you, because we raise mostly cattle up there and maybe some hay.

But I know that many of the tribes, and particularly the Pueblos, have some very, very strong religious cultural beliefs about growing

things. The Hopis, with corn, have dances. They have songs. They have things that are really related to the growing of things.

Is there any interaction with how you factor in traditional or religious beliefs with the growth of any community; corn, tobacco, squash, or anything? Maybe I ought to ask the Governor, since he is a Pueblo.

Mr. BOWEKATY. Sure, anything that we do has to be assisted with prayer; even the stone gabions that our conservation project people are doing, to try to fill the deep erosions. They usually are taught by a couple of our elders to do the prayers where we ask the flood waters and nature to work with us.

We are telling them that this is to help their children here on this earth, and not anything else. We are not trying to fight against them, but are asking for their sanction and their blessings.

It is the same thing when we do the planting the traditional way. We basically ask for prayers. So a lot of that is very integral to that.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, my own personal interest is that we should not forget those old ways, and that we ought to factor them in somehow. I certainly support that.

I have no more questions, but I appreciate your testimony. Mr. Deputy Secretary, thank you for sticking around a little while for us.

The record will remain open for two more weeks. Fred, if you come across your notes, if you could send those in, so we can make sure they are in the record. We may submit some written questions to you, if you could get those to us.

With that, I thank you, and this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:40 p.m., the committee was adjourned, to reconvene at the call of the Chair.]

APPENDIX

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RICHARD ROMINGER, DEPUTY SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss USDA programs and services that benefit Native Americans and to offer comments on S. 2282, the Native American Agricultural Research, Development and Export Enhancement Act of 2000. I would also like to speak briefly about reforms at the Department of Agriculture. We appreciate your strong support of Indian agriculture and agribusiness, Mr. Chairman, and your continued interest in strengthening USDA programs and services that benefit Native Americans.

As you know, a discussion of American Indians and agriculture is really a history lesson. Indians were the original North American farmers, working the land some 7,000 years before European settlers arrived. As you mentioned in your introduction to this bill, Mr. Chairman, agriculture is the second largest revenue generator and employer in Indian country. More than 80 percent of the 55 million acres of Indian lands in the United States consist of crop and range land. And these lands are in the most rural areas of our country. So when we talk about supporting Indian agriculture, we're also talking about supporting rural communities.

This administration is committed to strengthening the ties that bind our nations and making this a land of opportunity for all our people. Of course, everyone in this room knows this is easier said than done, particularly in Indian country where unemployment often exceeds 50 percent, where nearly one-half of young children live in poverty and where per capita income is roughly one-half the United States average. If we are to change these statistics, we need to get at their roots. Some are intertwined with the rural way of life: Lack of access to capital, and remote, dispersed populations are challenges facing many rural communities. Other roadblocks are unique, such as a lack of understanding and communication across Indian and non-Indian lines.

We have certainly experienced this at USDA, and we are changing the way we do business. We are a more diverse department—one that is better able to serve all the people we are here to serve. If you want to work at USDA today, you have to abide by a simple rule: Treat every customer and co-worker fairly and equitably, with dignity and respect. It's the golden rule: Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself. We have implemented close to 100 recommendations for change in the way we handle civil rights issues—from a new foreclosure policy to ensure people do not lose their land while discrimination complaints are pending—to a small farms advisory committee that is helping us better understand how the pressures of race, economics and rural life which threaten our family farm heritage.

The Department of Agriculture is also making significant progress in increasing program participation in Indian country. The department is preparing an update to a February 1999 report to Congress on American Indian and Alaska Native participation in USDA programs and services which will be available in a few weeks. I'd like to share a few highlights of that report with you today.

By making outreach to Native American and Alaska Native communities a priority, this administration has dramatically increased USDA program activities in Indian country. For example, in fiscal year 1999, the Rural Development mission area provided more than $10 million in business programs loan and grant assistance to American Indians and Alaska Natives, compared to a total of $13.3 million over the fiscal years 1988–96. Since 1993, the Rural Housing Service has averaged more than $10 million each year in grants and loans to American Indians and Alaska Natives to finance essential services such as child care facilities, fire and emergency services, high schools, colleges, hospitals, clinics, nursing homes and museums. This is more than 30 times the amount that was given out in the 4 years before this administration, when USDA only gave $1.9 million to Indian country for these facilities. In fiscal year 1999, USDA was able to top its all-time high record for number of community facility projects in Indian country, funding 22 projects on 21 reservations and Alaska Native communities.

USDA is also making steady progress in helping tribes bring safe, reliable, running water to their people. In fiscal year 1999 alone, the Rural Utility Service obligated more than $48 million to safe and clean water projects in Native American communities and Native Alaskan villages, improving the quality of life and providing more than 1,000 new jobs. By comparison, the average annual water and waster tribal investment from 1988–97 was approximately $5.5 million.

USDA's farm loan programs also show improvement. While Native Americans account for 0.5 percent of the Nation's farms, they currently represent 1.5 percent of USDA's 103,466 borrowers, the greatest number of Native American borrowers since fiscal year 1994 when the department reorganization moved farm loan programs into what became the Farm Service Agency. And that number is increasing thanks to the outreach efforts of the Farm Service Agency and its tribal partners. For example, since the beginning of the Stone Child College/Farm Service Agency Ag Credit Outreach Program in January 1998, more than 2.3 million dollars in loans have been made to dozens of tribal members on the seven Indian reservations in Montana, many of whom had never before participated in FSA programs. In just the past 6 months, more than $1 million in loans were made under this program to help tribal members in Montana purchase farms and ranches, provide operating capital and for other ag related projects.

In 1998, the Farm Service Agency began implementing a new $12.5 million emergency livestock feed program to help Indian tribes. This program is administered through tribal governments. As of last month, only $2.7 million remains and that amount is quickly being spent to assist tribes suffering livestock feed emergencies because of natural disasters.

The Department is also helping Indian agricultural producers promote their products in international markets. Since fiscal year 1998, the Foreign Agricultural Service has granted more than $1.1 million to tribal organizations to conduct export readiness seminars that identify, qualify, and train American Indian owned companies on export promotion and foreign trade show participation.

USDA agencies not normally associated with Indian programs have also been active in serving Native Americans. For example, in December 1999, USDA agencies responded to a Department-wide request to help find Y2K compliant personal computers for tribal colleges and universities on Indian reservations. Under the leadership of our Chief Information Office, we have distributed more than 400 fully functional, Y2K compliant personal computers to 25 tribal colleges and universities.

The Department of Agriculture is committed to making sure that Native Americans not only have equal access to all of our programs, but that they know about USDA programs. USDA agencies are stepping up their outreach activities to tribes and the results are heartening. For example, the number of elected Native American Farm Service Agency County Committee members has nearly tripled in the past 4 years—from 51 in 1996 to 146 in 1999. The Farm Service Agency has a National Native American Liaison and an outreach coordinator in every State and is currently operating under five separate cooperative agreements targeting the needs of Native American tribes and Alaskan Native communities. These programs, which will be outlined in more detail in the upcoming report, have been extremely successful.

USDA agencies regularly conduct outreach meetings with tribes. Just last week, for example, the North Dakota State Farm Service Agency, and the State offices of Rural Development, and the Natural Resources and Conservation Service held a 3-day conference for all Native American producers and tribal government officials throughout the Great Plains Region to discuss USDA programs with the tribes and to help USDA learn more about tribal customs and cultures. A similar meeting was held with the seven tribes of Montana last month. USDA also has a strong partnership with the Intertribal Agriculture Council which plays an invaluable role in our

outreach efforts. And the 1994 Institutions provide an important function as our partners in carrying out USDA-sponsored programs in education and outreach.

While we are making significant progress in expanding USDA programs and improving services to Indian people, there is still much work to be done and I thank this committee for its interest and support in this effort as evidenced by S. 2282, a bill to reorganize the Department's Native American Programs Office. The department has had an office in place to coordinate all USDA activities for American Indians since 1973. In 1992, the department established the position of Director of Native American Programs in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. The Director of Native American Programs is USDA's primary contact with tribal governments and their members and has the primary responsibility for coordinating USDA's service to American Indians and Alaska Natives. The Native American Programs Director also works closely and cooperatively with the Department's Office of Outreach.

S. 2282 substantially expands the responsibilities of the Native American Programs Office, including establishing a Native American export and trade promotion program to help develop tribal economies and to provide technical assistance in identifying and entering markets for Indian goods and services. In principle, the department supports efforts to strengthen the roles and responsibilities of this office. While our agencies are making great improvements in serving Native American communities, there is still a need for a strong, central office to ensure Department-wide coordination of these important issues. The department welcomes the opportunity to work out the details of this legislation with the committee staff.

If our goal is a strong government-to-government relationship that is evident not just on paper but in tribal communities across this land, then all of us—tribal leaders, government leaders, and business leaders—have to make a strong, shared commitment not just to economic development, but to economic empowerment. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for sharing this commitment.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ARDELL RUIZ, ASSISTANT MANAGER, GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and other distinguished members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. At this time, I will restrict myself to a shorter oral testimony, but I ask that my complete testimony be placed in the record.

My name is Ardell Ruiz, and I am Assistant Manager of the Gila River Indian Community ("the Community") and former Chairman of the Gila River Farms Board. The Community is comprised of both the Akimel O'Otham and Pee-Posh Nations. The Community's reservation ("the Reservation") was created by Executive Order in 1859 and covers 372,000 in south central Arizona. Our Community is comprised of approximately 20,000 enrolled members, 13,000 of whom live on the Reservation.

Gila River Farms ("the Farms") is an economic enterprise of the Community. It is comprised of five ranches, with approximately 12,500 acres irrigated per crop year. The Farms' headquarters are located on the Reservation, west of Interstate I–10 and about 30 miles south of Phoenix, Arizona.

A professional staff that includes a Farm Manager, Assistant Farm Manager, and approximately 137 full-time and 250 part-time employees perform the farming operations. The Community's Council appoints a five-member Farm Board that is responsible for policy decisions and overseeing management of the Farms. The enterprise has been successfully operated through this system since 1968.

Agricultural production at the Farms includes crops such as cotton, alfalfa, small grains, melons, citrus, olives, and a variety of vegetables that are grown in limited acreage. The Farms has also provided pasture for cattle and sheep grazing during the winter months and is currently involved in fish farming for local sales. The Farms has grown limited acres of specialty crops such as roses, pistachios, and guayule. These unique crops have been grown to determine crop production capability and limitations and to diversify the Farms revenues and markets.

The Farms has made improvements through land leveling, concrete ditch lining, and construction of water control structures to optimize the use of the limited water supply from the Gila River, groundwater wells, and now the Central Arizona Project. Since 1977, the Farms and the Community have invested over $25 million in improvements to optimize the return for the farming operation and to keep the Farms as efficient and effective as possible.

As hard as the Farms' management and employees have worked to make the operation successful, there are many areas where technical and financial assistance is required to enable the Farms to compete in today's global agricultural market.

I am honored today to speak on behalf of the Farms on S. 2282, the Native American Agricultural Research, Development, and Export Enhancement Act of 2000. The bill establishes the office of Native American Agricultural Research, Development, and Export within the Department of Agriculture and encourages the efficient use of existing resources and assets related to Indian agricultural research, development, and exports.

The sponsors of the bill are to be commended for their efforts and for recognizing the need for improvements in Indian agriculture. The challenges facing us with regard to continued success in agricultural endeavors on Indian reservations are dependent on a partnership between tribe's Indian producers, consumers, and the U.S. Government. This bill makes the appropriate measures to begin such a partnership.

Agriculture is the only renewable resource on our Reservation. Indian farmers have continued to reap the benefits of our land through farming over the last 2,000 years. But today we struggle to keep our farming ventures economically alive. In many instances, Native American farmers have to compete with mainstream non-Indian Farmer/Ranchers who are already established and have enjoyed the benefits of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs for years.

In order for Native Americans to truly benefit from this bill, a direct line of communication between the Indian Nations and the USDA must be established. A designated person at the USDA must be available to devote time exclusively to Indian agricultural issues and be able to meet with the tribes and Native American producers so as to enhance development of Indian agricultural resources, production, and marketing.

This USDA office should not be limited to a Native American Agricultural Research, Development, and Export Office. This office should act as the liaison and coordinator for all the USDA programs on Indian Reservations and have the authority to work with Congress, in conjunction with the USDA, to truly give respect and bring to the forefront the government-to-government relationship that Indian Nations have with the U.S. Government. This office must be given appropriate staff and funding to carryout programs that result in improvements at the local level.

We further recommend that this position be placed under the office of the Secretary or Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In the past, there have been similar offices located within the USDA in Washington, DC, but the officials in those offices were never given adequate funding and authority, nor a permanent home where Native Americans could go for answers and assistance. The Indian Desk, officially called "Director of Indian Programs, USDA," has been physically and administratively located in a variety of places within the USDA. At one time, the office was administratively located under the assistant secretary for Inter-governmental Affairs. This office worked with Congress and other agencies. This was appropriate because of the unique government-to-government relationship tribes enjoy with the U.S. Government. During another period, the office was placed under the Public Information Office of the USDA. Most recently, the office moved several times, including placement under the Assistant Secretary for administration. Physically, the office has been moved throughout the USDA, always without office equipment, funding, and staff to adequately operate the office. Therefore, to be successful, the office proposed in this bill must be given adequate funding to carry out its mandate to assist Indian Tribes with agriculture issues. Currently, the bill does not provide authorization for increased funding for the proposed office.

S. 2282 recognizes that the United States has an obligation to assist Indian tribes with the creation of appropriate economic and political conditions with respect to Indian lands to:

(A) encourage investment from outside sources that do not originate with the tribes; and (B) facilitate economic ventures with outside entities that are not tribal entities.

While these are two encouraging goals, they are only achievable if the personnel that are employed by the United States in a trust capacity are able and willing to work with entities that want to invest time and money on the reservations. As the committee is aware, the process that is currently in place to allow for such economic development is hindered by the interpretation of Federal requirements for fair market value (land appraisals) and leasing of tribal and allotted lands, which cause unnecessary delay in the process. In many cases, outside entities do not invest on reservations due to the length of time that is required to negotiate and secure an economic venture or because of limitations on the length of leases that do not allow adequate time for return on investment in the project.

Moreover, many investments are curtailed due to the individual's or the tribe's lack of collateral. This is due to the Federal trust status of the land, which prevents the land from being used as collateral and which may extend in some cases to improvements on the trust land. Many reservation-based Indians are not able to af-

ford, or even able to finance, the required development to take advantage of the programs identified in S. 2282. As addressed in the bill, these same individuals are the least likely of any farm group to receive payment or loans from the United States. The proposed office within the USDA should ideally focus on impediments such as this, which prevent tribes from obtaining the full benefit of agricultural development programs.

Members of the Gila River Farms Board who have participated in domestic and foreign trade missions are fully aware of the potential that exists for marketing Indian goods and services worldwide. They are also aware of the complexity and risk associated with foreign markets. In order to make the Native American Trade and Export Promotion a success, technical and financial assistance is required which will enable the Native American farmer to compete in a global market without jeopardizing everything that he/she has worked so hard to earn. There have been many past ventures by tribes into foreign markets only to find that payment for their goods can not be collected due to the lack of adequate and enforceable contracts. The proposed office within the USDA should also ideally shed light on these types of impediments to tribes' entry into foreign agricultural markets, and assist tribes as an advocate in dealing with their foreign counterparts.

There is opportunity and potential for all Americans (both on and off the reservation) to benefit from the passage of S. 2282 by opening new markets, businesses and improvements in the local agricultural development. We have farmed our land for many years and look forward to improving our farm enterprise and providing food for families all over the world.

PREPARED STATEMENT HON. KENT CONRAD, U.S. SENATOR FROM NORTH DAKOTA

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is good to be here to discuss some of the problems in Federal services for Native Americans. I would also like to thank Deputy Secretary Rominger for attending today's hearing.

One of the most significant program shortfalls that I have seen is the lack of effective methods to combat the rise of diabetes in the Native American population. I am particularly alarmed at the need for improvement in programs that provide adequate diet and nutrition standards to prevent diabetes and other diseases. While the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations is intended to provide an adequate food source and service, my constituents tell me that some of the meat and vegetable selections are simply inadequate or even inedible. As such, my constituents are asking for bison to be included in this food distribution program.

Additionally, just last week, the National Association of Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations passed a resolution requesting that bison be made a permanent part of food packages on reservations. I ask that this letter be included in the record. This is a very reasonable request. Bison is a low-fat and nutritious protein source that is part of many Native Americans' traditional diets and cultures. Bison can also serve as a small addition to a program that may help prevent the onset of disease and expensive medical costs.

Today, I am sending a letter to President Clinton requesting that bison be included in the Food Distribution Program on Indian reservations. Many of my colleagues have joined me, including the vice chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee, the Senate Minority Leader, and the chairman of the Budget Committee. I am also sending a copy of this letter to Secretary Glickman and Secretary Shalala. I would like you, Mr. Rominger, to be made aware of this proposal, and I ask that USDA fully consider the request for bison to be permanently included in this program.

National Association of Food Distribution Programs
On Indian Reservations

Resolution No. 2000-04

WHEREAS, NAFDPIR is a non-profit association of Indian Tribal Organizations participating in the USDA-FNS Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations; and

WHEREAS, the stated purpose of the organization is to promote an advocacy policy and legislative changes which will favorably impact our primary goal of providing foods and services for hunger assistance and nutrition education to low income Native Americans; and

WHEREAS, Bison has long been a nutritious and culturally-significant protein source for Native Americans; and

WHEREAS, Native Americans currently suffer from the highest rate of diabetes in the nation and the incidence of this disease has doubled in the last two generations; and

WHEREAS, Bison is a high-protein, low fat nutrition source that holds great potential for combating the ongoing problems of diabetes and heart- related diseases in the Native American population, and

WHEREAS, If distributed through the FDPIR program, bison can serve as a return to the traditional dietary habits that may help prevent the onset of disease and expensive medical costs

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that NAFDPIR does hereby request; that USDA make Bison available to reservations requesting this product as an additional permanent item in the food package;

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution No. 2000-04 was duly adopted by an affirmative vote of the membership of the National Association of Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations, in its Thirteenth Annual Conference on Thursday June 8th, 2000 in Buffalo, New York.

Nora Benjamin, Secretary
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
Onamia, Minnesota

Sherrie Perry, President
Cherokee Nation
Tahlequah, Oklahoma

Proposed Senate Bill S. 2282
"Native American Agricultural Research, Development and Export Enhancement Act of 2000"

Pueblo of Zuni
Governor Malcolm B. Bowekaty
(Testimony on S. 2282, related to the United States Department of Agriculture-USDA)
June 14, 2000

Introduction

On behalf of my Zuni people, Honorable Chairman, esteemed Senators, it is with great honor and pleasure that I appear before you to advocate for **S. 2282**. The Pueblo of Zuni is in complete agreement with the findings, purpose and intent as stated in the proposed bill. The lack of coordination and inefficient use of existing resources and assets by USDA has hindered American Indian/Alaska Natives' (AI/AN) sustainable economies.

Overview

A potential windfall for all tribes is feasible if we structure and amass resources that this bill intends. Too often we have fought. Too often we have been critical. Let us put that aside. We see a mechanism to invigorate and re-instill pride and self-reliance among our Pueblo people and all other tribes. You will hear witnesses' present examples and evidence of possibilities for mutual growth and mutual productivity if the right organizational framework, skills and authority are legislated and enacted. This mix will enable our tribes to reap benefits and coordination of services heretofore not accessible.

We believe the potential possibilities of **S. 2282** are understated. First, the strategic objective of developing economies of Native American tribes and the stimulation of markets and demands for Indian agricultural products and services are realistic and achievable. Secondly, the explicit mandate for comprehensive access to existing departmental resources consolidate policy and direction within the USDA to a singular objective. Native American tribes can now have equivalent access to resources that U.S. farmers and producers have had. These two objectives encompass and operationalize Trust Responsibility by the USDA to their AI/AN constituents.

Pueblo of Zuni Position

We humbly and sincerely present the following recommendations based on our experiences with supporting documentation and materials to illustrate our opening statements. I truly hope the information is useful and that it is of import in your deliberations.

Historical Relevance on S. 2282

The economic self-determination ingrained in S. 2282 is reality re-incarnate. My A:shiwi (Zuni) people have been traditionally and historically independent and self-reliant. They had extensive

acreage under cultivation through extensive networks of irrigation channels and gabions to disperse floodwaters over alluvial fans to optimize on nature's rainfall. (Photo 1) They surpassed experimentation on dry-farming methods and applied these techniques for growing drought resistant beans, corn, squash, peaches and other utilitarian grasses and shrubs. Their sacred Zuni Salt Lake provided minerals for preservation of produce, fruits and meats. This was the mainstay of their export program that enabled them to trade for copper bells and macaw feathers from interior Mexico; seashells, conch shells from the Sea of Cortez; and, buffalo hides from the plains area.

Dry farming with drought resistant corn, bean and squash varieties allowed us to supply food to the Spanish conquistadors, catholic priests and their Indian scouts. These alluvial irrigation practices produced forage for the Spanish conquistadors' horses, oxen and traveling poultry shops. These same practices enabled our A:shiwi (Zuni) people to rescue starving explorers, settlers and later the U.S. Cavalry and Army. (Photo 2) Our harvested wheat, corn, squash, and produce nourished US cavalrymen and their horses; even providing forage for the Beagle Camel Corps.

Contemporary Relevance and New Possibilities-**S. 2282**

Our good neighbor policy allowed settlement and the subsequent severance and alienation of our lands, water and natural resources. Still, we harvested timber for bridges, railroads and business stores for Gallup, Grants, Milan and St Johns. Our forest and lands became denuded and crisscrossed with gullies. Our rivers were dammed, which decreased sedimentation that deepened gullies. We have our stream flow lines at 10 ft below grade of our agricultural fields. (Photo 3) No longer do we see pigs float on houseboats to Arizona. (Photo 4)

Although we are severed access to our foundation of self-reliance and independence, the litany of woes is past we strive to look to the future. Our agricultural prowess can still see a renaissance and revival from **S. 2282** assistance. The coordination of resources under USDA for agricultural infrastructure rebuilding, research, export marketing and business development is very attractive.

My A:shiwi (Zuni) people have struggled for over three decades to catalyze that illusive combination of ideas, capital and marketing resources to be economically productive and sustain market demands . We see this bill as one of many strategies and opportunities that build on our history and tradition for economic benefits. This may be the catalyst for my people to concoct that illusive mix of economic success.

Native American Research, Development and Export Office (NARDEO)

S. 2282 is critically accurate in emphasizing coordination to maximize success. At a minimum, the creation of the "Native American Research, Development and Export Office" and Director's position is vital. However, we urge this committee to add one (1) more position because of practical lessons learned elsewhere that the scope and magnitude of coordination, promotion and building partnerships with other federal departments is beyond the capacity of one individual. Let's not short-change effectiveness and growth, at the outset, by an incomplete structural capacity and support system.

Duties and Activities- NADEO and Trade and Export Promotion

The duties of coordinating seven (7) mission areas and the activities of developing and promoting Indian Agricultural programs, facilitating water, housing, utility and infrastructure development is a heavy workload. The duties and activities of establishing and implementing an export and trade promotion programs is equally burdensome for one person. Albeit attainable but not the quality that Native American tribes are expecting.

Furthermore, the magnitude of policy implementation and agency programs coordination of S. 2282's intent at the Headquarters, regional and local/state levels are significantly difficult and complex. Let me explain with a simple diagram the scope and magnitude:

USDA	USDA-Agencies	Federal Departments
Secretary→ Director RDEO→	Farm & Foreign Ag Service→	Dept of Energy
	Food, Nut & Consumer Ser	Dept HUD
	Food Safety	Dept of Interior
	Marketing & Regulatory	Dept of Justice
	Natural Resources & Envir	Dept of Commerce
	Res, Educ, & Economics	Dept of Treasury
	Rural Development	Dept of Transportation
Regional Offices→	USDA-Agencies	Federal Departments
Local/State Offices→	USDA-Agencies	Federal Departments

An astute Senior Executive may be able to coordinate competently within the national USDA agencies, but not to the same competence with all other federal departmental agencies. The regional and local level agencies will be similarly constrained in effectiveness. Overlay this inter-agency/regional process with Native American tribal consultation and service delivery obviates the need for additional staff. Two full time equivalent positions (2 FTE's) are not adequate but we can refine this in subsequent years. Clearly, one additional position can effectively divide coordination and implementation activities at both regional and local/state offices.

The duties and activities indicate a need for a tenured Senior Level executive. The position must advertise for an executive with strategic planning background, applied economics background, tribal business development background, and public relations experience. The ability to leverage funds, foster and maintain communications and dialogue are essential abilities for the position.

The magnitude and complexity of work require strong effective support. Direct financial, administrative, technical and political support and assistance is pivotal to solidify success and assure consistency in policy application and operational maintenance. USDA Secretarial support and placement in the Secretary's office is critical for administrative endorsement in policy application peer acceptance of legitimacy for the NARDEO program. Anything less will build in failure.

Examples for Success

Let us illustrate with some examples through the following federal departments: Department of Interior- BIA (DOI/BIA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA/AIEO) and USDA-Rural Development.

The BIA has had several decades of assisting Native American tribes but the budget in recent years for economic development is minimal, $5 million dollars at most. This has been inadequate for funding a significant number of tribes, individual Indian applicants and corporate businesses. The federal Small Business Administration clearly has a firm funding level and infrastructure to assist minority firms including Native Americans. The BIA, has political, administrative and technical support but lack firm funding levels to make a significant impact.

The EPA's American Indian Environmental Office (AIEO) is similar. The AIEO has financial, technical and secretarial support, yet it is not attached nor placed in the Secretary's office. At a recent Strategic Goals and objectives up date meeting, Native American EPA goals were not adequately discussed and haphazardly formulated. The various agency program directors consulted with a small group of AI/AN representatives in lieu of formal tribal consultation by regions. Conversely, the regional offices were more responsive to tribes and their needs. Our tribe has received EPA grant funds for programmatic support and constructed wetlands funds and sewer lagoon expansion funds.

The USDA Rural Development Office is an exception to what's missing. They have had secretarial support, financial support, technical support and competent personnel at the headquarters level. The various regional offices are effective too a certain extent. The Rural Utility Service- Water and Waste Disposal program has serendipitously merged the right mix of strategy finance and technical personnel to began meeting infrastructure needs of tribes. The program establish in 1994 has seen growth that we believe is possible in S. 2282.

Year	Projects Funded	Loans Obligated	Grants Obligated
1994	0	0	0
1995	1	1	1
1996	13	6	10
1997	35	8	33
1998	21	8	21
1999	40	16	40
Total	110	$20,745,838	$62,832,040

This Table illustrates the five-year track record of projects funded and total grant and loan funds awarded to AI/AN tribes for water and waste disposal projects. (See Appendix 1) Seventy-five tribes from sixteen states have competitively secured funds with more awaiting FY 2000 funds.

Our tribe has been direct beneficiaries from this agency. We have secured over $7.7 million dollars for a water supply and distribution project that gives our tribe a chance at economic development. Our previous water supply was depleted, full of iron permanganate the blackened drinking water. Our residents, schools, hospitals and community centers experience water shortages monthly.

Potential Opportunities within USDA

Our tribe can benefit from the array of agency service and programs if the coordination is implemented. An Indian office can facilitate needs assessments and project financing options and capital for infrastructure needs for a competitive advantage in economic development. We have developed a strategic economic plan that incorporates all facets financial, technical and marketing resources that are available in all federal departments. The USDA is first stop for our needs should **S. 2282** become law. The following is a synopsized list of projects currently in need of funds or in the planning stages for our tribe.

Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

Our tribe can benefit from farm loans for ranchers and farmers hardest hit with the drought in the southwest. The Conservation Reserve program is clearly applicable to our attempts at reclaiming eroded agricultural and forest Lands. The Emergency Conservation Program for drought measures needs to be waived for tribes, current regulations prohibit our access. We had flooding last year that federal and state agencies did not deem sufficiently high in dollar damage, therefore we have unmet flood damage needs. The Emergency Watershed Protection Program will be most applicable for coordination for tribes in our similar predicament.

Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services

Currently our tribe receives services from the WIC, Food Distribution Program, School Lunch Program and Community Food Security. We have had to subsidize administrative costs and food warehousing and storage facilities.

Food Safety

No direct services received.

Marketing and Regulatory Programs

No direct services received.

Natural Resources and Environment

We are in stewardship agreements with our Southwest Forest Service Office. We are harvesting small diameter timber for our local tribal sawmill. Lumber for housing construction, furniture manufacturing and value added products are derived from small diameter timber. This has been a very productive and valuable venture. (See Appendix 2) Our agreement assists the Forest Service in management of timber and forest lands. We assist in reduction of fire fuels, healthy timber stands and erosion control practices.

We are participants in the Southwest Strategy for several federal agencies including USDA that have enabled us to present regional policy and tribal needs for expedited feedback and

resolution. We are supportive of this initiative and advocate for a national model to assist other regions and tribes in the nation.

We are establishing wetlands with the assistance of the NRCS, US F & W at our Zuni Heaven Reservation. Our Zuni reservation-based constructed wetlands and riparian area has been featured as prominent migratory routes for songbirds, ducks, geese and homes for two endangered species- willow flycatcher and Zuni Mountain Sucker. We have subsidized these projects with tribal resources; increased assistance from NRCS would be beneficial.

Research, Education and Economics

As mentioned in the history section, projects from this agency could help in restoring native species of corn, beans and squash for Intellectual Property Rights establishment and marketing options. Our local native seed bank will benefit from such assistance.

Rural Development

As stated previously, the RUS program has been of enormous strategic and financial assistance for our people's effort at self-determination. We are strong supporters of the agency and advocate for additional stable funding for infrastructure building.

Summary and Conclusion

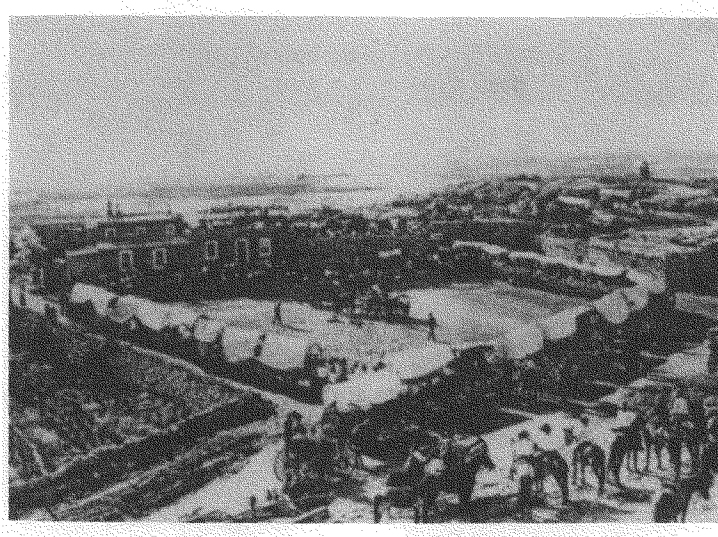
The intent of **S. 2282** is clear and comprehensively articulated. USDA must foster economic self-sufficiency by promoting the coordination of existing resources and assets of the department for their Native American constituents. The establishment of the NARDEO office and the two director positions at a minimum is a worthy investment to ensure effectiveness and achievement of the proposed bill **S. 2282**. The Pueblo of Zuni is strongly supporting the bill and we encourage adoption of our recommendations. On behalf of our A:shiwi (Zuni) people , Thank You!

(Photo courtesy of Smithsonian-Museum of American Indians – Heye Fdn.

Cornfield in Ojo Caliente

(Photo courtesy of Smithsonian-Museum of American Indians – Heye Fdn.)

Wheatfield harvestors in Ojo Caliente

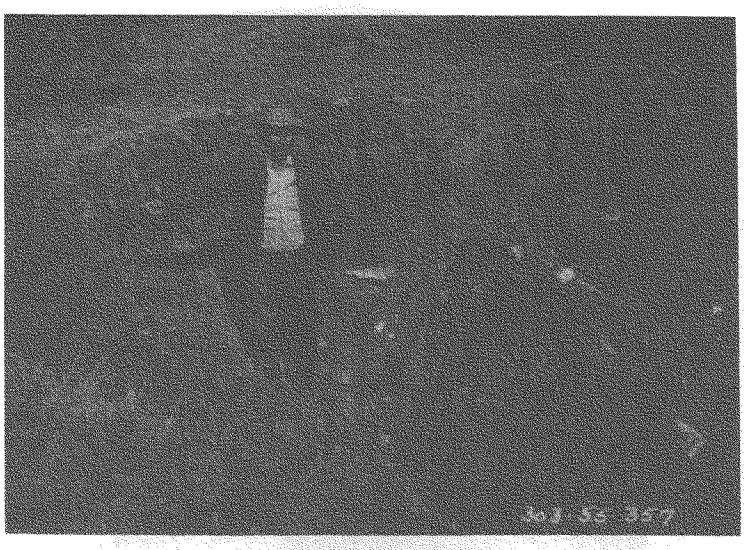


(Photo courtesy of Smithsonian-Musuem of American Indians – Heye Fdn.)

Army Wagons trains in Ojo Caliente

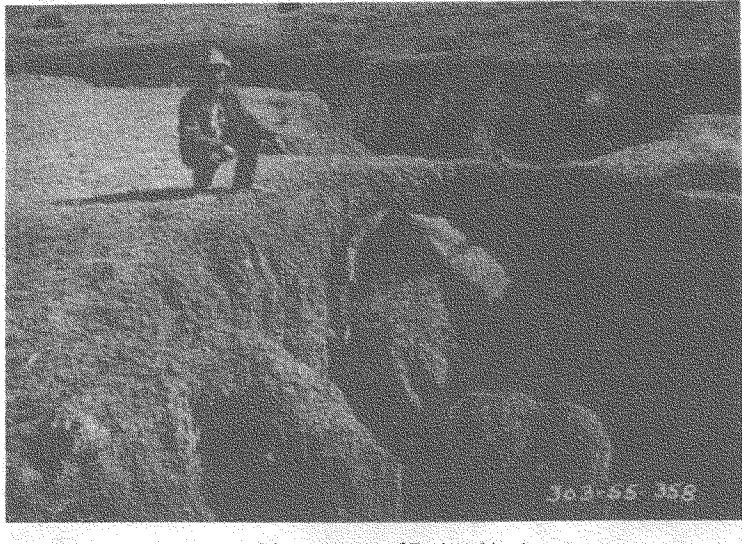
(Photo courtesy of Smithsonian-Museum of American Indians – Heye Fdn.)

Wheatfield in Ojo Caliente



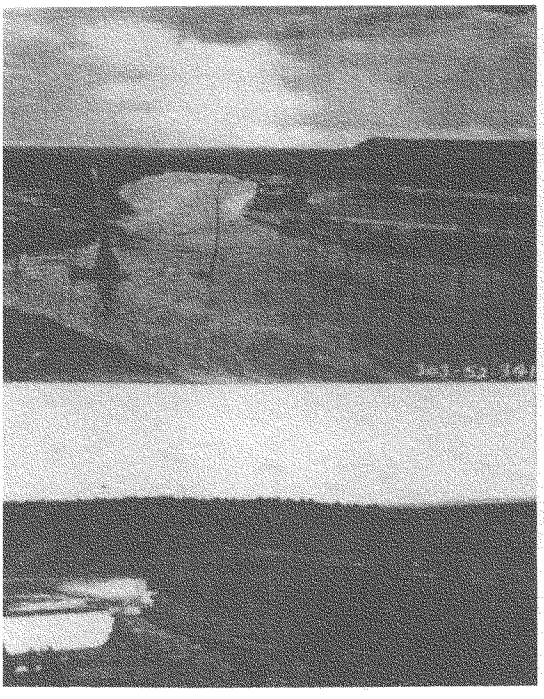
(Photo courtesy of Zuni Archives)

Eroding Gullies



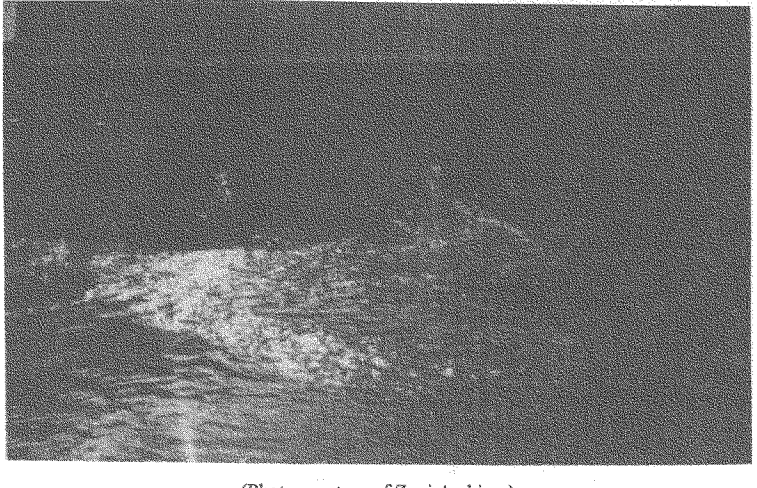
(Photo courtesy of Zuni Archives)

Eroding Gullies



(Photo courtesy of Zuni Archives)

Zuni River

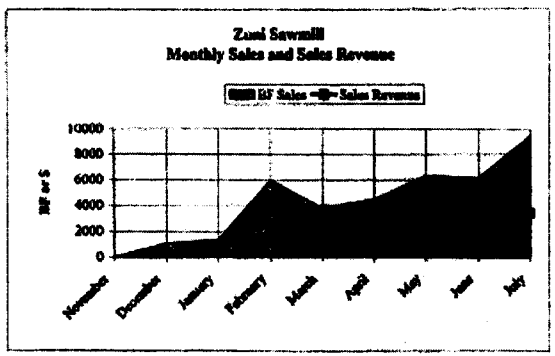


(Photo courtesy of Zuni Archives)

Zuni River

SALES SUMMARY
November 1998 - June 1999

Month	Total BF sold	Total sales	% change (BF)	% change ($)	Average price per BF	week 1 sales BF	week 1 sales $	week 2 sales BF	week 2 sales $	week 3 sales BF	week 3 sales $	week 4 sales BF	week 4 sales $	week 5 sales BF	week 5 sales $	average weekly sales BF	average weekly sales $
November																	
December	1014.7	$308.38			$0.30	1014.7	$308.38									1014.7	$308.38
January	1388.7	$662.19	34%	52%	$0.41			88.7	$23.26	437.3	$294.84	248	$89.48	594.7	$176.59	338.8	$140.85
February	6654.7	$1,941.98	339%	249%	$0.29	1178.7	$343.44	1481	$484.91	1638.3	$484.83	1654.7	$608.58			1488.7	$486.47
March	3772.8	$1,320.54	-37%	-32%	$0.40	828.3	$277.76	1312	$461.76	217.3	$148.76	1152.7	$516.73	361.3	$166.52	754.5	$300.11
April	4494.4	$1,489.96	19%	13%	$0.39	226.7	$309.40	1324	$502.46	166.7	$89.97	2765	$651.43			1123.8	$432.47
May	6356.8	$2,116.63	41%	29%	$0.33	388.7	$121.66	522.7	$182.39	3139.7	$1,055.76	2913.7	$776.83			1584.6	$628.91
June	6128.1	$2,316.72	-3%	10%	$0.38	728.3	$243.11	1840.3	$740.83	1086	$402.37	1438.3	$923.23	1077.5	$407.05	1238.6	$463.84
July	9438.4	$3,414.53	54%	47%	$0.36	2006.7	$653.87	1660	$789.80	668.7	$339.84	3602.7	$1,211.82	1389.3	$446.10	1697.8	$652.91
Total	38800.4	$13,849.69			$0.36												
Average	4812.6	$1,731.2															



USDA's RURAL UTILITIES SERVICE
WATER AND WASTE WATER PROGRAM
LOANS AND GRANTS TO INDIAN TRIBES
AND NATIVE ALASKAN VILLAGES
10/95 through 9/99

State	Borrower Name	Fiscal Year	Type	Loan Amount Obligated	Grant Amount Obligated
AK	AKIAK NATIVE COMMUNITY	97	W		$405,500
	AKIAK NATIVE COMMUNITY	99			$733,500
	ALAKANUK, CITY OF	99			$1,050,000
	ALLAKAKET, CITY OF	97			$235,800
	ATMAUTLUAK VILLAGE	97			$221,000
	BEAVER TRIBAL	97	S		$35,000
	BETHEL, CITY OF	98			$2,300,000
	BIRCH CREEK TRIBAL	99			$462,500
	CHEFORNAK, CITY OF	97			$280,000
		98			$1,600,000
	CHALKYITSIK VILLAGE	96	W&S		$680,000
	CHEVAK, CITY OF	99			$1,243,000
	COFFMAN COVE	99			$700,000
	DEERING, CITY	98			$800,000
	EGEGIK, CITY OF	97	S		$275,000
	EVANSVILLE TRADITION	97	S		$185,000
	GALENA, CITY OF	99			$250,000
	GOODNEWS BAY, CITY	97			$610,000
		99			$1,226,500
	GRAYLING, CITY OF	98			$112,000
	KONGIGANAK TRADITIONAL	98	W		$300,000
	KOTLIK, CITY OF	97			$533,000
		99			$780,000
	KOTZEBUE, CITY OF	97			$280,000
					$950,000
	KOYUKUK, CITY OF	97			$90,000
		98			$100,000
	KWINHAGAK, NATIVE	97	W		$275,000
		99			$612,500
	MARSHALL, CITY OF	97			$60,000
		99			$550,000
	MAT-SU BOROUGH	97			$37,500
	MEKORYUK, CITY OF	97			$750,000
		98			$350,000
	MOUNTAIN VILLAGE	98			$551,000
	NANWALEK NATIVE	99			$747,750
	NAPAKIAK, CITY OF	97			$425,000
		98			$170,000
	NATIVE VILLAGE OF	97			$275,000
	NIGHTMUTE, CITY OF	99			$500,000
	NIKOLAEVSK VILLAGE	99			$152,500
	NONDALTON, CITY OF	98	S		$348,500
	NULATO, CITY OF	98	W&S		$395,400
	NUNAPITCHUK, CITY OF	97			$1,150,000
		98			$329,000
	PORT GRAHAM NATIVE	99			$528,000
	RAMPART VILLAGE	99			$337,500
	SHELDON POINT, CITY	97			$90,000
		99			$98,000
	STEVENS VILLAGE IRA	97	S		$55,000
	TOGIAK, CITY OF	99			$1,075,000
	TUNTUTULIAK	97			$750,000
	UNALAKLEET, CITY	97			$282,500
	WAINWRIGHT, CITY OF	96	W&S		$1,375,000
		97	W&S		$440,000

State	Borrower Name	Fiscal Year	Type	Loan Amount Obligated	Grant Amount Obligated
AZ	COCOPAH TRIBE	97	W		$375,000
			W	$200,000	$200,000
		98	W		$84,000
			W		$310,700
			W	$25,000	
			W	$125,000	$375,000
	HOPI TRIBE	95	W&S	$702,560	$2,108,000
	HUALAPAI TRIBE	97	W	$90,000	$300,000
		98	W	$31,000	$210,000
	NAVAJO TRIBE	96	W	$249,000	$248,000
			W&S	$262,000	$261,000
		97	S	$40,000	$40,000
			W&S	$89,000	$135,500
			W&S	$172,000	$77,900
		98	W	$31,500	$94,500
		99	W		$267,500
	WHITE MOUNTAIN APACHE	96	W	$1,300,000	$1,300,000
			S	$840,000	
		97	W	$1,100,000	$1,100,000
			W	$211,100	$211,100
		98	S	$312,000	$312,000
CA	LOS COYOTES	98	W		$597,300
	TORRES-MARTINEZ	96	W		$197,000
		97	W		$53,000
	CAMPO BAND	99	W		$560,000
	RINCON BAND	99	W		$628,000
	LA POSTA BAND	99	W		$416,000
	LAJOLLA BAND	96	W&S		$1,100,000
ID	NEZ PERCE TRIBE	96	W&S		$38,160
		97	W&S		$42,000
	SHOSHONE-BANNOCK	99	W	$665,000	$1,200,000
		98	W		$42,000
ME	PASSAMAQUODDY TRIBE	99	W		$340,000
MN	BOIS FORTE	97	W&S	$185,500	$544,500
	BOIS FORTE	99	W&S	$224,600	$656,000
	UPPER SIOUX COMM.	98	W	$113,000	$339,000
		99	S		$600,000
MT	CHIPPEWA CREE	97	W&S	$66,000	$198,000
		99	W	$37,200	$111,600
			S		$112,500
ND	SPIRIT LAKE TRIBE	96	S	$215,000	
	TURTLE MT. BAND OF CHIPPEWAS	96	W	$461,000	
		97	W	$1,589,600	
		98	W&S		$531,600
			W		$1,812,000
			W	$1,288,000	
			W		$132,300
		99	W	$125,000	$325,000
		99	S	$792,900	$647,100
NM	ACOMA PUEBLO	97	W	$275,000	$1,125,000
		98	S	$2,125,000	$1,875,000
		99	W	$350,000	$1,050,000
	ALAMO NAVAJO SCHOOL	97	W		$150,000
			W		$85,000
	ZUNI, PUEBLO OF	99	W	$914,200	$2,742,6000
NV	FORT MOJAVE TRIBE	96	W&S	$744,000	
	YERINGTON PAIUTE	99	W	$62,250	$186,750
OR	UMATILLA INDIAN RESERVATION	99	SW	$564,000	
SD	LOWER BRULE SIOUX	96	W	$145,238	$150,950
	OGALA SIOUX	99	W	$150,000	$850,000
	OGALA SIOUX	99	SW	$150,000	$850,000
	OGALA SIOUX	99	W	$148,750	$446,250
UT	CEDAR BANK OF PAIUTE	99	W	$49,000	$221,000
	UINTAH-OURAY TRIBE	99	SW	$137,500	$112,500
WA	SPOKANE TRIBE	99	W	$223,500	$284,000
	NISQUALLY INDIANS	99	W	$386,040	$151,760
WI	RED CLIFF CHIPPEWA	97	W	$943,000	
		98	S	$1,133,000	$3,367,000
	STOCKBRIDGE MUNSEE	99	S	$472,400	$811,000
WY	SHOSHONE TRIBE	98	W	$100,000	$200,000
TOTAL				$20,745,838	$62,832,840

MONTANA/WYOMING

Indian Stock Grower's Association

TESTIMONY TO THE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
S. 2282 The Native American Agricultural Research,
Development and Export Enhancement of 2000

Member Tribes

Arapahoe (Wyoming)

Assiniboine/Sioux

Assiniboine/Gros Ventre

Blackfeet

Chippewal/Cree

Crow

Northern Cheyenne

Salish/Kootenai

Shoshone (Wyoming)

Honorable Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell and esteemed members of the Committee. As you are aware, all of the reservations represented by the Montana-Wyoming Indian Stock Growers Association are located in remote rural areas. Indian people for eons, and still today, have an inseparable link to the Earth and the animals that dwell upon it, and hold those individuals who till the land and raise animals in the highest regard. It facilitates enhancement of our culture and enables Indian stock growers to retain a strong heritage and link to our past and a more self-determined, economic capacity to build on the future.

It has been an extremely difficult period for Indian people who make their livelihood farming and ranching in Montana and Wyoming. This year has given some relief due to the fact that prices finally came back to what they were in 1992. For eight years farmers and ranchers have struggled to stay in business despite the depressed prices and lack of equity payment for their products.

Indian Cattle Producers are not subsidized. The bureaucratic "red tape" and difficulty exacerbated participation in any emergency hay programs over the years and brought little relief to our Indian ranchers. Moreover, there are burdensome issues that Indian ranchers must deal with. Presently, there are no existing agreements between states and tribes that illustrate the participation process for those agricultural programs that are forwarded from the Department of Agriculture to states.

Background:

- 25% of all cattle in Montana are Indian owned.
- 4 years just to get a tribal member from MWISA on Cattlemen's Beef Board
- Could get absolutely "nowhere" with state beef board
- Length of time to find the right person in USDA
- Wyoming has approx. 15,000 head of Indian owned cattle

Farmers participating in some of the farm bill programs have realized some relief with subsidies, but ranchers who solely depend on beef economics have struggled against insurmountable odds and many have had to reduce their herds or liquidate entirely.

As a solution, Tribes need to be a part of the export plan for beef. I cannot say enough about the premium cattle that are raised by Native Americans, yet we are still marketing cattle as our grandfathers before us.

MONTANA/WYOMING

Indian Stock Grower's Association

Member Tribes

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We need to move into the new millennium and expand our marketing options with USDA's help this will be possible.

USDA needs to buy more bison meat for school lunch programs and commodity programs so Indians can eat more healthy food that they have ate for years in the past. Purchasing more beef and bison by USDA for these programs will do two things. One it will develop and more sustainable marketfr Indian individujal producer and Indian Tribes that raise bison and beef. Two it will produce a more healthy and nutritional food for Individuals.

MWISA and the states of Montana and Wyoming have developed a good working relationship over the last eight years. Through a consultation process we have been able to resolve a lot of our problems internally. But, this consultation a lot of times ends at the state level and does not extend back to Washington D.C. With a fully staffed and funded USDA Indian desk in Washington D.C. the agricultural needs of Indian Producers can be viably addressed. This will save both the Indian producers and state USDA personnel a lot of time and money. We will findly have one place we can go to answer our positions and further to address them adequately. The personnel selected to work at the Indian desk in Washington D.C. should be members of a federally recognized tribe and should have an agricultural background if possible or if not a tribal member that has a substantial background in working with individual Indian Producers and Indian tribes.

Our main concern rests with the lack of consultation by the federal government with regard to the many; changes in law and policy that impact Indian agriculture. Tribes were not consulted when the beef check off program went into effect. When jurisdictional problems arise between Indian tribes and States, the stat merely shrugs off the problems citing lack of jurisdiction and their failure to address problems continue to plague Indian beef producers. With full consultation and serious discussions, many of our problems can be solved. This solution, however must come with must come with a full partnership between Tribes, the federal government, and with states. Yes, there are problems but there must be funding t find the solutions to our problems.

There is an increased awareness by Tribes of legislative issues that have merit discussion at the international levels. The International Trade Agreements, particularly NAFTA, have left participation of Native Americans out of serious discussion. We applaud your efforts in securing in securing support for this most important piece of legislation but we implore you to assure that there is an official consultation process in all legislation that effects Indian agriculture.

MONTANA/WYOMING

Indian Stock Grower's Association

We would ask that you consider elevating the National Indian Agriculture (Indian Desk) so that is full participatory involvement for Indian tribes. Indian tribes need to be part of the export plan for beef. I cannot say enough about premium cattle that are raised by Native Americans. Yet, due to the monopoly of the major packers, we cannot identify our beef once it is sold. The national Indian Agriculture Council and the Montana-Wyoming Stock Growers Association is solidly in place. Perhaps the Department of Agriculture could embrace a 51st state concept and deal directly with these representative organizations rather than states for addressing agricultural issues that involve tribal participation.

Thank you for this opportunity to address this honorable committee. The Montana Wyoming Indian Stock Growers Association full supports the enactment of S.2282 and applauds the effort of this committee to address Indian specific issues related to our fledgling economic conditions related to Indian agriculture.

Respectfully Submitted,

Fred Small

Mr. Fred Small, Vice-President
Montana Wyoming Indian Stock Growers Association

Member Tribes

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