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Technical Report

Evaluating Resource Needs of Native American Tribal Governments in the Midwest Region

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Evaluating Resource Needs of Native American Tribal Governments in the Midwest Region

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Chi-megwetch.²

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¹ Ojibwe translation for “thank you.”

² Ojibwe translation for “thank you very much.”

Executive Summary

This study is part of an effort by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to evaluate the current and future natural resource needs of Native American tribal governments in the Midwest Region, and to assess their familiarity and satisfaction with NRCS programs and services. This study, managed and executed by a college intern, a senior majoring in social science, was reviewed and sponsored by Michigan State University in cooperation with the NRCS Social Sciences Institute.

After completing a survey design, the “2002 Native American Tribal Government Natural Resources Survey” was submitted by the intern to Michigan State University’s research review board, the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects. Following their approval, the student/project manager mailed a survey to the natural resource department employees (or their equivalent) of 35 federally recognized Midwest tribal governments. Forty-four surveys were sent out and 22 completed surveys were returned, equaling a 50 percent response rate.

The survey revealed that most of the 35 federally recognized tribes have a natural resources department. These departments employ 1-30 people, but the average tribal band has 10 people employed by its natural resources department. The acreage of the bands ranges from 300 to 265,000 acres.

The study identified:

- Tribal familiarity and utilization of USDA agencies and NRCS programs and services
- Current and future natural resource concerns
- Band-sponsored educational opportunities/programs
- Perception of the cultural sensitivity of the USDA

Tribal familiarity and utilization of USDA agencies and NRCS programs and services

All respondents were familiar with NRCS programs and services. With the exception of the United States Forest Service, few bands were involved with such USDA agencies as Cooperative Extension and the Farm Service Agency. The USDA services/programs implemented by the NRCS that are *most familiar* to the bands are the Soil Survey, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives, and the Wetlands Reserve Program. Grazing Land Incentives and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program were least familiar to respondents.

Tribal governments in the Midwest Region *utilized* 18 NRCS programs and services. The Plant Materials Centers and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program were the two most frequently utilized programs, followed by Soil Survey and Wildlife Habitat Incentives. The least utilized programs and services, participated in by one respondent each, included conservation planning, Resource Conservation and Development,

environmental education outreach, invasive species, stream projects, water control structures, man-made impoundments, technical support, and sharing of GIS (geographic information system) information. One respondent mentioned the creation of a conservation district for the tribe as one of the services provided by the NRCS. This knowledge can help the Midwest Region, States, and field staffs understand which programs are well developed and accepted and which could be better utilized or marketed.

Eighty-one percent of the survey participants believe the NRCS is effective in increasing tribal government involvement in its programs and services. However, the majority of the respondents, who were tribal government natural resource department employees, was unaware of NRCS effectiveness in increasing private tribal farmers' involvement or believe the Agency's efforts are "not at all effective." Fifty-seven percent of the respondents reported they believe that private tribal landowners are "Not At All Familiar" with NRCS programs.

Current and future natural resources concerns

This study has provided information to better understand the status and needs of tribal natural resource departments. It is important for tribal community members to have a sense of ownership in the USDA and NRCS programs in which they participate. A feeling of ownership, control, or inclusion in the way the program is administered or developed may help sustain the program's existence within the community. This model of thought was incorporated into the study by asking survey respondents what their band's natural resource needs are and how the USDA could better serve the band.

Respondents conveyed their current natural resource concerns and future natural resource issues. Identifying these issues is important to help the Agency link needs to programs and services. The four greatest natural resource concerns in the Midwest Region named in the survey are wildlife habitat development, surface water quality, lack of sacred plants³ within the community, and ground water quality. Three of the 16 surveyed natural resource concerns are also cultural concerns: fishing rights, lack of sacred plants within the community, and preservation of sacred sites. A majority of respondents identified all three cultural concerns as current tribal concerns.

Some current concerns, such as the loss of wild rice stands and water related issues, were also reported as critical issues for the future. Identifying future natural resource issues can assist NRCS in targeting services that fulfill a tribe's natural resource needs.

Band sponsored educational opportunities and programs

Eighty-two percent of the respondents reported that the band provides natural resources educational opportunities, services, and outreach initiatives for youth and adults. These diverse programs provide awareness, education, and reflect cultural traditions. They include a variety of youth camps, career fairs in natural resources, training seminars,

³ Sacred plants: tobacco, cedar, sage, sweetgrass

newsletters, newspaper articles, and Earth Day activities, among others. These activities provide an opportunity for NRCS staff and volunteers to offer news releases, training, presentations, and, perhaps, an exhibit during a career fair.

Perception of the cultural sensitivity of USDA agencies and NRCS programs and services

The majority of the respondents believe the USDA is culturally sensitive to the natural resources needs of Native American communities. Fifty-five percent of the respondents were Native American. A cross-tabulation of race and perceived cultural sensitivity of the USDA was conducted. Interestingly, the Native respondents rated the USDA higher on cultural sensitivity than the non-Native respondents.

Respondents were asked to include suggestions that could improve USDA employees' understanding of Native American culture and cultural sensitivity. The purpose of the question was twofold: to help USDA and NRCS employees meet the needs of the band and for tribal communities to know that their voices are included and valued. A variety of recommendations were offered. Better education of USDA staff and the hiring of local natives are two suggestions related to NRCS employees. Additional suggestions are: increase program flexibility, provide better consultation on cultural resource and other policies, tailor programs to meet needs, sponsor outreach programs, and simplify program processes. A number of cost-effective and relatively easy-to-implement suggestions for the USDA to improve cultural sensitivity include: increase attendance at meetings and at tribal elders' luncheons, provide seminars for youth and adults, and provide more information about farming.

The Native American community in the Midwest is thriving. Many bands are growing in membership and land acreage ownership. With such expansions, assistance is often welcomed. USDA agencies, employees, programs, and services have the opportunity and resources to assist tribal communities. This study is one example of NRCS efforts and intent to include and assist Native people.

Introduction

America's first cultivators were the indigenous people of this continent. Native Americans possessed the knowledge and tools to sustain their existence from the natural resources of the land. Even today, knowledge and respect of the earth and its animals are apparent in Native people's use of the land and its resources. Many members of Native communities continue traditional hunting, gathering, fishing, and harvesting practices. Through the support of tribal governments, Native communities have a new social resource to assist in natural resource activities. Many tribal governments have developed natural resource departments that assist tribal members and the surrounding community with education and outreach while managing the tribe's environmental responsibilities.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has reached out to the tribal natural resource departments by offering special programs and services tailored to Native people in order to "learn from and contribute to Native American agriculture."⁴ "Almost 10 years ago, the USDA and the Department of the Interior agreed to a new foundation to improve the delivery of programs and services to American Indians and Alaska Natives. Consistent with this commitment, the USDA has reached out to inform American Indians and Alaska Natives about USDA programs and services available to them, to deliver programs more effectively to Indian tribes, and to initiate new programs in response to the needs of Indian tribes."⁵ This study, sponsored through an internship with the USDA NRCS Social Science Institute, is intended to contribute to those goals.

⁴ Guide to USDA Programs for American Indians and Alaska Natives. October 1997. United States Department of Agriculture Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations, 1997. P. 7

⁵ IBID. P. 5

Methodology

Design

Evaluating Resource Needs of Native American Tribal Governments in the Midwest Region is a quantitative survey of the tribal governments' natural resource departments. The data collection instruments consisted of four parts: pre-notice letter, cover letter, survey, and thank you/reminder postcard.⁶

The data collection process began with the mailing of the pre-notice letter. The purpose of the pre-notice letter was to inform members in the sample that they would soon be receiving a survey and to provide a brief description of the survey's purpose.

Approximately one week after the pre-notice letter, members of the sample received the cover letter and survey. The cover letter elaborated on the purpose of the study and explained confidentiality procedures and the agreement of participation. A thank you/reminder postcard was mailed a week after the survey to thank those who had returned their survey and remind those who had not to please do so. Appendix 1 is a copy of the survey.

Sample

The nature of the study only permitted a limited sample from which to draw. Natural resource department employees or their equivalent from 35 federally recognized tribal governments in the Midwest comprised the population of this study. A tribal government

⁶Material available upon request: write Social Sciences Institute, 4500 Cascade, Ste. 204, Grand Rapids, MI 49546.

is defined by the USDA as “the governing body of an Indian tribe that has been officially recognized as such by the Federal Government.”⁷ Tribal governments consist of many governing councils, various boards, and departments. This study focused on the tribes’ natural resource departments.

The 35 federally recognized tribes were each mailed at least one survey that was sent to the department’s director. Seven of the Michigan bands received two surveys per department because tribal natural resource department contact information was available. This was done to increase the likelihood of getting information from each band. Forty-two members of the sample were current employees of a natural resources department and two were environmental services employees from the Inter-Tribal Council in Michigan. Forty-four surveys were mailed and 22 surveys were returned, giving the study a 50 percent response rate. To examine the study's procedures, see Appendix 2.

⁷Op. Cite., United States Department of Agriculture’s Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations, 1997. P.135

Results

Familiarity with NRCS Programs and Services

One of the main goals of this study was to assess the Midwest Region bands' familiarity with NRCS programs and services. All of the respondents reported that they are at least "Familiar" with NRCS programs and services. Table 1 displays the respondents' familiarity with 10 specific NRCS programs and services. Respondents are most familiar with the Soil Survey, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives, Wetlands Reserve Program, and Resource Conservation and Development Program. In contrast, respondents are not as familiar with the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and the Grazing Land Incentives.

NRCS Programs	Not At All Familiar	Familiar	Very Familiar	Total # of Responses
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	2	13	6	21
Resource Conservation and Development Program	3	13	4	20
Plant Materials Centers	5	10	6	21
Wildlife Habitat Incentives	2	14	5	21
Wetlands Reserve Program	1	14	5	20
Conservation Planning	5	12	3	20
Conservation Reserve Program	8	8	4	22
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program	12	6	2	20
Grazing Land Incentives	14	5	1	20
Soil Survey	2	10	9	21

Utilization of NRCS Programs

Tribal governments in the Midwest Region reported they utilized 18 NRCS programs and services. They were asked to identify their band’s involvement in specific NRCS programs and services. Table 2 displays the responses. At the end of each program/activity the number in parentheses identifies the number of times the program or service was reported. Programs and services are ranked according to frequency. The Plant Materials Center and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program are the two most frequently identified services/programs with seven responses each.

Table 2. NRCS Programs and Services Bands Utilize by Tribal Governments (Question 3)
Respondent Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆Plants Materials Center (7)◆Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) (7)◆Wildlife Habitat Incentives (WHIP) (4)◆Soil Survey (4)◆Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) (3)◆Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) (3)◆Conservation Planning (1)◆Resource Conservation and Development Program (RC & D) (1)◆Environmental Ed Outreach (1)◆Invasive Species (1)◆Gardening Program (1)◆Several projects with streams (1)◆Man-made impoundments (1)◆Water control structure (1)◆Creation of conservation district for tribe (1)◆Technical support (1)◆Sharing of GIS info. (1)◆Blank (1)◆None (3)
<p>Miscellaneous Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆Would like to see the USDA NRCS develop specific policy in regards to Native Americans and their use of the Plant Materials center.◆Applying for assistance for projects and writing applications over and over again and still not getting things done.

Familiarity with USDA Agencies and Other Entities

Many survey questions asked tribes about NRCS programs and services; however, we were also interested in responses regarding other USDA agencies and other organizations. One question asked, “What USDA programs other than the NRCS programs, if any, is the band involved with?” The majority of respondents did not indicate being involved with other USDA agencies/programs (Table 3) with one exception. The U.S. Forest Service is the only agency with a high usage rate, with 45 percent identifying participation in its programs.

USDA Programs	# Of Respondents Involved	# Of Respondents Not Involved	Total # of Respondents
Cooperative Extension	5	17	22
Farm Services Agency	6	16	22
Intertribal Agriculture Council(IAC)	6	16	22
Forest Service	10	12	22
None	3	19	22
I Don’t Know	5	17	22
Other ⁸	3	19	22

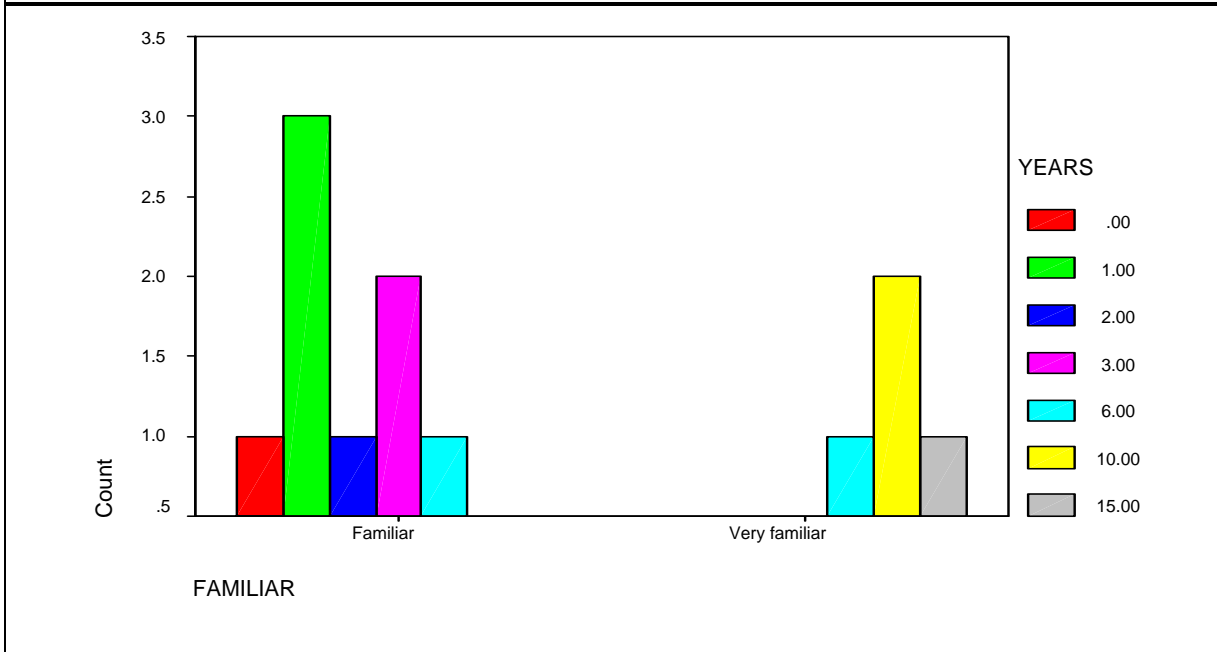
Familiarity and Years Involved with NRCS Programs

We hypothesized that the degree of familiarity with NRCS programs or services should increase with the amount of time involved with the program or service. The longer the band is involved with the program the more opportunities it has to increase its knowledge

⁸ An “Other” option was included as a possible response. Following is a listing of additional programs that respondents identified: Timber Council, RC&D, Foods – Low Income People, Rural Development, and Community Program

about it. An examination of the data confirmed that as years of involvement with NRCS increased so did familiarity with NRCS programs.

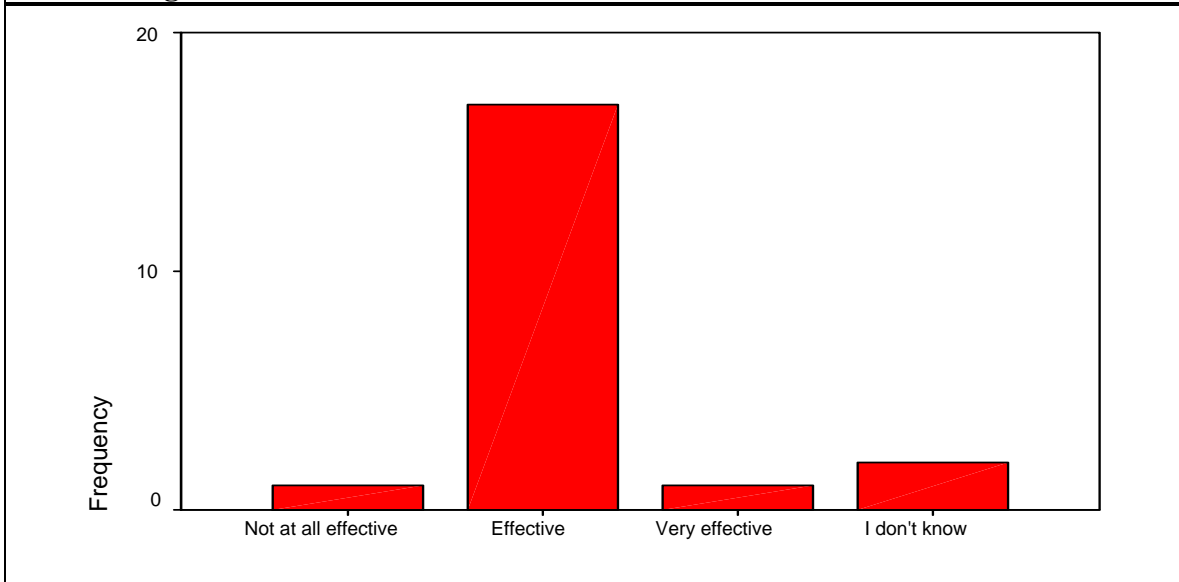
Figure 1. Number of Years Involved in NRCS Programs and Familiarity with the Programs



NRCS Effectiveness at Increasing Tribal Government Involvement

Survey participants were asked how effective they believe the NRCS has been in increasing tribal government involvement with its services. Eighty-one percent of the respondents believe that the NRCS is “Effective” in trying to increase tribal government involvement (figure 2). Only one respondent believes that the NRCS is “Not At All Effective;” one believes that it is “Very Effective;” and one person did not respond.

Figure 2. NRCS Effectiveness at Increasing Tribal Government Involvement in NRCS Programs

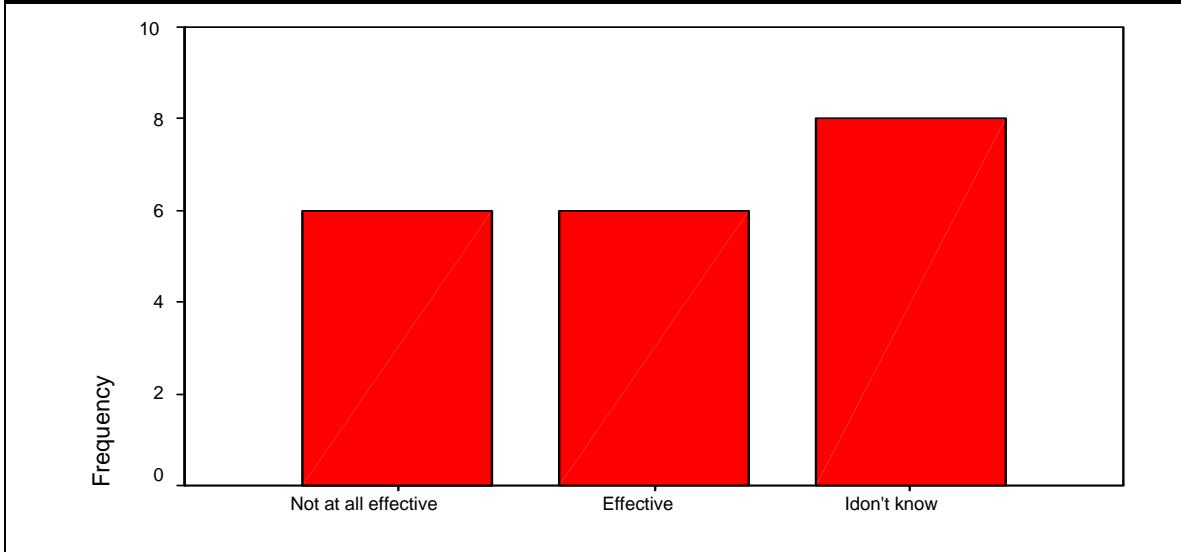


NRCS Effectiveness at Increasing Private Tribal Farmer Involvement

The NRCS provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources.⁹ NRCS programs and services are intended to assist private farmers as well as groups and organizations. To gauge NRCS effectiveness in increasing the participation of private tribal farmers in its programs and services, survey participants were asked to identify NRCS effectiveness. As mentioned previously, the survey participants are employees in the natural resources department of tribal governments. Therefore, it is not entirely surprising that 40 percent of the respondents do not know how effective the NRCS is in increasing private farmers' involvement in its programs (figure 3). Thirty percent believe the NRCS is “Not At All Effective,” 30 percent believe that they are “Effective,” and 2 offered no response.

⁹ Natural Resources Conservation Service Web site. www.nrcs.usda.gov

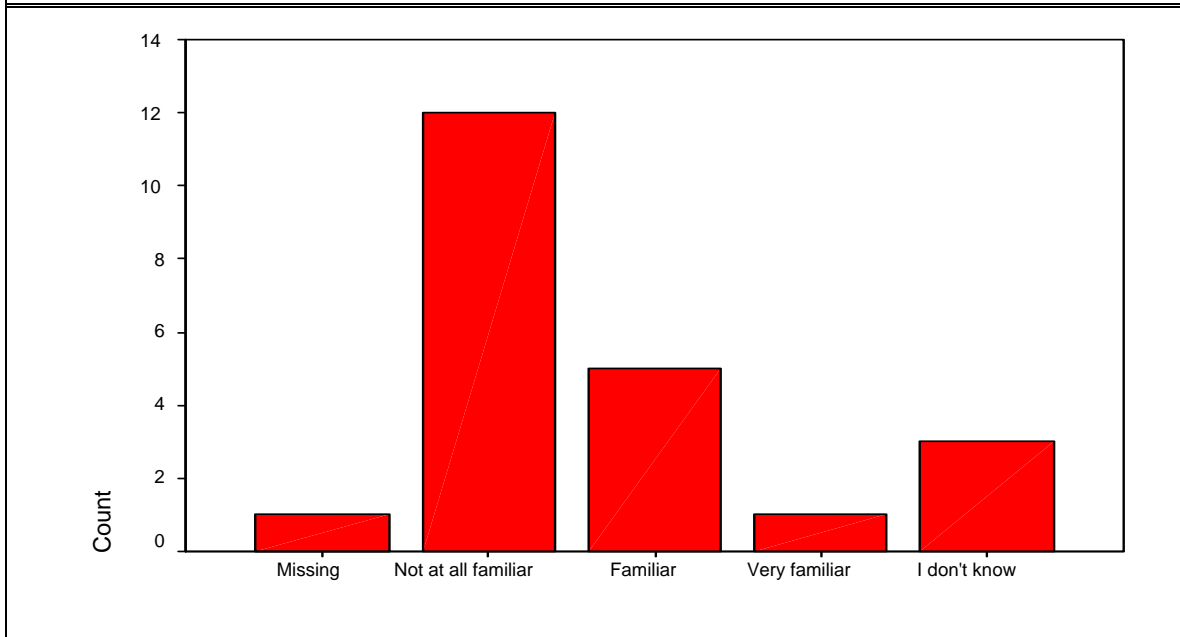
Figure 3. NRCS Effectiveness at Increasing Involvement of Private Tribal Farmers in NRCS Programs



Private Tribal Farmers Familiarity with NRCS Programs and Services

Are private tribal farmers familiar with NRCS programs and services? Tribal natural resources department employees do not believe they are. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents reported that they believe that private tribal landowners are “Not At All Familiar” with NRCS programs (figure 4). It needs to be reiterated that the role of the respondents are to act as natural resource employees of tribal governments and not as private landowners.

Figure 4. Perceived Landowner Familiarity with NRCS Programs and Services



Current Natural Resource Concerns in the Midwest Region

Tribal natural resource concerns are important for NRCS to identify for the purpose of providing appropriate services. The survey lists 16 natural resource issues and asks respondents to identify the current natural resource concerns affecting their bands. Respondents identify wildlife habitat, surface water quality, lack of sacred plants within the community, and ground water quality as the four greatest natural resource concerns. NRCS staffs that provide assistance to tribal governments need to be aware of the importance that tribes place on these concerns and should be prepared to provide information about services and programs that can assist the tribes. Just as important, respondents were not concerned with livestock waste and low crop yields. From the NRCS perspective, it is important for Agency staff to understand these are the tribe's low priority issues and field staff should not advocate discussion of these topics, unless the

tribes bring up the issues. NRCS staff should work with tribal groups, from a planning and program delivery perspective, to assess how to address those areas of highest tribal concerns and interests.

Three of the 16 natural resource concerns surveyed are embedded in the tribe's cultures. These concerns include fishing rights, lack of sacred plants within the community, and preservation of sacred sites. A majority of respondents checked all three as current tribal concerns. Eighty-one percent of the respondents identify a lack of sacred plants within the community as a concern, 71 percent identify fishing rights, and 62 percent identify preservation of sacred sites. These observations highlight the Midwestern Native Americans' cultural concerns and how those concerns compliment their natural resource needs. NRCS staffs need to be aware of how to respect the cultural aspects of these concerns while working to assist tribes achieve their natural resource goals.

Current Natural Resource Concerns	# Identified as a Concern	# Did Not Identify as a Concern	Total # of Respondents
Air Pollution	15	6	21
Degraded Wetlands	15	6	21
Erosion on Stream and Lake Shore Line	12	9	21
Fishing Rights	15	6	21
Ground Water Quality	16	5	21
Land Pressure due to Population Increases	12	9	21
Lack of Sacred Plants within the Community	17	4	21
Livestock Waste	1	20	21
Loss of Good Fisheries Habitat	13	7	21
Loss of Wild Rice Stands	13	8	21
Low Crop Yields	2	19	21

Preservation of Sacred Sites	13	8	21
Severe Sedimentation in Streams	9	12	21
Soil Erosion	10	11	21
Surface Water Quality	17	4	21
Wildlife Habitat	19	2	21
Development			
Other ¹⁰	3	18	21

Future Natural Resource Concerns

The services delivered by government agencies should adjust to the changing needs of the consumer. By examining trends to help identify future issues, NRCS will be able to target future services that fulfill a tribe’s natural resource needs.

Table 4 shows that 62 percent of the respondents identify the loss of wild rice stands as a **current** natural resource concern. When asked about **future** concerns, another 19 percent report wild rice issues will be one of the band’s most important natural resource issues in the next five years. Wild rice is a traditional food, and rice camps and rice gatherings are traditional cultural and social activities.

¹⁰ The following were issues presented from three respondents: lack of funding, invasive species, health of Great Lakes fishery, drinking water quality, endangered species/game species management, wood lands, wild berries, and wetland restoration.

Table 5. Comments on Future Natural Resource Issues	
A ¹¹	Our own water & air standards Native plants identification Preservation and enhancement The expansion of our fish hatchery Creation of a conservation district
B	Wetlands, Surface water
C	Best Management Practices Land use planning Protection of treaty rights
D	Groundwater quality Forest fragmentation National Environmental Policy Act Wetland delineation and protection
E	Wild rice lakes restoration
F	Water Air
G	The ones marked above
H	Surface water quality
I	Development of water/air programs Hunting/fishing regulations
J	Gathering rights Inventory plants Wildlife habitat
K	Waste water treatment Wild rice preservation (lakes)
L	Air and water quality
M	Economic Development
N	Protection of Water Resources and natural areas
O	Surface water quality
P	Ground Water and Surface water quality Along with wild rice restoration
Q	Regional planning
R	Air Fishing/hunting Housing
S	Land use planning Fishing rights
T	Maintaining traditional and commercial fisheries amongst younger generations Electric power sources (renewable vs. non-renewable issues) Forestry and wildlife management Wild rice restoration

¹¹To ensure confidentiality, only an alphabetical letter identifies respondents.

Composition and Focus of Natural Resource Departments

Band Demographics

When the USDA conceptualizes working with tribal communities in the Midwest, they should ask a number of questions. How many federally recognized tribes are in this region? How many of the tribes have tribal natural resource departments? How many tribal natural resource department employees work in these departments? And, how many acres do they manage? There are 35 federally recognized tribes in the NRCS Midwest Region and all but one have a natural resource department. The number of people employed by these natural resource departments ranges from 1 to 30, and the average department has 10 employees. The acreage managed by the tribes ranges from 300 to 265,000 acres, with the *average* number of acres equaling 35,712. Most of the tribal natural resource departments employ a handful of workers to manage tens of thousands of acres of land.

Natural Resource Educational Opportunities

The bands' natural resource departments are charged with managing the natural resource concerns of the tribes. One survey question asks if the "band provides opportunities for the community's adults and youth to be educated in natural resource issues." Eighteen of the 22 respondents replied, "Yes," and were asked to identify the educational natural resource opportunities offered by the band. Table 6 displays a compendium of their comments.

Table 6. Bands' Educational Natural Resource Opportunities

- Integrated Resource Management Program (IRMP), planned public meetings, Natural Resource Committee monthly meetings, several newsletters with IRMP, and newspaper articles.
- The tribe has its own youth summer camp and the Natural Resource Department provides programs for the camp.
- Youth sugar camp, youth wild rice camp
- Training seminars
- In house educational activities, newsletter articles, promotion of available outside activities.
- Local community college
- Local outreach, Earth Day activities
- Earth Day, tree give-away, Earth Fest photo contest, Youth/elder fish opener
- Youth camp presentation, Natural Resource Fair
- They are combined with our cultural resource needs
- Multi-tribal youth camps
- Staff members submit monthly articles to the tribal newspaper, public meetings, some public displays
- Through Menominee College
- These programs are in the works, but wetland education and wild rice are beginning
- Bison ranch, elk ranch
- Protector of the Earth youth camp
- We have a fall harvest feast which members attend and are educated in what we do at the department
- Mentor program, career fairs in NR

The data show that most bands offer educational programs, services, or outreach initiatives in order to improve their community's awareness of environmental issues. Several of the comments referred to natural resource department articles in tribal newspapers, youth and adult camps, and community presentations. The bands are providing natural resource opportunities that educate, encourage awareness, and reflect cultural traditions. The respondents were asked to rate program attendance on a scale of

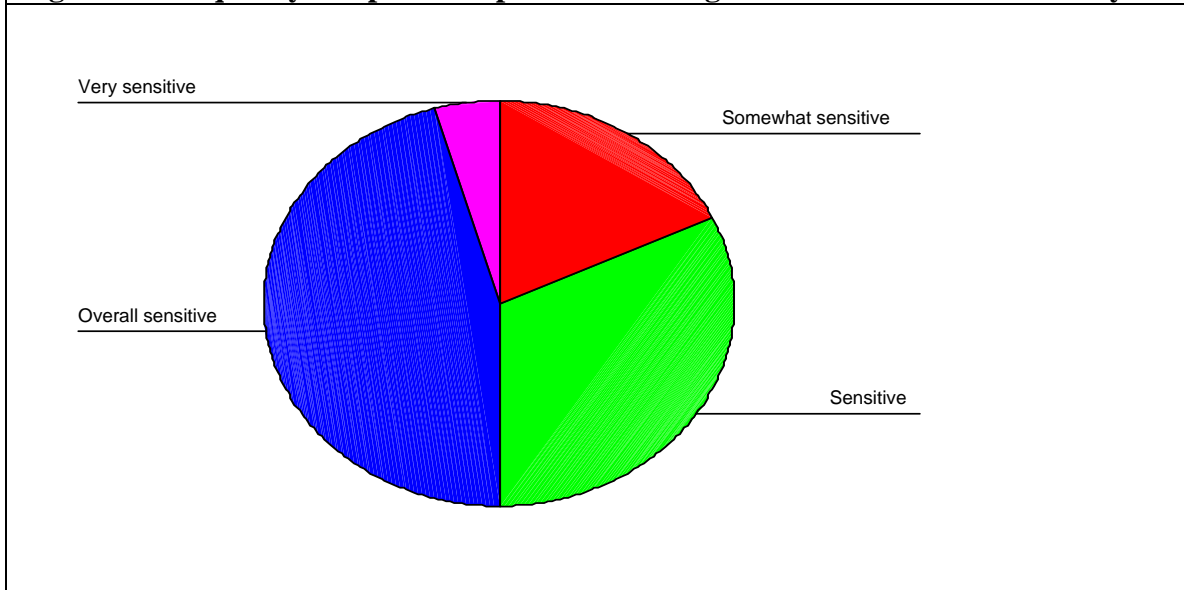
“Poor” to “Excellent.” Thirty-nine percent of the respondents who host such programs identify program attendance as “Fair” and 27 percent identify attendance as “Good.”

Cultural Sensitivity

If the Native community feels that the USDA understands their natural resource needs and provides services to meet those needs, then it is more likely that tribes will consider the USDA culturally sensitive to Native American natural resource needs and will utilize Department programs. Respondents were asked if they “believe that the USDA is culturally sensitive to the natural resource needs of Native American communities.”

Respondents could reply using a five-point scale ranging from: (1) -“Not At All Sensitive” to (5) -“Very Sensitive”. Forty-five percent of the respondents rate the USDA “Overall Sensitive” and 32 percent use a “Sensitive” rating for the natural resource needs of Native communities. It is encouraging that none of the respondents considers the USDA to be “Not At All Sensitive.”

Figure 6. Frequency Graph of Respondents Rating of USDA Cultural Sensitivity



The majority of the respondents believe that the USDA is culturally sensitive, so the important question is: how can the USDA continue to improve its cultural sensitivity to Native American natural resource needs? The respondents were asked a similar question and they provided the following well grounded and excellent suggestions:

Table 7. Suggestions On How USDA can Improve Cultural Sensitivity

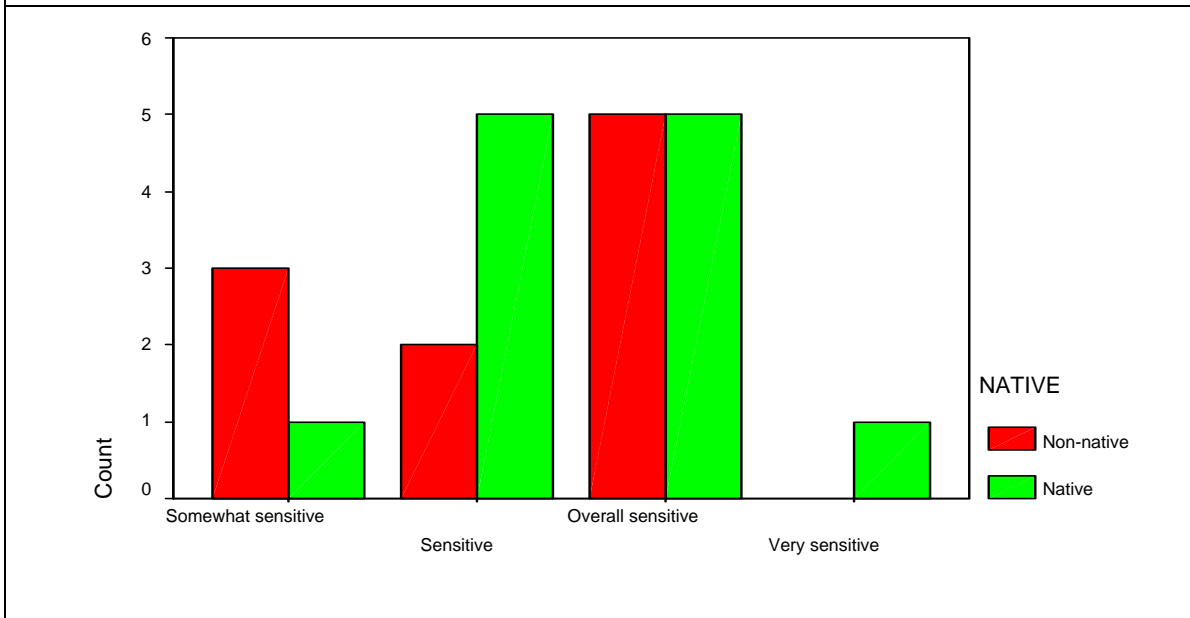
- Hire local, native liaisons & personnel. Create all Indian offices on tribal lands.
- Make the process a little easier
- Public meetings/seminars for Native Americans (young & adults)
- Outreach programs
- One main way is to keep up and expand meetings to talk about what is important locally with tribes
- Continue to work with tribes
- Protection of water resources & natural areas
- Change the requirements on grants so tribes can be considered eligible
- To have more information available about farming and that farming is good stewardship of the land
- Use consultation to implement real programs that benefit tribes. Need to be flexible and on tribes need and unique uses
- Better consultation on cultural resource policies, and policies that indirectly impact natural/cultural resources

- Tailor programs like EQIP & WHIP to fit the cultural & resource needs of the tribes
- Meet with the tribe on a regular basis
- They are making good steps with the WTCAC
- Better education of USDA staff
- Develop a policy for dealing with Native American communities, so that all of the
- USDA can more effectively work and understand Native American issues and
- communities
- Attend tribal elders luncheons regularly to let them know of opportunities & projects. Invite medicine people to be involved with fieldwork (1 day with hands on experience)

Cultural Sensitivity and Race

A cross-tabulation of race and perceived cultural sensitivity of the USDA was conducted to determine if respondents who identify themselves as Native Americans consider the USDA more or less culturally sensitive than the non-Native respondents do. Fifty-five percent of the respondents are Native Americans. Figure 7 shows that the Native American respondents rate the USDA higher on cultural sensitivity than the non-Native respondents do.

Figure 7. Race and Perceived Cultural Sensitivity of USDA



Respondent Comments

The quantitative survey data allow for frequencies and descriptive statistics but not for detailed responses. Open-ended responses and comment sections help the analyzer interpret more information than merely numbers. In a section that asked for additional comments or suggestions, over one-quarter of the respondents wrote comments and two respondents asked to have the results sent to them. A copy of the final study will be made available to all participants. Table 8 provides the respondents' exact comments:

Table 8. Respondents' Additional Comments

Table 8. Respondents' Additional Comments	
A	<p>-Need to have larger areas or more lines for the questions that require a written response.</p> <p>-The USDA has good programs. There just needs to be more work done on getting information about these programs to the tribes & individual tribal members.</p> <p>-Also the USDA programs are individual oriented. Tribes as governmental agencies are not able to access much or any of the available funds. That is an issue to be looked at.</p>
B	<p>-Please send a copy of the survey results.</p>
C	<p>-For question 2 – A lot of the titles of programs don't sound familiar. However, USDA NRCS representative has met with and is part of our IRMP team and has helped with the creation of a list of projects for the tribe. He then uses the list to look for monies for projects. We have a Natural Resources Committee and he attends all the monthly meetings, he's very helpful. The only farming being done on a larger scale here by a tribal member is a small raspberry farm. Most tribal members don't own sizable tracts of land. Please send a guide for USDA Programs for American Indians.</p>
D	<p>-Although I have worked here a short period of time, I know that the relationship between this tribe and the NRCS and Forest Service is working well.</p>
E	<p>-Small farms that are acquired by tribal government still need to be maintained. Most band members don't realize that farming creates better natural environments.</p>
F	<p>-Please send a copy of the survey results.</p>

Summary: Areas of Mutual Interest between Tribal Bands and USDA

Tribal bands in the Midwest Region are familiar with the assistance and programs offered by USDA NRCS. The bands identify wildlife habitat, surface and ground water quality, and cultural concerns (fishing rights, lack of sacred plants, and preservation of sacred sites). They are also concerned with the loss of wild rice stands now and in the future. All of these areas are ripe targets for NRCS to provide tribes with technical and financial assistance. Tribes have existing educational programs that represent another area where NRCS can provide focused assistance.

Although these tribal spokespeople feel that cultural sensitivity among USDA employees is high, they also offered several recommendations to increase sensitivity, including:

- Better education/training of USDA staff
- hiring of local natives
- increase program flexibility
- provide better consultation on cultural resource and other policies
- tailor programs to meet needs
- sponsor outreach programs
- simplify program processes
- increase attendance at meetings and at tribal elders' luncheons
- provide seminars for youth and adults
- provide more information about farming

This study has given USDA and NRCS staff a snapshot of some of the areas in which tribes and the Agency have a strong working relationship. There are also some areas of opportunities that tribal representatives identify. The results of this survey should be shared with appropriate representatives from the Native American tribal groups and Agency staffs as well as other USDA agencies. This type of study can help each of the organizations set and meet their mutual goals.

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**Appendix 1:
2002 Native American Tribal
Government Natural Resources Survey**



Natural Resources Survey

This survey deals with Native American Tribal governments from the Midwest region and their knowledge, utilization, and attitudes of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) programs. The NRCS provides assistance to people on a one to one basis to help improve and protect their natural resources. Throughout the survey the term "band" is used to refer to only the band or tribal organization that this survey has been sent to. The survey is not meant to represent attitudes of the entire Nation with which your band or organization is affiliated.

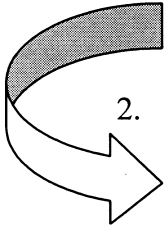
The Natural Resources Conservation Service

The first set of questions relates to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, also referred to as the NRCS. Even if you are not aware of the NRCS or it's programs we are still interested in you feedback.

1. How familiar would you say you are with the USDA NRCS programs and services?

(Check one.)

- Not At All Familiar (If 'Not At All', please skip to #11.)
- Familiar
- Very Familiar



2. How familiar are you with the following USDA NRCS programs and services?

(Circle one response for each.)

	Not At All Familiar	Familiar	Very Familiar
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	N/F	F	V/F
Resource Conservation and Development Program	N/F	F	V/F
Plant Material Centers	N/F	F	V/F
Wildlife Habitat Incentives	N/F	F	V/F
Wetlands Reserve Program	N/F	F	V/F
Conservation Planning	N/F	F	V/F
Conservation Reserve Program	N/F	F	V/F
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program	N/F	F	V/F
Grazing Land Incentives	N/F	F	V/F
Soil Survey	N/F	F	V/F

3. What NRCS programs and services, if any, is the band involved with?

4. If the band is currently involved with any NRCS program, how long have they been involved? _____ YEARS

5. If the band is currently not involved with any NRCS programs or services, to your knowledge was the band ever involved with such programs or services? (Check one.)

- No (**If, 'No', please skip to question # 7.**)
- Yes
- I Don't Know



6. Please list the programs or services they were involved with?

7. How did you find out about NRCS programs or services?

8. How familiar would you say private tribal landowners are with the NRCS programs or services? (Check one.)

- Not At All Familiar
- Familiar
- Very Familiar
- I Don't Know

9. How effective do you believe the NRCS is in trying to increase tribal government involvement in its programs or services? (Check one.)

- Not At All Effective
- Effective
- Very Effective
- I Don't Know

10. How effective do you believe the NRCS is in trying to increase involvement of private tribal farmers in its programs? (Check one.)

- Not At All Effective
- Effective
- Very Effective
- I Don't Know

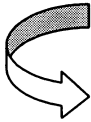
Natural Resources Needs

The next set of questions relates to the band's natural resource needs.

11. Does the band have an environmental and/or a natural resources department?

(Check one.)

- Yes
- No (If 'No', please skip to question # 13.)



12. About how many people are employed in the environmental/natural resource department? _____EMPLOYEES

13. About how many acres of land, if any, does the band manage?

_____ACRES

14. About how many acres of land do individual tribal members manage?

_____ACRES

15. Which of the following are current natural resource concerns affecting the band?

(Check all that apply.)

- Air Pollution
- Degraded Wetlands
- Erosion on Stream and Lake Shore Line
- Fishing Rights
- Ground Water Quality
- Land Pressure due to Population Increases
- Lack of Sacred Plants within the Community
- Livestock Waste
- Loss of Good Fisheries Habitat
- Loss of Wild Rice Stands
- Low Crop Yields
- Preservation of Sacred Sites
- Severe Sedimentation in Streams
- Soil Erosion
- Surface Water Quality
- Wildlife Habitat Development
- Other (Please Specify) _____
- Other (Please Specify) _____

16. What is/are the most important natural resource issue(s) that the band will address in the next five years?

17. Does the band provide opportunities for the community's adults and youth to be educated in natural resource issues? Ex: Mother Earth Awareness Program, Environmental Youth Camp. (Check one.)

- Yes
- No (If 'No', please skip to question # 19.)



18. What are the educational natural resource opportunities?

19. In general how would you describe the turn out for these opportunities? (Check one.)

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent
- I Don't Know

20. What USDA programs other than the NRCS programs, if any, is the band involved with? (Check all that apply.)

- Cooperative Extension
- Farm Services Agency
- Intertribal Agriculture Council
- U.S. Forest Service

- Other (Please Specify) _____
- Other (Please Specify) _____
- None
- I Don't Know

Attitudes about the USDA

Answer question 21 using a scale with 5-very sensitive to 1-not at all sensitive.

21. Do you believe that the USDA is culturally sensitive to the natural resource needs of Native American communities? (Circle one.)

Very Sensitive				Not At All Sensitive
5	4	3	2	1

22. How can the USDA improve their efforts to become more culturally sensitive to the natural resources needs of Native American communities?

23. The *Guide to USDA Programs for American Indians and Alaska Natives* is a manual that lists and describes the USDA programs and services offered to Native American communities. Would you like a free copy sent to your band? (Check one.)

- Yes
- No

Background Information

Background information is requested to help us better understand your responses. As a reminder, all information that you have provided in this survey will remain completely confidential.

24. What is the title of your current position? _____

25. How long have you held this position? _____

26. What is your race or ethnicity? (Check all that apply.)

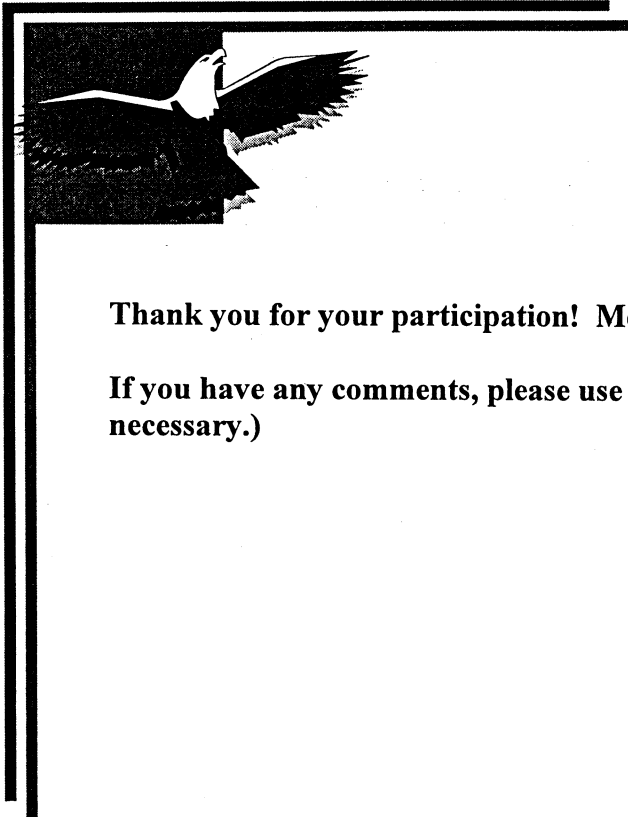
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or Alaska Native **(If Native American, please answer # 27)**
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other



27. If you are Native American, are you an enrolled member of the band that you are employed with? (Check one)

- Yes
- No





Thank you for your participation! Megwetch.

If you have any comments, please use the space below (add additional sheets if necessary.)

Please use the enclosed addressed and stamped envelope or return this survey to:

2002 Native American Tribal
Governments Natural Resources Survey
1550 East Beltline Avenue, Suite 245
Grand Rapids, MI 49506

If you have any questions, please leave
a message for Teresa Magnuson at
1-888-526-3227, ext. 51.



Appendix 2

Procedure

The survey development began with a literature review. USDA and NRCS publications, such as the *Guide to USDA Programs for American Indians and Alaska Natives*¹², were used to acquire a better understanding of USDA and NRCS programs, services, and goals. To assist in the development of a sound survey instrument and research design, survey design methods were also studied. For reference, Don Dillman's *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*¹³ and W. Lawrence Neuman's *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*¹⁴ were utilized.

In addition to the literature review, an NRCS Social Science Institute staff member, a Michigan State University faculty member, and the NRCS Michigan Native American liaison were also consulted. The NRCS Social Science Institute offered a college internship that included introductions to professionals who assisted with the study, supplies, and light office assistance. The MSU advisor provided guidance in survey design, data analysis, paper critiques, and time lines. The director of the Social Sciences Institute and the NRCS Michigan Native American liaison provided recommendations about which programs and services should be included in the survey. The background research and assistance were important to ensure that the study's purpose was met and that the survey procedures were conducted correctly.

¹² IBID, 1997.

¹³ Dillman, D. (2000). *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*. Second Edition. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

¹⁴ Neuman, W. (2000). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. A Pearson Education Company.

After completing the survey design, the survey was submitted by the intern from MSU to Michigan State University's human subjects research review board, the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS). "UCRIHS is an Institutional Review Board (IRB). Federal and University regulations require that all research projects involving human subjects and materials of human origin be reviewed and approved by IRB before initiation."¹⁵

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 10.0 data analysis program was used to assess the survey information. After entering the data into SPSS, frequency tables, crosstabs, and chi-square tables were used to analyze the survey information. The following analysis description is separated into the following categories: familiarity with USDA NRCS programs, involvement in USDA and NRCS programs, current and future natural resource issues, and race and cultural sensitivity.

Survey questions 24 and 25 are not included in the analysis due to the low final sample size. Question 24 asked the respondent to identify the title of their position. Question 25 asked how long the respondent had held that position. The low sample size, combined with the context of the questions, could possibly violate confidentiality by allowing the respondents to be identified. For the protection of confidentiality, neither question was developed in the data analysis.

¹⁵ University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, www.msu.edu/user/ucrihs/, January 22, 2002.

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To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD.) USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.