



A PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

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# NATIVE AMERICAN RANGELAND MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROJECT

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Funding provided by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation  
Service and the USDA Forest Service

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## Initiative Goals

The Society for Range Management is collaborating with tribal partners and federal agencies to implement a long-term initiative that will address several critical disconnects that impact the sustainable management of rangelands in Indian Country. We address areas such as recruitment, education, capacity building, applied research, and outreach through sound science and strong consideration of tribal traditional and cultural values. This is a four-pronged approach that includes the following activities:

- Train-the-Trainer" rangeland management workshops tailored for tribal/regional needs;
- Rangeland management tool-kits for outreach in both Native American and Hispano land-based communities;
- Inter-tribal informational website on rangeland management; and
- Evaluation for an accredited online soil and rangeland ecology course for tribal students.



## Stakeholders & Collaborators

The primary stakeholders are the governments and staff members of Native American Tribes that contain rangelands in the U.S. Collaborators and partners include the Society for Range Management, Animo Partnership in Natural Resources, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Forest Service, and the Intertribal Agriculture Council. We are currently inviting other partners to strengthen this initiative who are asked to commit their endorsement of this project, help disseminate information to their membership base, and collaborate with our training efforts.

## Background

Input received from members of the Society for Range Management's Native American Rangeland Advisory Committee indicated that culturally relevant training and capacity building should be a priority for any comprehensive rangeland conservation strategy. As tribal governments become more involved with the management of their own natural resources, meeting the capacity building needs for their workforce will be essential. In addition, tribal range managers are often in need of educational tools for their communities and tribal council members. At the tribal college level, many colleges are limited in faculty numbers and curriculum, and tribal students may not have access to courses that are required for federal, state, or tribal employment. Management of the tribe's own natural resources is becoming more relevant; if the cultural and traditional ties can be strengthened in the community, it can provide a sense of purpose, empowerment and stewardship for the youth. It is important for partnering organizations to assist with education programs that tie in to employment opportunities in natural resources, equip managers for community outreach with producers and the community, incorporate tribal cultural and traditional teachings, and help prepare their youth for the task ahead.



# Project Descriptions

## Train the Trainer Workshops

In 2016 and 2017, we conducted two preliminary brainstorming sessions in Montana and New Mexico, respectively, with tribal and federal agency staff, tribal college personnel, students, and extension range managers that work on tribal lands. We used a process to identify ecological, financial, logistical, and educational disconnects and challenges associated with tribal rangelands. This helped us to modify our strategic approach for implementing the workshops. We are currently following up with an online survey for tribal governments and colleges to further define those training needs and the most suitable management approaches.



We will work closely with tribes, or groups of tribes, to help them define short- and long-term range related goals, and tailor workshops for their staff-training needs. Tribal staff will be asked to commit to the development of a long-term strategy where outcomes can be assessed on an annual basis. Brainstorming sessions will be conducted to help staff identify training needs, management challenges, and best management approaches for a long-term strategy. Project objectives will be tailored to community needs, cultural approaches, tribal administrative needs, and local ecological communities, but will also address compliance requirements for federal reporting. Because many tribal range programs vary in scope, workshop topics can range from fundamental to advanced topics. Topics will include (but are not limited to) introductory soil and rangeland ecology, range plant identification & inventory, grazing practices, wildlife & range management, Ecological Site Descriptions, and remote sensing. Special topics can be added at the request of tribes. Workshops will be held locally and/or regionally; instruction will be coordinated through accredited university range management programs, natural resource management agencies, tribes governments and colleges, and non-profit organizations. Some training may be coordinated with pre-existing courses provided by agencies, but will be adapted to tribal needs. We will coordinate regionally based advisory groups that can perform site-visits and assist tribal staff with problem-solving when needed. A comprehensive program assessment will be conducted in Year 3 (2020), but bi-annual monitoring will be conducted throughout the project via discussion groups and post-workshop surveys to assess how the program can be improved. Workshop material can be incorporated into current tribal agricultural plans and climate

planning strategies; this workshop series can also be used as a model for addressing other fields in natural resources. Conference participation at the Society for Range Management will encourage tribal rangeland managers to network and collaborate with other rangeland managers, thus enhancing partnerships with universities, other agencies, and non-profit organizations.

Tribal rangeland managers will be provided with assistance from a regional rangeland advisory groups, if needed, to develop community relevant rangeland studies, and present their findings at national conferences of the Society for Range Management. Tribal rangeland managers will also be encouraged to help mentor tribal rangeland students through their participation with college range plant ID teams, volunteer opportunities, and other field activities. Students will be encouraged to participate in undergraduate research and management projects, and present their findings. Funding from this project will include scholarship opportunities for professionals and students to attend conferences and state/regional range management meetings.

### **Outreach Toolkits**

Outreach toolkits will be developed and tailored to both Native American and Hispano-agricultural communities. Outreach toolkits will target general community members, producers, tribal councils and local political leadership, and youth, and will be traditionally and culturally relevant for specific regions/tribes. Material will be innovative and creative to increase viewership. Final products about rangeland management will include the following:

- Downloadable PowerPoint presentations and video clips for tribal councils and political leadership. Foundational material can be used to tailor packages for specific community needs.
- Culturally relevant video presentations for general tribal members, which can include Native American humor and music to explain how soil is lost through erosion caused by overgrazing, wind, fire, and water runoff, and why rangelands are important to tribal communities. Films can be posted on YouTube or distributed by tribal staff.



- Downloadable baseline educational resource packets, including PowerPoint presentations, handouts, and recommended field activities for producer workshops.
- Downloadable resources for teachers (K-12) and Boys and Girls Clubs, including activity plans, handouts, field activities, video clips, and PowerPoint presentations.
- Downloadable resources for Tribal College and Hispanic Serving Institution range clubs, including links to the Society for Range Management, club start-up guidelines, recommended activities, handouts, video clips, and PowerPoint presentations.

## **Website**

A website will be developed to host educational and training material for tribal rangeland management, and provide online support. Range manager resources will include downloadable presentations, documents, data sheet templates, video clips, funding sources and opportunities, announcements, and tribal success stories. Public and educator resources would be open-access from the front-end of the website. Links will highlight professional organizations, tribal websites, and other relevant online sources. This website will be managed through a partnership effort with important links to partner websites. The site can be expanded to include all natural resource related components later, if partners desire.

## **Online Soil and Rangeland Ecology Course**

A feasibility assessment will be conducted for an online accredited soil and rangeland ecology course that would help students become more marketable for natural resource related employment opportunities. The concept is to host a course that would be accessible to all tribal students, with credits being applied to their home college. Course content would be developed by accredited soils and range professors, and thoroughly reviewed by tribal college and natural resource personnel. The course would be facilitated by a qualified college instructor, with core material being provided online. Additional downloadable materials, such as course instructor manuals, case studies, and lab exercises would be supplied for enhanced and facilitated learning. Field instruction would also accompany the online course. Matching funds will be solicited if deemed feasible.



# Timeline

Proposal development and funding acquisition.	2016
Brainstorming session in Pablo, Montana, to broadly identify capacity building needs, outreach needs, challenges with land management, education, and logistics, and effective ways to enhance recruitment of Native students into natural resources.	Summer 2016
Brainstorming session held in Albuquerque, NM, to identify support priorities and challenges with land management, education, and logistics. Proposal modifications were made based on tribal input.	Spring 2017
Curriculum development to provide tribes with a menu of courses based on tribal management needs, and online surveys; partnership development; announcements	Spring 2018
Training Workshops, advisory group coordination	Summer-Fall 2018
Advisory group meetings; program modifications based on tribal and advisory group input; website and outreach toolkit development	Summer-Winter 2018
Training Workshops, website, outreach toolkit development	Summer-Fall 2019
Online course assessment, workshop summaries	Winter 2019
Workshop assessments, advisory group visits	Spring-summer 2020
Professional development, tribal range program presentations at SRM conference	Fall 2020
Final report to USDA; preparation for publication in peer-reviewed journal and popular Native American publications	Winter 2020

