Biocontrol program gains momentum with student/intern involvement

Marie Mellick-INCA, Courtney Mitchell-SNH, Jesse Pepion-SNH, Doug MacArthur-INCA assist with biocontrol collections, Missoula, MT

A season of learning, networking, and progress

Our biocontrol program received some valuable help from our youth this season. Safeguarding Natural Heritage students and INCA interns participated in the Aphthona and Oberea collections in Missoula, Montana with Gary Adams-USDA-APHIS State Plant Health Director, Melissa Maggio-Montana, Weed Biocontrol Coordinator, and SNH camp facilitators. These collections were released on leafy spurge infestations throughout the Northern Cheyenne, Crow, and Blackfeet Reservations. Our biocontrol technician, Josh Werk, also collected Aphthona agents at the Grass Range site earlier in the season and released them on the Fort Belknap Reservation. He noted significant reduction of leafy spurge at the Doug Archambault property release site over a two year period. See photos.
Josh worked closely with Liz Werk, Fort Belknap Extension Agent, and Roc Becenti, former INCA district coordinator, in the surveying and monitoring of Leafy Spurge infestations. He was able to make contact with several local landowners and made initial contact with Fort Belknap Tribal Chairman, Andy Werk regarding the status of the conservation district. We look forward to an established collection site at Fort Belknap in the near future.

Biocontrol efforts for the Crow Reservation were conducted by Erlise Hogan, Crow TCD Coordinator, and interns, Greg Hogan and Xainen Little Wolf. Danielle Plainfeather, INCA Biocontrol Technician also assisted with collections.

**BIO-CONTROL RELEASE ON LEAFY SPURGE IN THE WEST PRYOR MOUNTAINS**

By Erlise Hogan

As Natural Resource Conservationist, we are tasked with fighting the war against Noxious Weeds. Currently in Montana there are 35 listed Noxious weeds. These are invasive non-native plants that push out the native plant species and take over our native rangelands. The Crow Tribe and the Indian Nations Conservation Alliance have been partnering since 2016 to release biocontrol agents on a noxious weed infestation of Leafy Spurge in the West Pryor Mountains near Pryor, MT on the Crow Indian Reservation.

We have found that the 2016-18 release of the biocontrol agent Flea Beetle (Aphthona spp) on Leafy Spurge (Euphorbia esula), has been an effective treatment option on the infested Pryor Mountain site.

In 2016-2018 the bio-control agent; Flea Beetles (Aphthona spp) were released annually within a 5 mile stretch of rangeland on the south side of the West Pryor Mountains. This year, biocontrol agents were collected in July in Missoula, MT. They were picked up from the State biocontrol station and transported from Missoula, MT to Crow Agency, MT. The agents were then transported, with the assistance of INCA intern, Xainen Little Wolf, from Crow Agency to the release site in the Pryor Mountains. There were two different agents released, three containers of each, with 75 Boring Beetles (Oberea spp) and 1000 Flea Beetles (Aphthone spp) in each container. The agents were distributed along a 3 mile stretch within the Tribal Range Unit 3, on the south side of the West Pryor Mountains.
The Leafy Spurge infestation site where the biocontrol agents were released in 2016 was dying back and turning red in color. You can see that the treatment is working by looking at the difference in the plants appearance. In the pictures of the site that was treated during 2016-18, the plants are wilted and have turned orange in color. Looking at the photos of new site where biocontrol agents were recently released, you can see that the plants are still healthy and yellow in color.

In conclusion, it is highly possible for the new release site to start seeing results by the year 2022 based on the results that the 2016-18 release of biocontrol agent Flea Beetle (Aphthona spp) has shown for the Leafy Spurge (Euphorbia esula) infestation at the Pryor Mountain site. It has shown to be an effective treatment option.

References:
http://www.nativepartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=naa_res_mt_crow
https://www.mtweed.org/weeds/weed-id/
https://www.mtbiocontrol.org/category/insects/.

Aphthona and Oberea agents were also released on the Northern Cheyenne and Blackfeet Reservations this season. INCA intern, Miah Chalphant assisted with the Northern Cheyenne release. Galen Hall, BIA Range-Browning, intercepted releases marked for Fort Belknap when those agents were unable to be delivered in a timely manner. He released them on the Seville Bench of the Blackfeet Reservation. We will be monitoring these sites and continue to work with Mr. Hall on collaborating biocontrol efforts with the Blackfeet Nation.
Public Informational Posters created by Miah Chalphant, INCA intern, Northern Cheyenne

Save The Date! INCA Annual Conference  
November 5-7, 2019  
Hard Rock Hotel and Casino  
Catoosa, Oklahoma
Indian Nations Conservation Alliance
Youth Page

“Evolving Native youth back to their roots through connections and nurturing of Mother Earth”
INCA Student Program Director, Gail Whiteman
gail.whiteman@inca-tcd.org

The summer of 2019 is flying by. INCA is so honored to be involved with the student interns this year. High school juniors and seniors & college freshmen and sophomores are working on projects across the West and Midwest, developing their relationships with nature, learning about natural resource management careers, and networking with each other and staff to stay connected.

INCA places student applicants with Natural Resource/Agriculture-related agencies, such as NRCS, 1862 & 1994 land grant institutions, and strong tribal natural resource departments. This summer INCA connected one student who wanted to get ranch experience with an emphasis on large animal veterinary experience. We were able to place her with the beautiful Padlock Ranch of WY & MT. Other students are working with bio control of noxious weeds in conjunction with the State of MT, to manage some of the most widely spread infestations. One student, Echo Ecoffey, at Pine Ridge is helping to build and operate high tunnels and gardens, creating a path to food sovereignty with SDSU Extension Service in two of the three hub communities being developed across the Pine Ridge Nation.

The APHIS-sponsored Safeguarding Natural Heritage Summer Youth Camp at Salish Kootenai College was attended by some of the INCA interns. Three interns came from out of state, including Idaho, South Dakota, and Minnesota. Another INCA intern spent the summer working with Menominee College in Wisconsin in their natural resource summer program, which also included a Safeguarding Natural Heritage Summer Program. The SKC camp not only focused on the territory of the CSKT, it also including an overnight trip to the Blackfeet Nation. Please enjoy these reports by Douglas McArthur, White Earth, MN and Marie Mellick, Coeur d’Alene Tribe, ID.

“My name is Marie Mellick and I am a citizen of the Coeur d’Alene tribe. I am going into my third year at the University of Idaho studying Agricultural Science, Communication, and Leadership with a minor in Rangeland Management. I have been interning at the NRCS Field Office in Plummer, Idaho for the summer through INCA. I am working under the Benewah County District Conservationist, Ree Brannon, to learn all about NRCS and the Conservation District. Agriculture and Natural Resources have been a big part of my life and are important aspects of our heritage and future. I love seeing what NRCS and tribes are doing to protect the environment. This opportunity has put me on the
right path to learning and doing what I love in the future. I have a passion for outreach and hope to increase communication to tribal members on projects and opportunities to learn about and experience natural resources on the reservation. In my free time, I like to go to the Coeur d’Alene Lake, go hiking or backpacking, and gardening. I can usually be found identifying plants, being a soils nerd, or playing in a stream.”

Douglas McArther, White Earth, MN - “My second year as an INCA intern came with more growth and learning. During this summer I was exposed to a range of new things and even able to step out of my comfort zone. One of the most memorable events from this summer was the SNH camp held in Pablo, Montana. This was something very new for me especially knowing the fact that I was going to be 1,000 miles from home and must ride on a plane for the first time ever by myself.

The SNH camp was held July 8-17. I arrived in Pablo a day early and met up with Marie Mellick who is also another INCA intern from Idaho. We ate at a place that overlooked Flathead Lake. It was truly a sight to see. Being a kid from the northern Midwest the most you see is prairie, crop land, deciduous forest, and lakes. While in Pablo I was able to see a whole new type of scenery from towering mountains, crystal clear rivers, and rolling hills of grazing land. It’s truly a beautiful area and was a privilege to be able to go.

The SNH camp was a truly amazing experience. We learned about many major aspects of conservation and of our Native American culture. One of the biggest aspects we learned about was identifying invasive species and how to control and combat them. We learned about biocontrol on Leafy Spurge and Spotted Knapweed. Biocontrol is the use of insects to eat and eliminate these invasive plants. We were able to visit an herbicide trial on a new herbicide that is found to not be as harsh towards native species but eliminates nonnative species such as Ventenata.

Another point of importance was Buffalo and introducing them back into the wild. Buffalo played major roles in ecosystems. They are natural cultivators. When they would travel across the plains, they would open the ground below them and knock off seeds from plants to be grown. They were a major food source for the Native Americans which relied on the buffalo for almost everything, from hides for clothing, bones and hooves for tools, and sinus and tendons for string. Then Buffalo were hunted to near extinction and their role in ecosystems has been severely missed.

Lastly, we were also able to go to the local Fisheries Department and got to get our hands dirty and pull gill nets that capture Lake trout which are an invasive species in Flathead Lake. After they catch the fish, they process them and distribute them to local stores and food pantries to be given out and sold to locals. These are only a few of the things we learned at the SNH camp. I can’t thank Salish Kootenai College enough for providing a place to stay and Rene Dubay and Gail Whiteman for helping plan this amazing camp and making it possible.”
AATCD/INCA hold annual regional conference in Prescott, AZ

This year’s annual regional conference, Conserving of Our Diverse Tribal Natural Resources, was held at the Prescott Resort and Conference Center in Prescott, AZ in July. The following is a summary from one of our District Coordinators who attended:

By Wallace Tsosie

I attended the Arizona Regional Arizona Association of Tribal Conservation Districts (AATCD) and Indian Nation Conservation Alliance Annual Conference in Prescott Arizona. I assisted with the conference registration and took several pictures. I was also on a panel discussion where several tribal conservation district representatives were asked how the tribal conservation districts work with BIA, Tribal Council, and FSA, and how they rate them on a scale of 1 to 10. My response to the question was that it all depends on who is in charge and how you work with them at the District level. I thought this was an interesting agenda topic. As for Navajo SWCD, the new By-Laws are viewed as a renewal of partnership and respect at the same time a reorganization of new leadership and outlook at the district level.

The first day of the conference started with introductions. Ft. Defiance SWCD displayed the District banner on the wall. The first general presentation topic was the Training and Work Session on How to Form a Conservation District, including strategic planning and roles and responsibilities of Tribal Conservation Districts.

Allan Hanley, INCA Grants and Agreements Coordinator, talked on Tribal Self Determination Authorities in American Indian Resource Management. Helena Deswood’s presentation on Southwest Climate Hub was a good presentation where volunteers work together to measure precipitation through the CoCoPaHS program. In the evening the AATCD Board had a meeting.
The second day started with Sharma Torrens presentation on Arizona Department of Agriculture: Ways They Can Help. Brian Thomas talked about Examining the Diversity of Tribal Conservation Districts. All Tribal Conservation Districts are different in their own ways, for example: land base, population and even the tribal governmental structure.

Amos Stevens always does a good job talking about the Tohono O’odham SWCD project and activities. Overall I thought the conference was short and sweet with plenty of food. It was good to see and talk to old friends and exchange information.

Pictured in headline: Wallace Tsosie, Brian Thomas (standing), Ray Martinez, Philip Bravo, Roland Tso, Harold Joseph

Native Resources

by Brian Thomas, INCA TCD Regional Specialist

“Tribes meet to conserve holistically, and in harmony, to protect what Mother Earth provides for all mankind...the gift of life and survival. Our interconnectedness with all of Creator’s creations, and as natives, we must not lose the precious forms of life that appears from within our Mother Earth. As the water must be protected for our future survival. This is what I see that’s very important to attend these meetings and share our goals and objectives as honorable stewards for future generations.”

The benefits of tribal natural resource management and development include creating jobs; maintaining tribal societal cohesion; forming healthy tribal and non-tribal communities and relations; developing innovative approaches to address pervasive unemployment and poor health brought on by environmental factors:

1. Inventory tribal historic properties
2. Prepare and carry out a tribal-wide historic preservation plan
3. Assist federal agencies with reviewing projects on tribal lands

Although only a fraction of their original territories, many tribes still control vast areas of land and water. Some tribal lands contain extractable resources such as oil, gas, and timber. Other lands are used for hunting, fishing, livestock grazing, and agriculture. The political and economic self-determination and self-sufficiency of most tribes depend on maintaining their land and natural resources TCD’s will work helping tribes to safeguard their land rights; water rights; hunting, fishing, and gathering rights; resource rights; and environmental rights.

Environmental Protection: Many American Indian and Alaska Native tribes face an array of health and welfare risks as a result of environmental problems, such as surface and groundwater contamination, illegal dumping, hazardous waste disposal, air pollution, mining wastes, habitat destruction, and climate change. Helping tribes to protect the environment would be one of the TCD’s top priorities. As sovereigns, tribes can govern the environment within their territories. In addition, environmental laws such as the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Safe Drinking Water Act regulations allow tribes to enforce federal environmental programs.
New executive director brings fresh, new approach to native lands management

By Gail Whiteman

**Delane Atcitty from Taos, New Mexico** has taken the reins this year at INCA, as Executive Director. He replaces Dick Gooby, who retired last November, an original founder and Executive Director for 20 years. Mr. Atcitty was Deputy Director for a short while, previously.

Delane received his MS in Agribusiness/Ranch Management from Texas A&M, and holds a BS in Agribusiness from Oklahoma Panhandle State University.

He and his wife, Cherylin, have been beef producers and currently run bison near Taos Pueblo. As a young couple raising livestock, they both know the struggles, teamwork and long-term commitment of being agriculture producers. Delane is dedicated to supporting tribes in getting Tribal Conservation Districts formed and working fluidly, and knows TCDs are only as successful as each tribal administration’s buy-in.

In July, Delane joined the SNH Youth Camp at Salish Kootenai College for a few days as he made a circle through Montana, meeting with INCA staff, USDA personnel, tribal leaders and organizations. He caught up with the summer camp crew at the National Bison Range at Moiese and engaged the students in a discussion about the commitment and effort it takes to be a producer and to always look to add value to your product, and ways to diversify an operation to help stay afloat. He talked about professionalism and what it takes to be a leader. His love for bison flowed as he talked about their benefits to the ecosystems they inhabit.

Under Delane Atcitty’s hat stands a Native leader ready to strengthen INCA’s mission to help tribes gain the momentum needed to build a future for the next generations to take control of land management issues, create TCDs and develop ARMPs, manage wildlife, and promote youth.

*Mr. Atcitty can be reached at: (575)779-9331 or delane.atcitty@inca-tcd.org*