21-22 EDITION

WISCONSIN TRIBAL CONSERVATION ADVISORY COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

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A FAREWELL TO JERRY THOMPSON

Saying goodbye to one of WTCAC's founding members.

By Saffron Mears

From, Your friends at WTCAC

Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council

As one of the founding members of the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council, Jerry Thompson has been a key factor in the growth of WTCAC over the last 21 years. From working with multiple tribes across the United States to pitching pilot programs in Washington D.C., Thompson has been a vital member in the longevity and continued success of WTCAC.

"...their [tribes] voices just were not being heard. And so we formed an informal group at that time with the State Conservationist," Thompson said as he reflected on the modest beginnings of WTCAC.

"I worked everything from the inside...met with all the tribal leaders. It was amazing."

Through his work in policy-making and collaboration with a multitude of tribal organizations across the country from Wisconsin to Hawaii, Thompson has helped establish one of the most prominent organizations for young Indigenous students in the field of agriculture and environmental studies. "We made this program to get more tribal members into USDA with important tribal culture knowledge background," Thompson said as he explained the need for young people within the field of agriculture. "There are so many opportunities for young people."

As the future of WTCAC continues evolving with strong collaborations with organizations such as the USDA, Thompson will always be remembered for his expertise in leadership and interpersonal communication. Thank you for your hard work, and happy retirement!

INTERN SPOTLIGHT

Meet the Winter 21-22 Intern Team!

SAFFRON MEARS

Hello! My name is Saffron Mears and I am a 20-year-old originally from Oconto Falls, Wisconsin and I am a member of the Oneida Nation. I spent the first few years of my life living on the Oneida reservation, and I now reside in Madison, Wisconsin as I pursue an undergraduate degree in Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. As a Native American student, this internship was especially special to me and instilled important foundational communication skills in me.

DEVEN METOXEN-HAMILTON

Hello, my name is Deven Metoxen-Hamilton I am from Seymour Wisconsin, a small town just outside the city of Green Bay. I am currently in my 2nd year at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, majoring in Wildlife Ecology as well as minoring in Biology and Soil Science.Some of my hobbies are bowling, soccer, football, as well as fishing and hiking. I also have interests in wildlife anatomy and diets specifically mammals and birds.

Angela Biggs: A Dedication to Conservation

By Saffron Mears

In recent decades, conservation and environmental justice have been poignant topics of discussion. From the rights of farmers to land treatment, the field of conservation is expansive and intricate. For these reasons, the work of organizations such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is crucial to effective and sustainable conservation. No one understands the importance of the environment quite as much as the current USDA National Program Manager Angela Biggs. Through her work, Biggs explains the importance of communication and highlighting Indigenous voices in the conversation on environmental justice.

"I've been really proud of being able to, while I was out in the field, work directly with farmers and help them with their needs," Biggs said. "As I've moved up, it's my responsibility to look at the bigger, broader perspective."

With over two decades of experience, it is hard not to share Biggs's excitement about the field of conservation and her role within it. Starting her career with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship in the field of water quality, Biggs has held many notable titles throughout her career.

"I've had the opportunity to work on so many different projects, I don't know if I can tease out just one," Biggs responded with a laugh when asked about a project she was particularly proud of. "Just being able to address the concerns of farmers." Spanning in positions from the State Conservationist for Wisconsin to working with the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Biggs has worked on a multitude of important projects in the field of conservation and continues to do so today. And as the current National Program Manager, Biggs hopes to bring this level of communication and attention to the USDA as a whole.

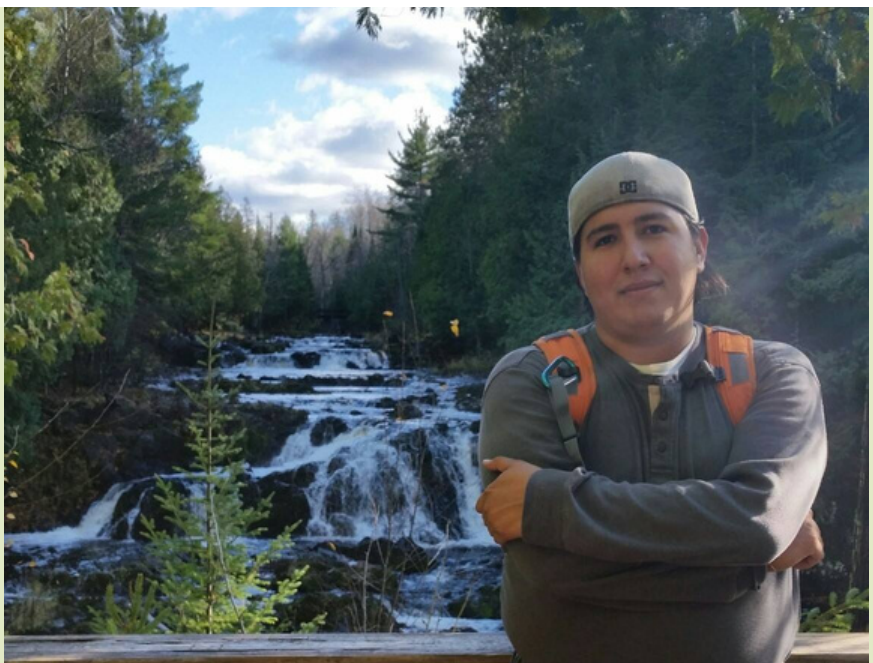
This communication begins with Indigenous voices. For Biggs, it was important to build and maintain the connection between the USDA and the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council, or WTCAC. "They're [Tribal Nations in Wisconsin] setting the agenda," Biggs responded when asked how the USDA plans to work with tribes in conservation and environmental justice.

"We [USDA] are happy participants in providing information and having the opportunity to hear what their concerns are."

As projects move forward, Biggs plans to continue working with Tribal Nations in the field of conservation. Through meetings with WTCAC, as well as speaking to community leaders, Biggs works to include the perspectives of Tribal Nations in the story of environmental conservation. "The fact that we [USDA and WTCAC] are able to have a good close working relationship," Biggs said when asked about USDA's work with WTCAC. "It's a testament to the leadership and desire to work together with tribes in the field of conservation."

Meet Gregory Gauthier: the new WTCAC Outreach and Education Coordinator

Gregory J. Gauthier Jr. is a citizen of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, with Ho-Chunk and Stock-Munsee Community Band of Mohicans ancestry. He went on to serve in the AmeriCorps VISTA Tribal Resilience Initiative at the College of Menominee Nation Sustainable Development Institute after studying Environmental Science with an emphasis in Ecology at UW-Oshkosh, showing his long-standing commitment to environmental and community stewardship, as well as the development of systems that address the full range of environmental and cultural resource sustainability in response to Climate Change. Following his time with AmeriCorps VISTA, he worked in a variety of capacities in the non-profit and public sectors, specializing on environmental issues. Prior to joining the Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (WTCAC) Outreach and Education Coordinator, he worked as a Climate Organizer for Wisconsin Conservation Voters in the Fox Valley and Green Bay, advocating for climate and environmental solutions to help address concerns and raise people's voices for change for present and future generations. In his free time, Gregory enjoys being in the outdoors, spending time with friends and family, and especially backpack camping.



VOICES OF WTCAC

By Saffron Mears

The Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council is proud to have hosted a multitude of Native American interns over the past years. In everything from experience within the DNR to working alongside the USDA Forest Service, WTCAC works to ensure an educational and enlightening experience for all Indigenous interns that decide to partake in a WTCAC internship. As WTCAC continues to move forward, WTCAC wishes to highlight past intern voices in hopes of inspiring future generations of interns, as well as giving a platform to past WTCAC employees. Answers have been edited for clarity.

ANASTASIA WALHOVD

(she/her)
Tribe: Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Q: How has WTCAC helped you with your current career?
A: The WTCAC internship was vital for getting my career started. I am in a semi-related field now (archaeology) and a lot of the skills I learned as a WTCAC intern apply to my everyday work.
Q: Any advice for future interns?
A: Ask lots of questions and know that there are no stupid questions when you are there to learn. Learn everything you can.

RILEY BERRY

(he/him)
Tribe: Muskogee Creek Nation
Q: How has WTCAC helped you with your current career?
A: The summer I worked at WTCAC was the first time I had ever been away from home for a long amount of time... It opened my eyes to all the possibilities that are out there, and showed me that if I am worthy of every one of those possibilities.
Q: Any advice for future interns?
A: Be yourself. Have an open mind. Be willing to go the extra mile. Challenge yourself, you never know what you are capable of until you try.

ELENA HILL

(she/her)
Tribe: Oneida
Q: How has WTCAC helped you with your current career?
A: My apprenticeship opened up the world of options for me. With help from so many different people, all whom I met through WTCAC, I now am confident I can balance my degree with my passion. Also, because of my new found passions, I was able to use extra credits to take college horticulture classes that helped expand my world of knowledge.
Q: Any advice for future interns?
A: This is the perfect chance to be curious and dive deep into the minds of those you are working with. My favorite part about working with WTCAC is the vast diversity of professions and organizations I have had the opportunity to get to work with...There are so many connections to be made and so much knowledge to be found.

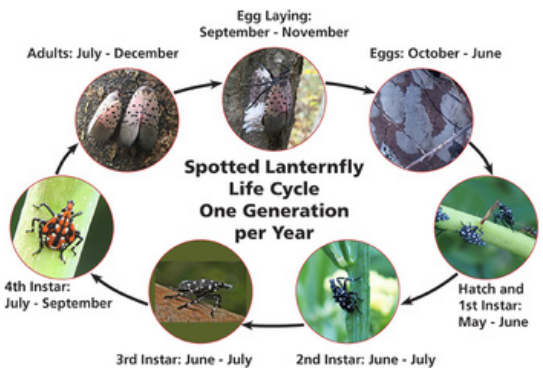
IS SLF THE NEW EAB?

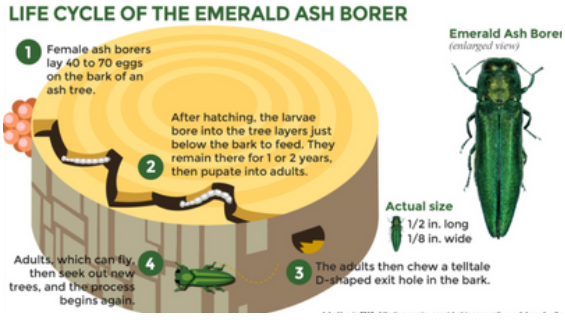
By Melissa Johnson

Maybe?! Maybe not. The spotted lanternfly (SLF) has been a hot topic in the world of invasive pest lately, but do we need to brace ourselves for another emerald ash borer (EAB)? Let's compare!

Spotted Lanternfly vs Emerald Ash Borer

SLF is an invasive planthopper	EAB is an invasive borer.
Native to Eastern Russia, Northern China, Japan, and Korea	Native to Eastern Russia, Northeastern China, and the Korean peninsula
First detected in Pennsylvania on September 22, 2014.	First detected in Michigan in July 2002
The adults cause damage by feeding on phloem and have piercing-sucking mouth parts.	The larvae cause damage by feeding on phloem.
Generalist feeder that feeds on almost anything except for conifers. They feed on over 100 different hosts but love the tree of heaven.	Exclusively feeds on ash species.
They will lay their eggs pretty much anywhere such as stone or human-made objects and doesn't need to be near their food source.	They lay their eggs on ash species. They need to be near their food source, burrowing into the bark to feed.
Only kills grapes and Tree of Heaven and capable of killing an entire vineyard.	Only kills ash species
No evidence of SLF moving into forests but will feed on trees at the edge of forests and disturbed areas.	Capable of causing ecosystem disruption in forests composed of ash stands.
Disperses during the nymphal stage by jumping, and flying during the adult stage. Skillful at hitchhiking by laying eggs on vehicles or any type of moveable outdoor surface.	Disperses through adult flight, and movement of wood products





The Evolution of Sugarbush Operations

By Jonathan Pruitt

As the precipitation shifts between flurries and showers and the temperatures fluctuate below freezing and above, the sap stored deep in the roots of sugar maple trees begins to flow toward the buds of this year's leaves. Following the running sap are the Tribes in Wisconsin who continue the practice of tapping the sugar maples, collecting the sap, and boiling away the water until it is reduced to syrup or sugar crystals. While the methodology behind processing sap has shifted from kettles and pans over open fires to evaporators with automatic temperature controls, the connection of the Tribes to each other, their lifeways, and their standing relatives through working the sugarbush together remains.

There has been a growing desire among Native American communities to expand sugarbush operations, both through the creation of new operations and increasing production of existing operations. The Wisconsin Natural Resource Conservation Service has recently released an updated document that details how their programs can assist Native American maple sap producers to operate. There are two main avenues through which the NRCS can currently assist sugar bush operations: energy efficiency in boiling sap and forestry assistance for tending to maple stands.

On the energy side of things is the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) Ag Energy Assistance. Starting with an on-farm or in this case sugarbush, energy audit from a Technical Service Provider (TSP) to assess how efficient the existing operation is, EQIP Ag Energy assistance then provides two options to increase efficiency. The first is a reverse osmosis heater to remove water from the sap and the second is an enhanced pre-heater that warms the sap before it reaches the evaporator so that more heat isn't wasted bringing the evaporator back up to the proper temperature after adding cold sap. While the reverse osmosis heater is better suited for large-scale commercial production, enhanced pre-heaters are an excellent option for small and medium-sized producers. Currently, TSPs for energy audits in Wisconsin have little familiarity with energy systems for sugarbush operations, but NRCS is working on changing that. Additionally, the NRCS offers cost-sharing for TSPs to perform energy audits through a reimbursement program.

On the forestry side of things, there are programs through EQIP as well as the Conservation Stewardship Program to improve and maintain the health of maple stands. EQIP offers assistance with creating a forestry management plan through Conservation Planning Activity (formerly CAP) CPA-106 as well as Conservation Practice Standards (CPS) associated with management such as tree marking and thinning through Timber Stand Improvement (CPS 666) and removal of invasive species through Brush Management (CPS 314). Updates to CPSs related to sugarbush operations include Forest Landings and Trails (CPS 655) and Forest Access Roads (CPS 560). Both practices focus on facilitating vehicle access to trees within a maple stand for people to tap trees, set up, and collect sap from buckets and tanks while limiting the effects of vehicle traffic on soils and the tree roots beneath them. CPS 655 is geared toward off-road vehicle traffic like ATVs and skidders, while CPS 560 is geared toward heavy use vehicle traffic like trucks. It's worth noting these practices are intended to address resource concerns resulting from forestry-related activities like collecting sap and not for creating recreational trails.

Going a step beyond better roads and trails to support forest health, as well as reduce labor and fuel costs for vehicle operations related to hauling sap, are vacuum tubing systems linking multiple tapped trees to mainlines that can drain into storage tanks throughout the stand or directly to where the sap is being processed. While vacuum tubing systems can greatly reduce the need for vehicle traffic in maple stands during a time of year when it's easy to make ruts in soggy soil, there are some concerns about the effects of the tubing system on tree health. Having multiple trees being tapped with exposed inner bark while also connected via tubes raises the possibility of increased transmission of pests and disease between trees. While more work needs to be done to study the effects of tubing systems, some tribal producers are already operating with vacuum tubing systems in their sugarbush. Dynamite Hill Farms, which is based in the UP town of L'Anse, MI, has a mix of trees tapped with individual buckets and groups of trees tapped and connected with tubes. Owners and operators Jerry Jondreau of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community and Katy Bresette of the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe, are monitoring the trees in their stands to see if there are differences in health between tubed and non-tubed trees over time. At this time, there are no existing CPS scenarios under which the NRCS can cost-share for vacuum tubing systems for collecting maple sap. However, there can be clear benefits to soil health and plant health from reducing vehicle traffic for sap collection in the forest that comes with utilizing such a system. And while it will take a few years to get the ball rolling on developing an EQIP practice standard and cost-sharing for implementing tubing systems for collecting maple sap, efforts are underway to explore this option. If a time comes in the future where the NRCS can support sugarbush operations by helping pay for vacuum tube lines, don't be surprised when signs like these become a common sight in the forests.

Tribal Sugarbush Workshop at Dynamite Hill Farms, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community
Photo Credit: Dan Cornelius

The Emergence of the Spongy Moth

By Deven Metoxen-Hamilton

Spongy Moth via *TreeHugger*

The Spongy moth has been recently gaining the attention of the media due to its former name. If the “spongy moth” is an unknown name, it is because this insect was previously known as the “gypsy moth”. The reason for the name change is due to the word “gypsy” being considered a derogatory term for people of Romani descent. In 2021 the Entomological Society of America’s Better Common Names Project reviewed any names that included or could include any derogatory and inappropriate terms with the specie’s common name. The name “spongy moth” comes from the egg mass of the insect due to its soft and spongy consistency. Aside from the Name change the spongy moth has been an invasive pest of Wisconsin for decades and can still be a serious defoliator of many hardwood trees in yards and forested areas. These pests are very dynamic, and the population can explode under the right conditions and lead to extensive defoliation. The egg-laying process plays an important role in these dynamic as female spongy moths egg masses can have up to 1,000 eggs. These egg masses can be found on trees, stacked boards, piles of wood, and even vehicles. The removal or destruction of the egg masses could help reduce the local population. One method used for disposing of the egg masses is to scrap them into a container of soapy water and set them aside for a couple of days before discarding them into a garbage bin.

Invasive Species Events

From our partners at IPAW

Mark Renz (UW Madison) and Anne Pearce (Wisconsin First Detector Network) in partnership with the Invasive Plant Association of Wisconsin will be holding four invasive plant identification workshops throughout Wisconsin this spring.

Oshkosh - May 18 (Wednesday)

Wausau - May 24 (Tuesday)

Dodgeville - June 2 (Thursday)

Osceola - June 9 (Thursday)

At these events we will provide training on identifying invasive plants in Wisconsin, how to map, and a primer on management options. This training is ideal for seasoned veterans looking to brush up on invasive plant ID skills as well as people with limited experience with invasive plants.

Trainings will be in person from 10-2pm with lunch provided. We will have locally collected specimens to conduct hands-on training and will supplement these with ppt presentations. Goals will be centered around improving knowledge of common and emerging invasive terrestrial plants by learning key traits that allow for quick identification. In addition to identification, we will overview free methods to map and report invasive species observations through EddMaps. A range of resources will be provided to attendees (EG Invasive Plant Field Guide) that will be helpful in future identification efforts and highlight management options.

Don't delay, register now by visiting the IPAW website. Details are on the website. Pre-registration is $50 ($25 for students) and locations are spread out throughout WI. Limited space is available so register soon!

Visit IPAW.ORG For More Details

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council

NOW HIRING - FIELD FORESTER

The Stockbridge-Munsee Community is currently seeking to hire a field forester for their Bowler, WI office. This new position will focus on timber cruising, timber marking, boundary marking, and future harvest planning. This position will aid the Tribal Forester in all aspects of timber management. Through the tight-knit ecology office, opportunities to assist on projects in other ecological areas may arise.

Ideal candidates will be eager to learn, understand, and assess the ecological, economic, and social aspects of forest management and apply them through sustainable land stewardship. Candidates must have a bachelor's degree or higher in a forestry-related field, be proficient in tree and plant identification, and have a working knowledge of ecology, silviculture, reforestation, wildlife habits, and forest mensuration. Experience is preferred but not required

Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Council

SUMMER 2022 APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN!

WTCAC NEEDS YOU!

Are you a Wisconsin Native American student looking for a future in natural resources and conservation career opportunities?

Gain internship experience in a variety of placement locations such as:

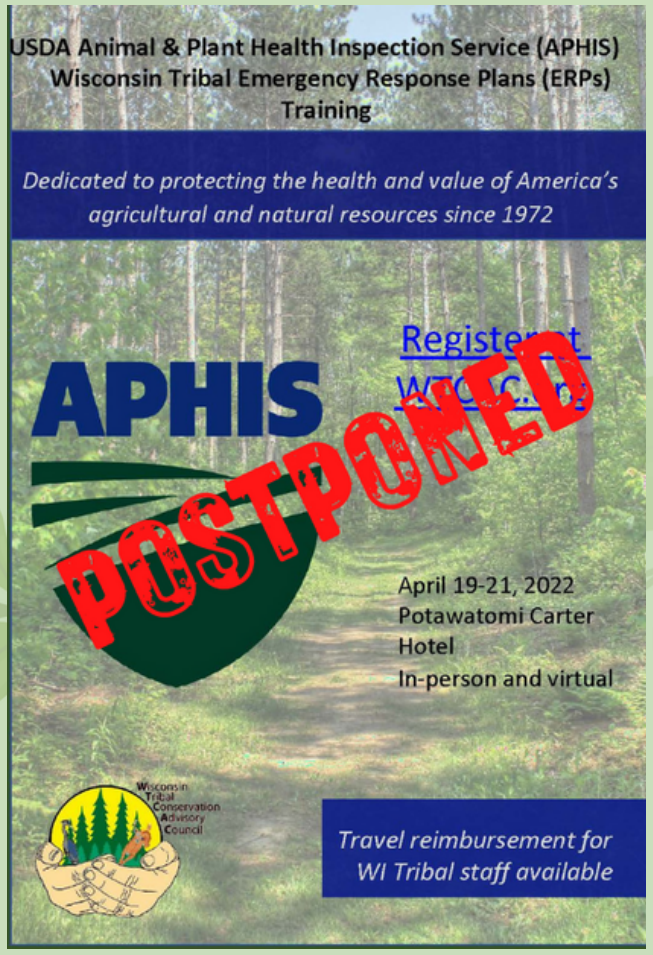
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service
- United States Forest Service
- National Agricultural Statistics Service
- University of Wisconsin-Extension

INTERESTED CANDIDATES SHOULD EMAIL A COVER LETTER OF INTEREST TO MJOHNSON@WTCAC.ORG
WWW.WTCAC.ORG

VISIT WWW.WTCAC.ORG FOR MORE DETAILS!

The APHIS WI Tribal Response Plan has been postponed

Help us determine the new date for the event.



Visit the @WTCAC Facebook page to take a short survey that will help us find a new date for the training!

Find us on Facebook

CONTACT US HERE:

Melissa Johnson
Pest Survey Specialist
920-471-2356
mjohnson@wtcac.org

Jonathan Pruitt
Tribal Resource Conservationist
517-281-7035
jpruitt@wtcac.org

Tom Melnarik
WTCAC Civil Engineering Technician
715-902-9286
tmelnarik@wtcac.org

Jeffrey Mears
Executive Director
920-639-7457
jmears@wtcac.org

Greg Gauthier
Outreach and Education Coordinator
715-204-9036
ggauthier@wtcac.org

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