



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



# Forming TCDs and Working with NRCS

## **Mission**

Helping Alaskans conserve and protect their  
natural resources

## **Vision**

Resilient landscapes and communities  
through voluntary conservation

# History



# NRCS 101

- NRCS is a federal agency under the U.S. Department of Agriculture
- NRCS provides Technical Assistance and Financial Assistance to private landowners to address natural resource concerns on private agricultural lands.
- **Natural Resource Concerns are SWAPAE:** Soil, Water, Air, Plants, Animals, Energy



# More NRCS 101...

- Lands managed for subsistence are agricultural lands
- Participation in NRCS programs is voluntary
- Any tribal producer can apply for and receive USDA assistance regardless of TCD participation



# What is a Tribal Conservation District?

- Formally organized entity
- Local people, local priorities
- Establishes formal partnership between USDA and Tribal Nation
- Combines traditional ecological knowledge with technical resources to actively manage natural resources in a defined area



Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission TCD signing ceremony in 2014.

# Goals of a TCD

- Set local priorities for conservation
- Ensure sustainable use of natural resources for:
  - Subsistence
  - Economic Opportunity
  - Resource Development
  - Cultural Preservation
- Coordinate planning and implementation of conservation projects on-the-ground



Tyonek TCD signing ceremony in 2005.

# Nation to Nation Relationship

- Establishes a formal relationship between the USDA Secretary of Agriculture and the Tribal community.
- A TCD can support enhanced working relationships with state and federal agencies that can assist in meeting the community's needs.



Brooke L. Rollins  
33<sup>rd</sup> Secretary of Agriculture

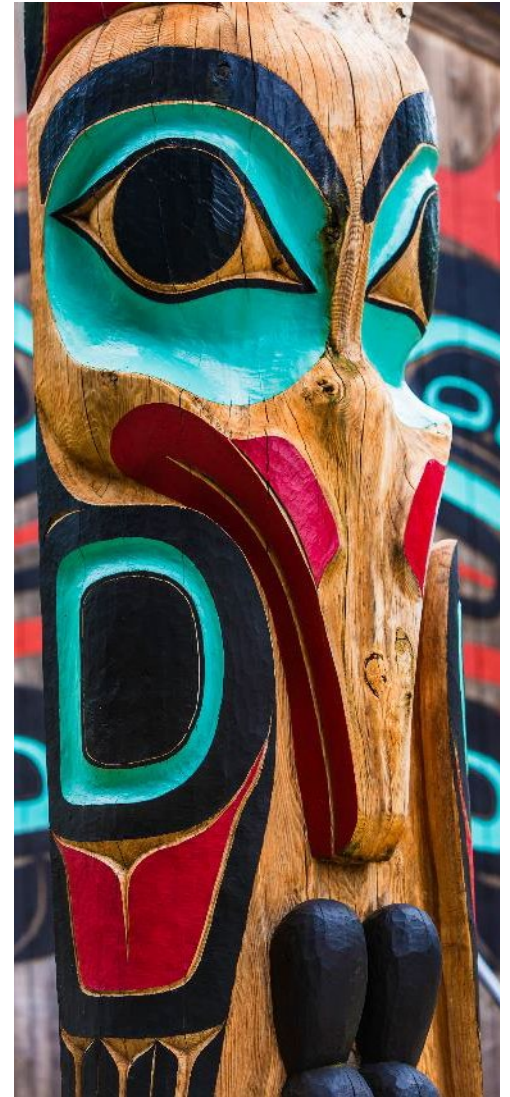
# 25 TCDs in Alaska

(includes 3 pending)



# Process to Form a TCD

- The TCD formation process is relatively simple but can be lengthy.
- NRCS will help guide the process.



# 1. Tribal entity determines interest in creating a TCD

- Typically initiated by one or more local Tribes.
- Participating entities may include regional and/or village corporations or non-profits.



## 2. NRCS provides TCD participants with document templates

- **Resolution** must be signed by the governing body of each Tribe/entity participating in the TCD. The resolution authorizes the future TCD to be a party in the Mutual Agreement.
- **Mutual Agreement (MA)** - This is the agreement between each TCD entity and the Secretary of Agriculture.



### 3. Participants submit completed documents to NRCS.

- NRCS will review the MA and all corresponding Resolutions.
- NRCS will write a cover memo for the Chief to accompany the Resolution and MA.
- These documents comprise the TCD Package.



## 4. State Conservationist submits TCD package to the Chief

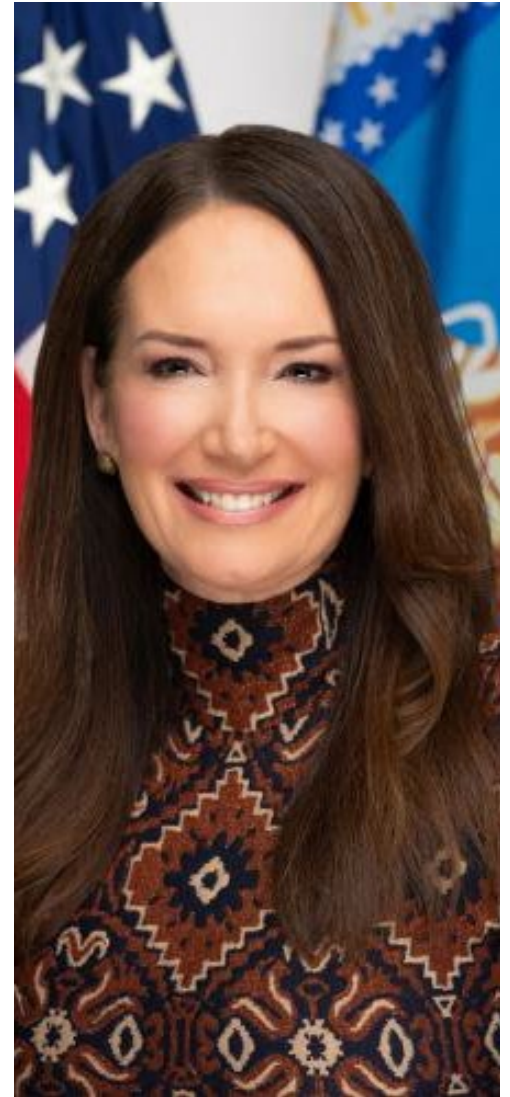
- The STC will review the TCD package and then route it to the Office of the Chief, Aubrey Bettencourt.
- At any point in the review process, the package can be returned to NRCS Alaska for clarification, inconsistencies, incomplete information, or other concerns.



Chief Aubrey Bettencourt

## 5. Chief submits TCD Package to Secretary of Agriculture

- Once the package is approved at the Chief's office, it is then routed to the Office of the Secretary for review and signature.
- At any point in the review process, the package can be returned to NRCS Alaska for clarification, inconsistencies, incomplete information, or other concerns.



Secretary Brooke L. Rollins

## 6. Secretary of Agriculture signs the MA

- Once the package is approved and signed by the Secretary of Agriculture, it is routed back to NRCS Alaska.



## 7. TCD Participants Sign the MA – Signing Ceremony

- Each participating entity in the TCD must then sign the MA after it has been signed by the Secretary.
- TCDs are encouraged to have a signing ceremony for this occasion.



Kuigglugmiut (Kewthluk) signing ceremony in 2009.

## 8. TCD Operations

- TCDs should develop a Board and by laws; identify common goals, roles, responsibilities, and expectations.
- TCDs may enter into cooperative agreements with NRCS
- TCD and NRCS maintain working relationship



# Renewing the Mutual Agreement

- Currently the MA's expire 5 years after signing.
- USDA leadership is working on updating the process.



# Contact:

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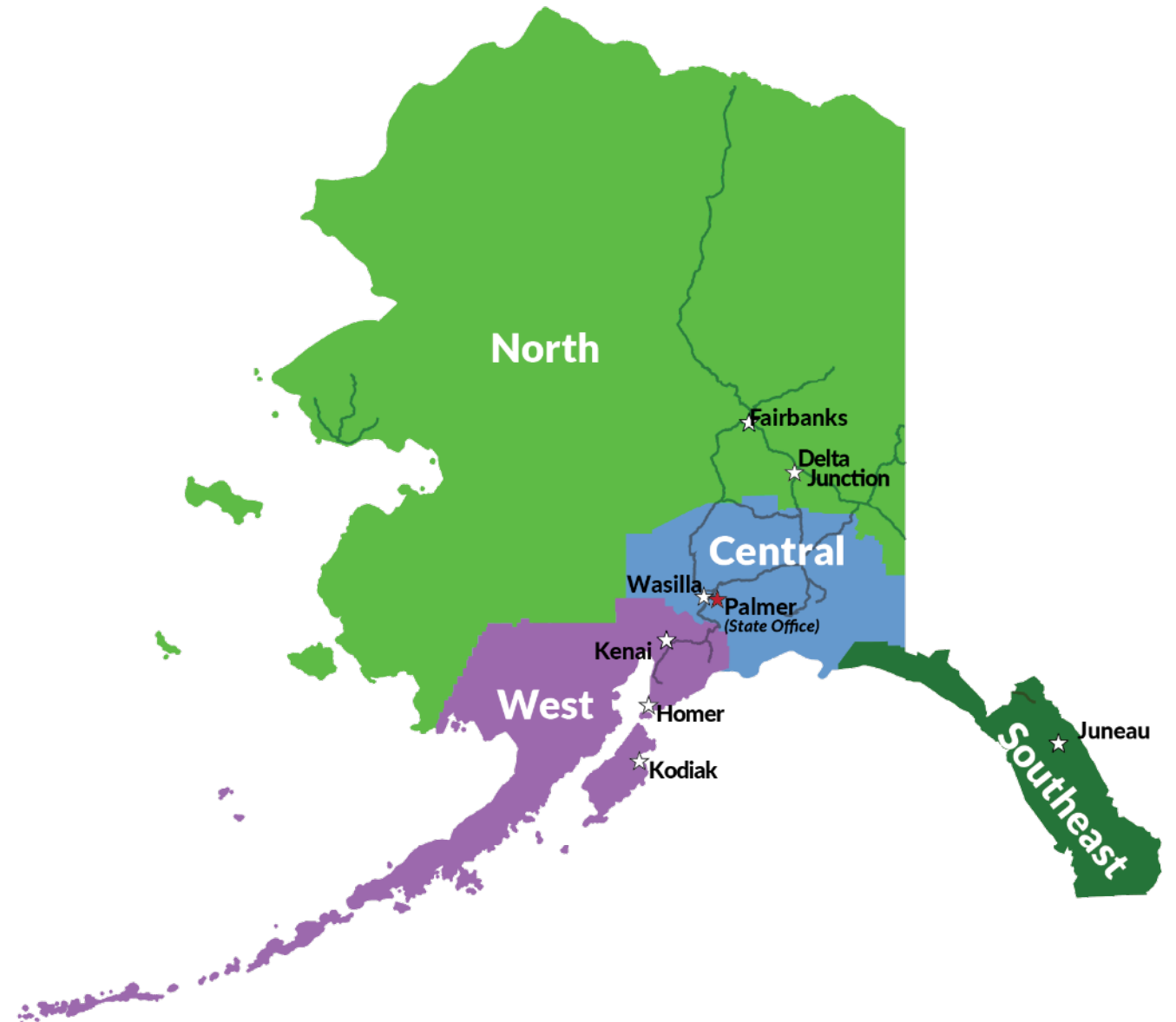
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