



American Indian Alaska Native

Please enjoy this issue of American Indian Alaska Native news.
Published to celebrate the contributions of American Indians

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Objectives of the American Indian/Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program include:

- Support the unique role of American Indians and Alaskan Natives within the Federal Government system.
- Recruit potential American Indian/Alaskan Native employees.
- Build coalitions with appropriate advocacy groups that support the NRCS mission.
- Encourage the participation of American Indian and Alaska Natives in all NRCS sponsored programs and activities.

Tribal Culture. Healthy Lands. Healthy People. Tribal Lands Day September 29th, 2012



Tribal lands in the United States encompass over 56 million acres. Across the nation, tribes are making significant contributions to the management of some of the country's most ecologically diverse and culturally significant land and natural resources.

The goal of Tribal Lands Day is to recognize the work that tribal communities are doing on tribal land, while supporting and encouraging additional, local volunteer, healthy outdoor recreation and environmental education events.

Tribal Lands Day and National Public Lands Day will both be held on **September 29, 2012**. Both events share the values of celebrating environmental stewardship and healthy communities through community engagement, volunteerism, and outdoor recreation. However, tribal land is not public land: it is land that is owned and managed by sovereign tribal governments. Tribal natural resource managers work daily to restore habitat, protect wildlife, and sustainably manage their land and natural resources. As North America's first land managers, tribal communities possess valuable traditional ecological knowledge that frequently informs natural resource management at many levels. Tribal Lands Day was created to recognize the valuable contributions of tribes to natural resource management, land stewardship, and the restoration of tribal lands.

Oka Kapassa– Return to Coldwater Native American Festival

Oka Kapassa, a special Native American gathering, is held in Spring Park, Tuscumbia, Alabama to celebrate the culture and traditions of American Indians who once thrived in north Alabama. The eighth annual two-day event will be held on Friday, **September 7 and Saturday, September 8, 2012**.

Friday is a day set aside for school children and is also open to the general public.

Return to Coldwater is an event not only for the reunion of family and friends, but also for tourists who come to enjoy the celebration of native culture still very much alive in the Tennessee Valley. Visit their website for schedule of events, festival photos, and much more.

Google the article title above for more festival information..

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Secretary Vilsack Announces Appointment of Tribal Relations Director

Joanna Mounce Stancil has been selected to serve as the Director of the USDA Office of Tribal Relations.

As director, Ms. Stancil will provide permanent leadership to the efforts of USDA to improve tribal government consultation policies and practice and improve the ability of USDA agencies to work effectively with Tribal governments, communities and individuals.

Ms. Stancil is Shawnee/Cherokee from Oklahoma and has been an advisor to the Federal government in their responsibilities to Tribal governments and to Tribal governments in helping them in building infrastructure and economic development.

Many places throughout Alabama take their names from the languages of the indigenous American Indian tribes.

Attalla - from the Cherokee word otali (mountain).

Attalla is a city in Etowah County. The town occupies the site of an Indian village which was of considerable importance during the Creek War. It was in Attalla that David Brown, a Cherokee, assisted by the Rev. D. S. Butterick, prepared the "Cherokee Spelling Book".

Living Archeology

The trees are known as Indian marker trees or trail trees and were bent by Native Americans in their youth to mark trails or other landmarks, like a creek crossing. These trees were used as early road maps. They are living archeology," Rick Wilson, the chief ranger at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument in Colorado, told the AP. Park Ranger Jeff Wolin said the Utes bent the ponderosa pines to mark a trail to Pikes Peak—*tava* or sun in the Ute language—an area sacred to them about eight miles away.

The trees are an important part of history that should be preserved. Mountain Stewards, a nonprofit based in Jasper, Georgia has compiled a database of 1,850 marker trees in 39 states. The group's process to verify a tree is indeed an Indian marker includes age, it must be at least 150 to 200 years old, and finding marks that show where the tree was tied down.



These images from the Great Lakes Trail Marker Tree Society show a typical burr oak (left), a single trunk trail marker tree (middle) and a double trunk trail marker tree with the group's founder Dennis Downes.

Trail trees don't adhere to one specific shape. In North Texas, the Comanches bent them in a low, half-moon shape that runs parallel to the ground before shooting up. In other places, the trees bend at a 90-degree angle a few feet from the ground with the trunk running parallel to the ground for a few feet before bending again up toward the sky. Mother Nature can bend a tree and it can look in some cases almost like an Indian tree. The Great Lakes Trail Marker Tree Society's website has a bevy of photographs of Indian marker trees if you would like to see more.

Cherokee Prayer Blessing

May the warm winds of heaven blow softly upon your house. May the Great Spirit bless all who enter there. May your moccasins make happy tracks in many snows and may the rainbow always touch your shoulder.