

## MEMBER'S ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATE

March 6-8, 2023 Virtual Meeting

### **MEMBER'S NAME**

Jack Hicks

### **ORGANIZATION**

Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

### **CONTACT E-MAIL / ORGANIZATION URL**

<https://www.choctawnation.com/>

### **ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION**

The Choctaw Nation is the third-largest Indian nation in the United States, with over 200,000 tribal members and more than 11,000 employees. The first tribe over the Trail of Tears, historic boundaries are in the southeast corner of Oklahoma. The Choctaw Nation's vision, "Living out the Chahta Spirit of faith, family and culture," is evident as it continues to focus on providing opportunities for growth and prosperity.

### **PRIORITIES / ACTIVITIES FOR FY2023**

One of the main goals we have on the Choctaw Nation's ranches and properties is the eradication and management of the invasive wild hog population. I know this is a major problem not only on our reservation, but across Oklahoma's Indian Country and a multi-state region.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has a Feral Hog program funded annually that makes a huge effort in managing the Feral Hog population within the 10.5 counties of southeast Oklahoma. Last year there were a total of 2,574 hogs trapped on the Choctaw Nation Reservation. Choctaw Nation Land Mgt. and Forestry Programs partner with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) working together to host Outreach meetings for our Tribal producers for information on best practices to combat this growing population of feral hogs.

As the Executive Director for the Oklahoma Tribal Advisory Council (OTCAC), I have had the opportunity to discuss the feral hog issues with all the 39 Tribes in Oklahoma. Oklahoma has feral hogs in 70 of the 77 Counties and invaded Tribal lands of the 29 Tribal Nations. One of the biggest feral hog issues for Tribal Nation is the damage to their croplands, pastures, wildlife habitat and more importantly their crops, plants, and traditional grounds. The State of Oklahoma Wildlife division reported there are 1.5 million feral hogs currently in Oklahoma and Tribes need help to address this issue.

Tribal Nations want to address the feral hog issue; however, they may not have the funding or equipment to address this issue. There are several state and federal agencies who have received funding to address the feral hog issue however many of the Tribal Nations of Oklahoma smaller Native producers are not aware of who to contact and who has funding to help.

Please see the supplemental page for our invasive plant species issues.

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### **PRIORITIES / ACTIVITIES FOR FY2023** *(continued)*

The Choctaw Nation Land Mgt. program is very active in the management of Noxious and Invasive plants on our Tribal and Individual Restricted Lands. An annual proposal is prepared and submitted to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) with a prioritized list of Noxious and invasive weeds with a plan of treatment. Our most common threat to our grazing lands is Sericea Lespedeza and Musk Thistle. These plants are extremely difficult to control and will outcompete other Native plants and destroys habitat for Wildlife. Both plants are on the State and Federal Noxious Weed list.

The invasion of Sericea Lespedeza and Musk Thistle Sericea is not limited to the Choctaw Nation. In, Oklahoma both are growing in all counties and on Tribal lands except, the Panhandle. Although these plants were introduced to control soil erosion, that not what is happening today. One of the biggest issue for address these noxious weeds is the lack of awareness on how to control both noxious weeds. Many may feel they has addressed the issue if they spray the weeds once. It is not that easy. These plants are reliance to one single management practice such as spraying, burning and implementing grazing management plans.

There is both state and federal funds available to help manage both Sericea Lespedeza and Musk Thistle Sericea. However, producers need to know where to look for funding and technical assistance. Getting state and federal agencies together to hold workshops on how to management Sericea Lespedeza and Musk Thistle is one thing that can be done today to controls these noxious weeds. I know the Choctaw Nation; other Tribal Nations and the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council would be willing to assist in planning such workshops.