



MACS News

Upcoming Events

MACS will once again be represented at the Federal Managers Association Training and Convention this spring in Washington DC. This year's attendees will be James Kruize and Russell Miller. Our Association's plan is to continue the established pattern of sending one experienced and one new MACS representative to FMA each year. This continuity is important in establishing and maintaining relationships with our Congressional leaders in Washington.

FMA National Convention – Crystal City, VA. – April 9-14, 2005

The NACS and NASE National Conventions are also quickly approaching. Registration forms are now available on the NACS and NASE websites. Coordinating travel plans will help us maximize representation and minimize costs. If you are interested in attending the National Convention or coordinating the travel, please let one of your MACS officers know of your interest.

NACS National Convention – Orlando, FL. – June 26-30, 2005

NACS/NASE Zone B Meeting

On February 10, three MACS members attended the NACS/NASE 2005 Zone B annual meeting. The meeting was held in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Doug Frago, Deputy Administrator for Field Operations; Carolyn Cooksie, Deputy Administrator for

Joe Migyanka, Human Capital Management Consultant; Terry Tanner, Chief, Guaranteed Loan Group, Farm Credit Applications Division; and Glen Richter, Chief, Loan Operations Division, were all in attendance representing the National Office. Some summary highlights presented at the meeting follow:

Doug Frago delivered what he called the State of the "FSA Situation" address. He reported a major financial deficit in FSA that is somewhere between 42 and 62 million dollars. This is the reason why his office is approving all hires in the Agency only as necessary. This is also the reason that staff ceiling numbers have not been released to the field as of this time. He commented that the ceiling numbers have never been delayed to this point in time previously. He projects that FSA will downsize its staffing level between four and five hundred employees through attrition. Mr. Frago's office is reviewing and re-reviewing both the financial numbers, as well as what each county office should look like. Relocating offices where and as needed is a likelihood. He stated that all cuts are fluid at this time and nothing is in concrete yet.

Carolyn Cooksie reported that FLP has already taken steps to decentralize offices and address changes in delivery due to the changing face of agriculture. She stated that FLP has reduced its presence to only 700 of the 2400 FSA offices across the country, but additional small changes are still to come due to budget deficits and the need to downsize further.

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2004-2005 MACS Officers

- Russell Miller -President
- James Kruize - Vice President
- Justin Phillips - Secretary
- Sheree Krogstad - Treasurer
- Mark Bertram - Past President
- Becky Martinson - NASE Contact
- Michael Walzak - District 1
- Wendy Erickson – District 2
- Randy Dufner – District 3
- Jerry Hurrele - Districts 4 & 6
- Beverly Turner- Districts 5 & 7
- Tom DeCock - Districts 8, 9, STO

Minnesota Association of Credit Specialists - Farm Service Agency, USDA
www.anaelfire.com/mn/macs2

Ms. Cooksie stated that she would not advocate early retirement / buyout offers in FLP, as we cannot afford to lose any positions. We will need to continue to look at workload inequities and balance them as needed, which in some instances will require employee relocation. FLOT's mobility clauses will be emphasized even more at hiring. We need to send people to where the work is. "I would rather sacrifice brick and mortar so that we can save our "people" positions"

Carolyn also talked briefly on our court cases, FBP, the next farm bill, NIR changes, and streamlining regulations. Here are the highlights...

Court Cases: There is an effort to minimize the number of people on consent decree rotations, but it's not over yet. The case monitor for "Pigford" is way behind and has been extended to April of 2007, if that tells us anything. Carolyn also stated that "Keepseagle" was certified as a class and that we must win this case. She is confident that with what we have learned through consent decree and the "Pigford" case, we will prevail.

FBP: The FBP issues of this past year were about as expected. There were some good things and some things that need improving. The current problem of speed is being addressed and will only improve as updates are put in place. She reminded us that the FBP is our financial planning tool at this time and we need to continue to use it and learn how to make it work for us. It is important to report problems so that the problems can be addressed and fixed.

The Farm Bill: The next farm bill will again have congress looking to FLP and NACS and NASE for input. Farm Loan Programs had 33 amendments in the last farm bill, and she wants to continue to be ahead of the game for the next farm bill. Carolyn is looking to NACS and NASE for input especially in the area of 51-S changes.

NIR update: 2006 is the end of NIR. The new process will deal more with risk and exposure. It will focus on finding problems before they happen and not waiting until after they appear. It will appropriately be called "Risk Assessment".

Streamlining: The streamlining reg's are back on track. This is expected to be as big a change as implementing the FBP. Carolyn expects there will be a 60 – 90 day period to implement the changes sometime by the end of the year.

Terry Tanner presented an update on "FLPIDS" – Farm Loan Program Information Delivery System. The goal of the system is to combine our current separate systems, (FBP, DALR\$, GLS, SCIMS, PLAS, DLS, RA, Reports etc.) into one single access point system. The result will be data located in one place on a single web system, reducing the need for a number of passwords, and the time it takes to access separate systems. This will be the "Data-mart" of FLP and other information, used by our Agency in the delivery and operation of our program. As budget is tight, FLPIDS will be a system implemented in several phases over time.

Joe Migyanka, Human Capital Management Consultant

presented some very interesting results of his study of our workforce. His work draws in data on our Agency mission and needs (both agency and customer), and combines it with workforce analysis. As a whole, our government workforce has a retirement "bubble" quickly approaching. He stated however, that the problem of not having replacement workforce trained and ready to assume leadership roles is especially problematic in the 1165 series of employees. The statistics he presented show that one in three of the 1165 employees are now at a point where they could choose to retire at this time. The numbers get worse as **more** than one in two of all 1165 employees could retire in the years 2007, 2008, and 2009. The problem is multiplied by the fact that it takes several years to develop and train an employee in the 1165 series. He stated that these numbers are why the president had put 100 extra 1165 positions in his budget, (before they got cut). He stated that if we cut 1165 positions at this time instead of building them up as necessary, it would be mission critical. We are in danger of not being able to accomplish our mission objectives.

Glen Richter talked about the end of year accomplishments. He also mentioned that there will be changes to the treasury cross-servicing program in regards to married co-debtors, processing of payments received in county office and compromise offers.

NACS/NASE Information

Many times during the year, NACS and NASE post items, such as newsletters to their websites. FMA also makes requests to help our cause, and these items are also posted to the NACS website. It is important that we “step up to the plate” and take the responsibility to support the Association whether it is MACS, NACS, NASE, or FMA. Visit these sites to see what the various associations are doing for you. More importantly, see what you can do to help yourself and your association.

Consultative Meeting

The MACS annual meeting with the SED and FSA State Staff is being scheduled for March 30. If you have some issues that you would like discussed, please, relay them to me, or any MACS board member. As we plan for an effective and productive meeting, I would like to have issues for discussion submitted two weeks prior to the consultative meeting. This is our opportunity to be heard; let's make the most of it.

A Word From Sheree

By: Treasurer Sheree Krogstad

It is wonderful to report that the Minnesota Association of Credit Specialists (MACS) has 10 new members this year. I looked back in the records since I have been MACS treasurer, a little over five years ago, and it is the highest number of new members in one year.

I would like to welcome the following to MACS:

Steven Tottenhoff
Karen Welander
Dawn Erickson
Lauri Prince
Patricia Gendron
Marlene Halvorson
Michael Walzak
Judy Grams
Greg Janachovsky
Sharon Nelson

It would be awesome if we could get that many members to attend Zone Meetings and National Conventions each year, *along with a lot more attending our own state annual meeting in September.*

Lynn Meyer, Russell Miller and I recently returned from the zone meeting held in Oklahoma City.

As the Zone B Representative, I had an opportunity to prepare and run the NASE portion of the meeting. We were fortunate to be able to have Carolyn Cooksie, Deputy Administrator for Farm Loan Programs and Glen Richter, Chief, Loan Operations Division, Finance Office, St. Louis, meet separately with the NASE members to answer our questions.

Other speakers included Doug Frago, Deputy Administrator for Field Operations; Joe Migyanka, Human Capital Management Consultant and Terry Tanner, Chief, Farm Credit Applications Division.

There appears to be many challenges ahead, but we always seem to pull together to get the job done.

Be watching for minutes from the zone meeting in the near future.

The Power of Goals

By: Past President Mark Bertram

There has been a lot of talk again recently about goals; they were made a part of the SED's performance plan in 2004 and now are being added to the performance plans of everyone else. Sure goals are important in soccer and hockey, but do they have a place in the federal workforce, or are they the latest of a long list of “buzz words” that stay long enough to hopefully inspire better performance and then fade into obscurity.

I was thinking about this recently when I had the opportunity to view a video entitled “The Power of Vision”. The video goes into great detail emphasizing the importance of having a vision; being able to look beyond the obstacles that face us today in order to stay focused on long term plans and commitments. It illustrates the importance of vision by giving examples where someone's vision enabled them to improve something about themselves, overcome tremendous odds, and even survive. The more I listened to this video the more interchangeable the words vision and goal became. I realized the importance of goals as a tool to take us beyond the natural limitations that our mind has set for us.

Then why, if goals are so valuable, do we struggle to set them? First off, I think people set short term goals many times every day; most of the time in their mind. Getting that last loan done today or finishing that newsletter article are examples of two such goals. However, people struggle writing down (and sharing) specific goals because they are now

committed to them and afraid of failure, especially if the cause of failure is outside their control. See, if we haphazardly store goals in our mind we can adjust them as we need to assure success, or in some cases, disregard completely. Other times we fail to commit to goals because we are unsure of the process; if we set simple goals the results are meaningless because very little or no effort is needed to achieve success. On the other hand, setting goals too lofty runs the risk of not being able to accomplish and experience the satisfaction that comes with goal achievement.

However, the more we want to accomplish personally or professionally, the more we want to reach beyond our natural limitations, the more we must make a commitment to goals. Goals will keep us focused and committed. Sure, there are risks, but if utilized properly, the goals not achieved are just as valuable as those with which we were successful, provided we fully understand the reasons for our failures; this gained knowledge and determination will be the key to eventually attaining that goal. We must set some that are moderately obtainable so that we can experience success and keep us hungry for more, yet at the same time set some that are likely unobtainable as these are the ones that will push us to reach farther than we thought imaginable.

NACS Fundraiser Underway

By Justin Phillips MACS Secretary

Once again, the NACS board has approved the use of a "lottery" raffle to raise funds for

the membership. The net proceeds from the raffle will be used to promote the goals of NACS and the Federal Managers Association (FMA). Each state is being asked to sell tickets to help make this fundraiser a success. Once again, the tickets in Minnesota are being sold by the District Representatives. If Minnesota sells all of our allotted tickets, we will receive one free registration to the National Convention in Orlando, FL, June 27-29, 2005. Furthermore, any tickets that MACS sells above our initial allocation will earn \$2.50 per ticket for MACS.

The winning number will be chosen based upon the Pennsylvania mid-day daily drawing from May 27-31, 2005. There will be two winners per day for a total of 10 winners. The winners will receive \$300, unless they are the winner on Monday, May 30, in which case the prize will be \$1,000. The ticket price is \$10/ticket and you can purchase one (or more) by contacting your District Representative. The ticket sales will be over by the end of March so don't delay! This is an excellent opportunity for everyone to support NACS, FMA, and MACS, and who knows, it could be your registration to the National Convention that is free!

Congratulations

By: President Russell Miller

As I listened to the speakers presenting changes to come and our reality of today at the Zone B meeting, Bill Mahaney, NACS President, presented a very important fact. Team FLP received the highest

performance rating in all of USDA.

The Performance Assessment Rating Tool known as "PART" rates all programs in government. The ratings generated by this process are used by Congress to decide who is effective in their mission and who is not. This translates into who gets funded at current levels, who gets more dollars, and who can we get along without.

The process of setting, tracking, and accomplishing goals has been the primary reason FLP is able to demonstrate its effectiveness and do so well in its performance rating as compared to the rest of our sister USDA Agencies. This bodes very well for future funding of our mission in this time of budget cuts and deficit fighting measures.

So Congratulations Team FLP, you are USDA's shining star. The next time you wonder, "Why do I need to spend so much time on goals, planning, tracking and reporting results?" Please keep in mind. FLP has a mission to accomplish and isn't one of those areas cut – "that we can get along without."