

MACS NEWS

July 2008

Minnesota Association of Credit Specialists - FSA
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MACS/MNASCOE Annual Meeting - July 18th

There is still time to attend the annual meeting in New Ulm, on Friday, July 18, 2008. Please see the MACS web site for registration and hotel information. A draft agenda for the MACS portion of the meeting is attached to this newsletter.

Activities will begin Thursday, July 17th in the afternoon and evening. On Friday morning a joint session with MNASCOE will be conducted from 8:00 – 11:00 AM. Following this, the two Associations will hold their separate business sessions.

NACS/NASE Convention

Bob Vaughn, Greg Janachowski, Mark Drewitz, and Lee Crawford attended the NACS Convention and Sheree Krogstad and Lynn Meyer attended the NASE Convention in Lincoln, Nebraska, June 16-19th.

A detailed report of the meeting will be posted later this month by NACS so be sure to register for the new NACS website to access this report. The following information is a brief synopsis of the major events of the meeting:

FSA Issues, Teresa Lasseter, Administrator

46 County Offices could have been closed this year except this process has been put on hold for now due to language in new Farm Bill. Need to wait until farm bill is implemented before this process can resume. Very few employees have lost their jobs due to previous office closures.

Knowledge Bank, a private sector firm was hired by FSA to complete an assessment of the FSA organization. It also includes recommendations. This report is available on the FSA intranet website. An executive steering committee made up of senior FSA career employees has been formed to ensure this report is presented to the next administration.

Employees need to understand each others' programs and help one another serve our customers. I.E. the new ACRE program in the Farm Bill.

2008 will be the last time Administrator Lasseter addresses NACS/NASE. A sincere appreciation of gratitude towards the NACS/NASE Associations was expressed by Ms. Lasseter.

DAFO Issues, Steve Connelly, DAFO

Two year moratorium on closing additional offices with some exceptions. Approximately 40 offices to be closed in FY 09. These are the same offices that were slated to be closed prior to passage of the new Farm Bill. FSA is looking at increasing the number of COC members when combining offices. Additional staff will be hired to handle the leasing of all field offices, etc. Updates on Receipt For Services and FOIA are coming out soon. Working on language changes in Consultative Agreements regarding use of USDA computers. Government emails belong to the Government. If you receive a questionable or inappropriate email, do not forward it.

HR Issues, Donald Sanders, Chief HR, KCMO

Official Personnel Files (OPFs) have been scanned. These electronic files have different tabs that categorize the OPFs in different sections. Employees can access via EAUTH ID and Login. OPFs are the property of the Government. Manual files will be stored for seven years and they destroyed after seven years. New ID badges required to access workplace and log on to your computer. Will allow for e-signatures if this feature is authorized by the National Office. Completion deadline set for October 2008. More change is coming. We need to look hard on streamlining how we do business and utilize technology and Total Quality Improvement. Everybody needs to read the Organizational Study report posted to the FSA web site regarding FLP Field Operations. The bill is coming due and we need to adapt. We also need to share lessons learned on past experiences to help the overall mission. Networking is very important.

FLP Issues, Carolyn Cooksie, DAFLP

Funding in good shape for all programs, including G-IA with the exception of EM money. Down to \$6 million and may run out. They are working on transfer authority to alleviate this. Flat line budget for FY 2009 vs FY 2008. This is a good thing, considering all the other Government programs taking a hit for FY 09. Down to 77 inventory properties in the U.S. Rules and regulations need to be written for the new Equine Farmer Loan and the new Conservation Loan programs contained in the new Farm Bill. Online FLP PT training manual being updated with a completion date set for September 2008. Also plan is to develop a PT course in Ag Learn for FLP PTs. National Office FLOT Pool will continue. Since Guaranteed Loan Program is shared with RD, FSA will move to the new customer ID program in August 2008. Private sector firm hired under contract to develop a nationwide FLP Marketing Initiative to address National Office's concern of decreasing direct case load. New IBM High End server is being purchased for FBP and may be operational August 2008.

NACS and FMA

A NACS constitutional change was passed by NACS members present at the June 2008 NACS Convention in Lincoln, NE that no longer requires members to pay mandatory dues to the Federal Managers Association (FMA). The expectation by NACS is the money that had been sent directly to FMA by State Treasurers, will instead go to NACS. The NACS Board need to officially vote on a NACS dues increase before this can occur. Individual States will need to vote on whether or not they wish to continue their state association with FMA.

NACS Resolutions

Resolutions for policy, program improvement, legislative issues, etc., from the members are reviewed by individual Committees who then revise and clarify the submissions and then make recommendations for adoption or non adoption. During the convention, members may attend the committee meetings to provide their input on resolutions under consideration. This year, MACS delegates attended Legislative, Management/Personnel, Farm Loan Program and IT committees. The July 2007 MACS resolutions (that passed) pertaining to the National Office were all submitted and acted on. Some were recommended for non adoption by the respective committee. The full committee reports will be posted to the NACS web site shortly.

NACS Board Elections

President: Stu Skidmore, Washington State.
Vice President: Randy Milloy, Texas
Secretary: Jean Smith, Tennessee
Treasurer: Priscilla Howell, Arkansas
Past President: Mike Gibbs, Georgia
Zone A Representative: Dan Mattson, Idaho
Zone B Representative: Mark Drewitz, Minnesota
Zone C Representative: Chuck Lipscomb, West Virginia
Zone D Representative: Joe Austin, North Carolina

NASE Board Elections

President: Nancy Fuchs, North Dakota
Vice President: Susan Long, Kansas
Secretary: Judy Rains, Iowa
Treasurer: Paula Foster, Nebraska
Zone A Representative: Phyllis Kostelecky, Montana
Zone B Representative: Cindy Porter, Nebraska
Zone C Representative: Carol Truman, Pennsylvania
Zone D Representative: Charlene Holbrook, Florida

NASE Convention Report by Sheree Krogstad

The 2008 NASE convention was held at the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln, Nebraska. Sheree Krogstad and Lynn Meyer attended. The convention was called to order on Monday morning with a joint session with NASE, NASP and NACS. We were welcomed to Lincoln by a representative of the Convention Bureau. The Nebraska Farm Service Agency SED and Rural Development State Director also welcomed us to Nebraska.

NASE and NACS split from the NACS-RD & NASP groups and speakers from WDC and Finance Office addressed the group. Steve Connelly, DAFO, talked about how the Farm Bill affects field operations, the field level structure – office closures are on hold until the end of the FY, County Committee size, GSA leasing; Receipt for Service – make sure you give a receipt if a producer requests it; FOIA requests – be careful what we release and regulations are different for Farm Loan and Farm Programs; Pigford lawsuit will be a large task for farm loan and county office staff, Knowledge Bank study which looked at N/O & S/O to optimize operations, use of government computers – be careful about what you are sending. Don Sanders, Chief, HR-KCMO, talked about changing from manual performance files to electronic OPF – should be easily navigated, LINCpass – will be used to log into computer and electronic signatures for transmission of documents, Realty Specialists positions – 15 positions, of which 11 states have posted the announcement. He also mentioned during the Q&A, that pay banding is no longer an option.

Steve Pratt, NADD President, and a NASCOE representative briefly spoke.

After lunch, NASE went into a separate session. President, Nancy Fuchs, welcomed us to the convention. Roll Call was taken, there were 20 members present. Sheree Krogstad was appointed the parliamentarian for the meeting. The minutes of the 2007 convention were read and approved. An audit committee was named and the Treasurer's Report was reviewed. The treasurer books were then turned over to the audit committee.

Glen Richter, Chief-Loan Operations, spoke to us about the offset deadline, which is coming up shortly, and about the account number change for guaranteed borrowers – at this time a direct borrower with a guaranteed loan will have two different numbers.

Submitted Zone Rep and State Reports were read. The By-laws, Personnel, Resource Ways & Means and Farm Loan Program Committee reports were given and resolutions presented and voted on. There were 10 FLP resolutions submitted.

On Tuesday morning, we again met with NACS. Theresa Lassiter, FSA Administrator, spoke to the group about office consolidations – no offices will be closed that are over 20 miles apart – won't be doing anything with this now due to Farm Bill implementation. Carolyn Cooksie, FLP Deputy Administrator, talked about funding, farm bill changes, only 77 inventory properties nationwide, updating the PT Training manual, FBP database clean-up, GLS – shared by RD & FSA – RD has decided to change numbers so FSA must change – she said not a problem except when guaranteed borrower has a direct loan also. She also mentioned that there should be a sign of the farm loan program in every county office. Glen Richter spoke to the group, mentioning the items he discussed with the Program Technicians the previous day. Jim Blaylow, Farm Credit Applications in St. Louis, discussed upgrade to FBP and that the first phase of Direct Loan Servicing will be piloted in two states in early 2009 and should be nationwide by spring 2009. The second phase will be Agcredit/Special Servicing and the third phase will be farm property. Dennis Taitano, Chief Financial Officer, talked about the '08 budget and that we should expect a long term continuing resolution for '09. Heidi Ware, from the budget division, talked about BPMS – updated 3-BU that all levels of organization will use, activity reports system – which will be implemented when the department implements the T&A system and WIDGETS – which will count the things we do.

NASE then reconvened to resume business. Carolyn Cooksie met with NASE. She said they almost have the Loan Analyst position graded and classified and then will have to have DAFO sign off on it. She said she hopes to have this done within 3-6 months or by the policy meeting.

The IT Committee report was given and resolutions presented. There were 14 IT resolutions submitted. The Nominating Committee presented the list of candidates: Nancy Fuchs, President; Susan Long, Vice President; Judy Rains, Secretary; and Paula Foster, Treasurer.

On Wednesday we discussed new business. Standing Rules were discussed and it was decided that they should be attached to the By-Laws. Zone Meetings were also discussed. Since attendance at Zone A and Zone D is very minimal, it was decided that Zone B will invite members of Zone A to attend their meeting and Zone C will invite Zone D. Maybe this will "entice" more members to attend a Zone meeting.

Elections were then held. There were no nominations from the floor so Nancy Fuchs was elected President, Susan Long was elected Vice President, Judy Rains was elected Secretary and Paula Foster was elected Treasurer.

We then broke into Zones to nominate a Zone B Rep and Alternate. Cindy Porter, from Nebraska, was nominated and elected to be our Zone B Rep and Marla Crawford, from Iowa, was nominated and elected to be the Zone B Alternate. We also asked for volunteers to fill committee positions. There were several new members in attendance that expressed an interest in serving on committees, along with some members that had notified Nancy that were interested in being on committees. Our list of committee volunteers was then presented to the board.

After the zone break-out, the installation of officers was done by Past President, Bonnie Noziska.

Nancy Fuchs presented certificates to committee members and gifts to her board. She also presented the Best Newsletter Award to Texas and the Most New Members Award to Iowa.

Everyone was reminded of the Zone B Meeting to be held in Bloomington next February.

Meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

At the banquet, Sharon Rohrich from North Dakota was presented with the NASE Blood, Sweat and Tears Award.

NASE State Contact Report by Lorraine Edwards

Minnesota currently has 17 paid NASE memberships.

As NASE representative for Minnesota I was happy to be invited along with the MACS and MNASCOE officers to meet with State Office personnel in February. Due to illness Perry Aasness was unable to meet with us. This was a very interesting and informative meeting for me.

Five NASE members attended the Zone B meeting in Sioux Falls, SD in March.

Upcoming NACS/NASE Conventions

The 2009 convention will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, June 20-25, 2009. A bid was entered by Maine to host the 2010 convention in Portland, ME in June 2010.

Upcoming Meetings

Zone B Meeting – Minneapolis, MN, February 6 & 7, 2009.

NACS/NASE Annual Convention – Atlanta Georgia, June 20-25, 2009

NACS/NASE Information

NACS and NASE association information is available at their web sites. Information, newsletters, and other materials are available at their respective web sites:

NACS – www.nacsfsa.net

NASE – www.nasefsa.org

Links to these sites as well as FMA are maintained on the MACS web site under “Links”.

2007-08 MACS Board

President Lee Crawford
Vice President Randy Dufner
Secretary Becky Martinson
Treasurer Sue Westrom
NASE State Contact Lorraine Edwards
Past President Mark Drewitz

District 1 Representative John Jacobson
District 2 Representative Jim Velde
District 3 Representative David Petry
District 4 Representative Kevin Lehmann
District 5 Representative Rick Ray
District 6 Representative Scott Nordby
District 7 Representative Mark Baumann
District 8 & STO Representative Tom DeCock

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MACS Business Meeting Agenda
July 18, 2008

Roll Call

Reading, correction, approval of minutes of last meeting

Report of officers

Treasurer
Secretary
Vice President
NASE State Contact
Past President
President

DRAFT

Appoint Audit Committee

Guest Speaker: Stuart Shelstad, FLP Chief Minnesota FSA

Report of committees

Management/Personnel – Jim Velde, Chair
IT – Cindy Vukasin, Chair
Farm Program – Cory Christenson, Chair
Farm Loan Program – Kevin Hagen, Chair
MACS Operating Manual – Mark Drewitz, Chair

Old Business

New Business

2009 Zone B Meeting Update – Jerry Hurre, Tom Haubrich – Co Chairs
FMA/MACS State Affiliation discussion – Mark Drewitz
Constitutional Vote regarding FMA dues

Election of Officers

Miscellaneous Business

Audit Committee Report

Installation of new officers and board members

Adjournment