



MACS News

News and Upcoming Events

By Bill Mahaney, NACS President

National Convention: While in Orlando for the Farm Loan Programs Policy Meeting I had the opportunity to tour the Rosen Centre Hotel. The Rosen Centre Hotel is a fantastic facility for family vacations and business meetings. I would encourage you and your family to make your convention reservations today. The convention dates are June 27th – 29th. Members will have an opportunity to visit with senior management officials, review information technology demonstrations and visit with fellow NACS members as we work to enhance programs, services and working conditions. Details of the FSA tomorrow plan **MAY** even be available for review and discussion by June. Orlando offers plenty for family members to do while you are attending meetings. There is a trolley stop within a block of the hotel. Individuals can purchase a multiple day pass for a few dollars or ride the trolley for a nominal fee of 75 cents per ride.

NACS National Convention – Orlando, FL. – June 27- 29, 2005

FSA Tomorrow: “FSA tomorrow” is the term utilized by senior management officials to describe a plan to modernize FSA. With fewer farmers and better technology (communication and transportation) some believe that the FSA infrastructure and business practices need to be updated.

According to officials who spoke at the Farm Loan Program policy meeting in Orlando, FSA’s tradition of customer service must adapt - real customer service means fewer trips to the office; and FSA must achieve a flexible 21st century structure with fewer offices that are better staffed. Today’s budget will not fund yesterday’s infrastructure. NACS is cautiously optimistic that “FSA tomorrow” will address inefficiencies in a prudent business manner. NACS will continue to monitor the situation, keep members informed and offer suggestions, support or opposition as necessary.

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2005 MACS Convention

By Vice President James Kruize

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! – Plans are being made for the 2005 MACS convention to be held in Detroit Lakes, MN on September 9th at the Speak Easy Restaurant which is located just east of the Holiday Inn. A block of rooms will be reserved at the Holiday Inn, 1155 Hwy 10 East, Detroit Lakes, MN 56501, phone 218-847-2121. The cost of the room is \$69.95 plus tax. Check in time is 3:00 p.m. and check out time is 12:00 noon.

Pre-convention activities (golf) are being planned for the 8th. Specifics including times, registration events, and exact location of activities are to be announced soon; watch your e-mail and check the website.

June 2005

Inside this Issue

- 1 • News & Upcoming Events
NACS/NASP/NASE 2005 NATIONAL CONVENTION
FSA Tomorrow
2005 MACS Convention
- 2 • Consultative Meeting
• A Word from Sheree
• The Silent Patriot... Americas Civil Servant
- 3 • The Silent Patriot... continued
- 4 • The Future is Ours
• 2005 NACS Convention Delegate
• Spin Zones

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Justin Phillips - Secretary
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Mark Bertram - Past President
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Tom DeCock - Districts 8, 9, STO

Minnesota Association of Credit Specialists - Farm Service Agency, USDA
www.anaqfire.com/mn/mac2

We each need to take this opportunity to invite our co-workers to the events and meeting.

Our MACS membership is outstanding. There is no better way for non-members to get a feel for the association, what we do, and what we stand for.

If you have ideas for activities to be held during the meeting, please contact me.

Consultative Meeting

The MACS and MNASCOE annual consultative meetings with the SED, State Committee, and FSA State Staff were held on March 30, 2005.

The MACS board met jointly this year with MNASCOE executive committee members to discuss issues of common concern. Issues of common concern were jointly presented at the meeting. The format for this meeting was new for both associations. The meeting was effective, efficient and appeared to be well received by all participants.

You will find the discussion topics and details in the minutes of the meeting, which have been posted to the MACS website.

A Word From Sheree

By: Treasurer Sheree Krogstad

Do you want to make the Minnesota Association of Credit Specialists the best ever? Do you want to have first hand input into association endeavors?

Do you want to grow as an individual, FSA employee, as well as a MACS member?

If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, we need you to be an officer in the Minnesota Association of Credit Specialists.

Even though the MACS Annual Meeting is still a couple months away, now is a great time to be thinking about throwing your hat in the ring and letting members know you are interested in being President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer or District Representative.

"The Silent Patriot...America's Civil Servant"

By Vice President James Kruize

Russell Miller and I had the opportunity to attend the 67th National Convention and Management Training Seminar of the Federal Managers Association in Washington, D.C. in April.

There were 136 registered convention delegates in attendance from all areas of the federal government. There were representatives of the Bureau of Printing & Engraving, General Services Administration, Navy, Army, Environmental Protection Agency, Social Security Administration, United States Air Force, Department of Labor, Veterans Administration, Department of Defense, U.S. Mint, Railroad Retirement Board, Center for Disease Control, Internal Revenue Service, Farm Service Agency, and Rural Development. There

were 20 members from NACS in attendance which comprised approximately 15% of all attendees. The association had another good showing at this convention.

The convention started on Sunday with the business meeting which continued into Monday with Agency breakouts and Zone meetings. Tuesday was the "Management Training Seminar" with the following topics: "Implementing New Personnel Systems", "Governing Principles for the Civil Service", "Utilizing New Management Flexibilities", and "Image of the Civil Servant". The highlight of the week was the "Day on the Hill" on Wednesday.

Majority of our time during "Day on the Hill" was spent discussing the legislative agenda of NACS.

The main issues presented and discussed with the congressional offices were as follows:

ABOLISH TERM LIMITS ON DIRECT LOANS – Arbitrary term limits place unnecessary burdens on customers at a time when they are growing in their business and unable to obtain private/commercial credit at reasonable rates and terms. Loan customers are moving to commercial credit in a manner which is consistent with their operation. Therefore, term limits are placing burdensome administrative requirements on both the customer and the agency.

ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR LOAN PROGRAMS – Farm Loan Programs has achieved a high standard of quality in the

whole FSA portfolio. Delinquencies and losses are at all time lows. OMB's PART report was very favorable for Farm Loan Programs and we achieved a moderately effective score. We encourage and recommend that funding be maintained to meet customer demand.

HUMAN CAPITAL ISSUES – FSA and Farm Loan Programs are not unlike other government agencies in facing a crisis with potential retirees. We estimate that 50% of our Loan Managers will be eligible to retire in the next 3 years. There is a two year training curve to get new loan staff trained. We need to plan for this crisis by hiring trainees and the funding needs to be appropriate for the required training.

EFFECTIVELY WORK TOWARD INCREASING THE LOAN LIMITS for our direct loan programs. The current limits of \$200,000 for farm ownership loans and \$200,000 for operating loans were set over 20 years ago. Production costs and real estate values have greatly increased over the past 20 years. These low limits are greatly limiting our ability to help beginning farmers and socially disadvantaged farmers.

The issues that the Federal Managers Association had prepared were also brought forward to the congressional staff:

Support the funding and utilization of the federal student loan repayment program to recruit and retain the best and brightest federal workforce.

Congress mandates that agencies extend coverage of

50% of the professional liability insurance premiums to non-supervisory federal managers.

Pass legislation to ensure that the business of the federal government is conducted in the public interest.

Maintain or enhance funding for information technology to assure that federal agencies have the tools needed to perform the public's business in an efficient cost effective manner.

Russell & I were fortunate to meet with the staff of Congressman Collin Peterson (MN), Congressman Earl Pomeroy (ND), Senator Norm Coleman (MN), Senator Byron Dorgan (ND), and Senator Kent Conrad (ND). At the visits with these staff members we were very well received and several questions were asked of us which showed their interest in our issues.

It was great to see a group of federal employees working together for the betterment of all federal employees across the government. Everyone who attended the convention learned the issues affecting the other agencies of the federal government. I got to see first hand the positive influence of the Federal Managers Association.

I encourage each member to stand up and be heard through NACS and FMA. We should be asking ourselves "What can I do for NACS and FMA" instead of "What has NACS or FMA done for me"?

Darryl Perkinson, FMA National Vice President discussed the theme of the convention as follows:

"Everyday thousands of people serve their community in a variety of ways. Coaches, troop leaders, teachers, volunteer readers, etc., assist in helping the young and needy of our society. These heroes walk among us in our facilities and agencies everyday serving the American public and this great democracy. Each of us knows that hero and can relate to their service and dedication.

The sad fact of this image is that most of our fellow citizens do not know about our contribution. The persona of the Civil Servant is to serve without fanfare and celebration. The core of the Civil Servant rests in dedicating themselves to the mission and foundational principles of democracy that were established by those who preceded them.

For us in the Federal Managers Association the time has come to ensure our members get recognized for the contributions they make daily to this great Nation. We as an association have made great strides in receiving recognition among our friends in Congress and the Agency leaders we approach in our daily walk."

This convention and the Federal Managers Association are very beneficial to our association. FMA has a strong political voice, testifying four times before Congress this year. I highly encourage anyone wishing to attend this convention next year or in the future to contact one of us.

“The Future is Ours”

By: Past President Mark Bertram

We are in the midst of potentially more difficult times as we struggle with dwindling budgets and staff levels; each further challenging our ability to effectively accomplish our goals and fulfill the agencies mission. Through these times it is imperative that we do two very important things:

1) Support the association –

Many times we become so wrapped up in our day-to-day routines that we forget about all of the hard work that goes on behind the scenes with the association. Many times too much of the burden for carrying the load for the association falls on the shoulders of the few whom we have chosen to lead. But like any good team, the success will be reflective of the commitment of every member/player. I encourage everyone to become more involved in the association by recruiting new membership, attending the upcoming annual convention, provide input and suggestions to the leaders, and actively make the association better. Through the association, we each have the ability to impact our future and the future of this agency; take advantage of this unbelievable opportunity.

2) Partner with our sister association – We have tried on a number of occasions to partner with the MNASCOE association. Just this spring, the two associations jointly participated in the SED consultative meeting, and your’ President and I attended the annual MNASCOE convention in Detroit Lakes. It’s not surprising that many of the

same employee concerns are shared by both associations; the best, most effective way for each association to be heard is to carry the same message together. One thing that we may need to once again consider is a joint annual convention. This may very well mean that each association demonstrates some concession to the tradition meeting dates for the greater good of all of the employees. We need to be flexible to bring it together.

2005 NACS Convention Delegate

As of this date, MACS does not have a delegate registered to attend the NACS portion of the 2005 Convention in Florida. If you are a Farm Loan Manager, Farm Loan Officer, or Farm Loan Specialist able to step forward and represent your association by attending the convention on June 27 – 29, please contact one of the officers of the association. MACS wants to send you to Florida.

“Spin Zones”

By: MACS President Russell Miller

A well known TV and radio commentator of our time begins his program with the words; “...and you have just entered a No Spin Zone.” As public servants working for the Farm Service Agency, we too need to place ourselves in a no spin zone of fact and reality.

The agricultural community and the greater public as a whole, which we serve, are changing. As a result, we have been presented with a number of challenging issues to resolve

that will result in change. The fact and reality is that we have reduced farm numbers, an aging population, technology changes, and National and local budget deficits all at the same time. Our Agency is facing reduced staff ceilings, adapting to workforce changes, restrictive training and travel budgets, and realigning work to the available workforce, just to name a few.

Making the necessary adjustments to resolve the challenges facing our Agency will require all of us to focus on the facts and prioritize FSA’s mission in the decisions we make. The process will most certainly have a degree of discomfort for many of us as we must find and put in place new efficiencies in how we deliver our service. Our State Office leadership has been informational and transparent in presenting us with the facts as they are. Our individual and team efforts toward the accomplishment of our Agency’s mission and input in the process we are facing have never been more necessary or important. In the end, we will again find a new set of facts and challenges to face, but confidently know we can face them, adapt, change, and succeed in accomplishing our mission.