



MACS Newsletter



March 2006

Structural Review Team

The structural review team met at the State Office Feb. 28-March 1. MACS was represented by Becky Martinson and Mark Drewitz. This team was charged with setting parameters on the program delivery plan. It was not designing the actual plan on a proposed delivery structure.

The State Office has issued the resulting document concerning the planning issues which you should review. MACS has emphasized key issues that should be considered such as continuing effective program delivery, 1165 grandfathered offices, workload equity, and impact on employees – particularly PT's. A map of current FLP areas was developed to assist in the review. This map is posted at the MACS web site.

Discussions with the State Office continue. Their willingness to continue discussion on these issues has been appreciated.

Annual Consultative Meeting

The Annual Consultative Meeting was held with the State Office on March 8th. MACS and MNASCOE representatives met together prior to the meeting with

State Office personnel to review common issues of concern. A joint session was conducted of both associations with the SED, administrative personnel and the FLC. MACS met individually with the FLC later.

There was constructive discussion on the issues presented. A full report of the meeting is included with this newsletter from the MACS secretary's minutes.

Follow up on the issues reviewed is planned. Thanks go to the State Office participants for the time and effort they expended for the meeting.

Lender Workload Survey

Reminder to complete the lender workload survey as you visit with your lenders. Each member is requested to discuss the questions with key lenders in your area and complete the questionnaire on their behalf. Make sure you advise the lender that a response is not necessary for participation in FSA programs. Once you have completed a sufficient number of questionnaires, compile them and then email the results to Sue Westrom at sue.westrom@mn.usda.gov.

Please complete your discussion with area lenders by June 1, 2006.

Proposed MACS By-Laws Change

At the Executive Committee meeting prior to the consultative session, the MACS record retention process was reviewed. Currently, each MACS President obtains custody of boxes of records upon taking office from their predecessor. Thus far, this has included everything that was accumulated by each President during their term. Cumulative this results in several boxes of material. A similar circumstance is existing for the treasurer records. The MACS

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constitution and by-laws are silent on the method of and required retention of records.

Language is planned to be drafted to address this issue to specify what records must be kept and what can be disposed of. If any member has a concern on this process please email it to mark.drewitz@charter.net. The proposed language will be published in a future newsletter.

Association Fundraisers

NASE - The NASE fundraiser will be a chance to win \$500.00. Tickets are \$5.00 per chance. The drawing will be held at the Annual NASE Convention which will be held in Arlington, TX.

Please contact any Minnesota NASE member if you would like to purchase a ticket. If you don't know who they are email Becky Martinson or Sheree Krogstad.

NACS – Tickets **still remain** for the NACS lottery raffle. Tickets contain two chances to win, cost \$20.00 each and may be purchased from any of the MACS District Representatives or email your request to mark.drewitz@charter.net. You may pool your resources and buy tickets together as well. Any tickets in excess of 43 sold by MACS will earn \$5.00 per ticket for our state association.

2005-06 MACS Board

President – Mark Drewitz
Vice President – Lee Crawford
Secretary – James Kruize
Treasurer – Sheree Krogstad
NASE State Contact – Becky Martinson
Past President – Russell Miller
District 1 Representative - Kirk Phelps
District 2 Representative – Wendy Erickson
District 3 Representative – Michael Smith
District 4 Representative – Kevin Lehman
District 5 Representative – Rick Ray
District 6 Representative – Scott Nordby
District 7 Representative – Cindy Vukasin
District 8 & STO Representative – Tom DeCock

MACS Annual Meeting – July 21

Keep the MACS annual meeting date open for Friday, July 21, 2006. This will be a joint meeting with MNASCOE for part of the day prior to separate business sessions.

Officer elections will be conducted, resolutions for improvements to the Agency reviewed, information shared, and other Association business conducted.

More information as to agenda, registration, etc, will be included in an upcoming newsletter.

FMA Information

The FMA Washington Report newsletter is located at: <http://www.fedmanagers.org/public/washingtonreport.cfm>. Members are encouraged to monitor the FMA site to keep abreast of the latest events with FMA and legislative actions in Washington.

Upcoming NACS/NASE Meetings

2006 National Conventions - June 19-21 in Arlington, Texas. Planned attendees include Mike Norberg and Mark Drewitz. Other attendees are needed to fill out the NACS and NASE delegate slates. Registration material is available at the NACS web site.

NACS/NASE Information

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

NACS – www.nacsfsa.org
NASE - www.geocities.com/judy_potter_2000/

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



**MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION
OF CREDIT SPECIALISTS**
FARM SERVICE AGENCY
USDA



ANNUAL CONSULTATIVE MEETING – MACS

Date: March 8, 2006

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Location: Minnesota Farm Service Agency State Office, St. Paul, MN

Members Present: Mark Drewitz, President
Lee Crawford, Vice-President
James Kruize, Secretary
Sheree Krogstad, MACS Treasurer
Russell Miller, Past President
Becky Martinson, NASE State Contact

The 2006 Annual Consultative Meeting with the State Office was held jointly with representatives from MNASCOE. MNASCOE was represented by Kevin Beekman, Ann Ulwelling, Jolene Brasel, and Kevin Bergquist. Prior to the meeting with the representatives from the STO, MACS and MNASCOE held a brief, informal meeting to discuss the issues that would be raised during the consultative meeting. Major discussion centered around issues that MACS and MNASCOE have in common. Complete details of these issues follow in the minutes below.

MACS and MNASCOE representatives met with John Monson, Stuart Shelstad, Dan Hockert, Deb Crusoe, and Mary Aukes. The following issues and concerns were discussed:

ADMINISTRATIVE/OTHER

1) Office Structure – FSA Review Team, etc.

Enough already, just get it over with.

Open enrollment and how this affects FLP borrowers/applicants.

Continued concern over FLP PT CO vs GS. Concern over accountability and designation of employee's responsibilities and supervision of employee. Prior instances of CO FLP PT's were ended due to these issues.

STO RESPONSE

There is no authorization for open enrollment of FLP borrowers.

All current arrangements involving FLP, PT, CO vs. GS are arrangements that were driven and/or supported by local managers. It is our policy to allow and support local manager's attempts to find local solutions to problems. We currently have three service centers where CO PT's function as FLP PT's. In two of these cases the plan calls for the FLM to be the supervisor of the CO PT that has responsibility for the FLP PT work. If we convert those three CO PT's to GS PT's we will use up three GS FTE's that will have to come from some other credit team. MNASCOE would like to see a formal description for a CO doing GS PT work but the STO does not see formalizing, it needs to be more individual plans.

GS can supervise CO but CO can't supervise GS. Can't reassign programs at present time due to the freeze.

It is difficult for COF to see how STO is making decisions. The STO is doing a lot of things that is confusing to the COF. Change is increasing, it is accelerating very fast. We no longer have all the time and resources to get everything we want done. COF must commit to local solutions to resolve problems. Things are happening so fast that it is getting very difficult to manage. Communication needs to rise to a higher level. When issues come up, the Associations need to contact the STO to discuss them.

Business needs will drive the office structure process.

The STO has been working long and hard to resolve the Kittson County PT situation.

GS PT vs FLOT: Business need dictates hiring.

2) Budget Spreadsheets

County Offices seem to be spending a lot of time on budget spreadsheets when the information is already contained in BRIO. It appears that we are doing duplicate work.

MNASCOE RESPONSE: We understand the timing may not be as quick as the spreadsheet reports are but the same information can be received in BRIO. It is also possible that more errors can happen when manual entries are made. MNASCOE would like an explanation as to why we are duplicating the work.

STO RESPONSE

Timeliness of information in a limited budget environment is everything. BRIO versus spreadsheets is like a choice between being reactive or proactive. We need to be proactive. Tracking budgets, planning budgets and moving funds locally are the keys to empowerment and accountability of decision-making. BRIO is not currently designed as a management tool for decision-making or movement of funds. It is reactive. Our spreadsheet tracking system is a proactive planning tool for local decisions. BRIO is purely a reporting tool. FSA operates now in an “Anti-Deficiency” era which requires agencies to stay within budget. In a limited budget environment, planning is the key to ensuring optimal use of dollars and remaining within budget as required by OMB. Times have changed and planning is more important than ever. We have replaced hand written planning and tracking with better spreadsheets. We have pushed decisions to the local level requiring more tracking locally. We have analyzed spending on specific accounts to ensure greater consistency. We have used the data to make better financial decisions.

There is no duplication in budget planning. BRIO is not capable of doing all the things we can do with spreadsheets to be better planners, more strategic and fiscally accountable. We anticipate BRIO to be updated to operate in a web-based environment, and in that case, we will review our current budget methodology and ensure no duplication.

3) Budget

Is there an explanation why FSA takes 4 ½ months to get the CO and GS allocations issued? We realize this is not a State Office issue but are looking for any insight into this common question.

Overtime vs. comp time – Policy, is there overtime available? Already having trouble using all the available leave.

STO RESPONSE

The most realistic timeframe to have received a GS budget was around the 1st of February, however, new issues and discussions arose at the time which delayed allocations.

The history is that we didn’t get an appropriation from Congress until November. As USDA and FSA received its appropriation, Congress was concurrently considering a rescission bill which would have reduced Salary and Expenses by 1 or 2%. FSA waited to allocate any budget until knowing what the rescission percentage would be. At the end of January, Congress passed the rescission at 1% and FSA reduced its salary and expense accordingly. Over the course of the next month, the Budget Division developed the budget plan and asked the Administrator to make some tough decisions on cuts due to budget shortfall. The Administrator made those decisions by the beginning of February. At this point, DAFO pressed the Budget Division to maximize flexibility for states to move money within GS and CO. This was a new discussion for the Budget Division, requiring a new tracking method. Budget developed that first with the

CO budget and it was allocated a few weeks ago. GS budget was last and it was broken down into 13 budget categories from three previously. There will likely be another delay from the State because we have to compare our new allocation to last year to know where we stand. That requires us to break down budget into like categories, which didn't exist last year. Then we need to develop a spreadsheet to track all categories for planning and flexing. While all of this is going on, we are pushing decision-making to the local level via a new policy. This new policy is currently in the final stages of development.

We hope to have the GS budget out in a couple weeks.

4) Relocation

The process does not appear to have gone any smoother with the recent “voluntary” reassignments. Examples:

One FLO was on house hunting trip in one location after being advised he was moving there. He was advised by another FLM that this was incorrect as that FLM's FLO was moving there. Subsequently the FLO did get another notice directing him to another office.

STO RESPONSE

This may be unavoidable. In your example the FLM that told the FLO that he was not moving there had no authority to do so. Since all transfers are voluntary, he could only ask the FLO if he would be willing to change. This is actually what happened in this case. The FLO then agreed to the change. Only at that time could it be approved. In an environment where our ability to determine staffing locations is limited and workload imbalance can be significant, we need to frequently reconsider decisions and react quickly to opportunities. As we find ourselves more and more in a reactive mode it is important that expectations be realistic for the work environment that we live in.

Affected supervisors – both receiving and losing were not notified.

STO RESPONSE

Our records reflect that both receiving and losing supervisors were notified. The concern as we understand it was the timing of the notification. In a voluntary process the employee that will be transferred must request the transfer. Then DAFO in WDC must approve the transfer. During the time in between these actions there are opportunities for the employee that may be transferred to communicate with many folks. As a result, supervisors can not always be notified officially because we have not received approval from DAFO. We recognize that we can do a better job of ensuring supervisors are aware of plans even if they are not official and we will incorporate that communication into our planning process.

A FLO that is to be temporarily share with another office upon relocation was not advised of this during the relocation determination.

STO RESPONSE

These are not state office administrative determinations. Employees that will be detailed to assist at other sites are informed of this by their supervisor. The terms of that arrangement are determined by the DD and that employee's supervisor.

State Office highlighted the following “Relocation System Improvements”

- **MN FSA Relocation Introductory Brochure**: This brochure is sent to all transferring employees upon notification of directed reassignment. It gives employees a brief introduction to FSA relocation allowances, establishes employee eligibility factors for authorizing a relocation allowance, and designates between basic entitlements available to all employees and discretionary items that are authorized on a case-by-case basis by the STO. The brochure further serves to introduce employees to the state's relocation website, encouraging them to log on for more detailed information about the relocation process.
- **MN FSA Relocation Website** (<http://intra4.fsa.usda.gov/MN/MNi/relocation/>): This website was created to serve as an accessible reference for more detailed information concerning relocation allowances. The text is primarily

taken from the FSA travel policy manual, but has been somewhat altered for clarification and ease of use. As employees begin using the resource, the page will continue to grow to meet employee needs.

- **Personal Contact/Relocation Authorization Phone Call**: After the employee has been given some time to review the brochure and website (timing depends upon proposed speed of the transfer), Bill Walker contacts the employee to review any questions and concerns. At this time, Bill also conducts a Relocation Authorization survey with the employee. This short questionnaire establishes what services the employee thinks he or she will need based on the move circumstances. Through this questionnaire, Bill will receive all the information needed to establish the Travel Authorization (AD-202/202R).

5) FLO/FLOT

Recent movement of FLO's appears to have resulted in greater inequity in staffing. (Example: Crookston vs. Glencoe) What criteria are used to determine location and movement of FLO's?

STO RESPONSE

FLO's are moved both to provide training and to meet agency workload needs. The Crookston example does not represent the norm because a FLO was relocated there but resigned. The result is the staffing numbers do not reflect the results of the original transfers that were authorized. The problem was caused by the resignation. This problem must be dealt with using details or another voluntary reassignment. These are the only tool we have at this point.

Resignations/Retirements of FLO's that may be upcoming cause the affected offices to have the following concerns:

Length of time for the replacement to arrive.
Training status of the replacement.
Availability of the replacement.

STO RESPONSE

We share these concerns. We have very little control over the length of time if we are filling the vacancy using voluntary reassignments. The hiring process might find someone outside the state but that is not a fast process. At this time the only option we have is locating FLOT's in locations where they could develop into contributors down the road.

6) Communication Items

MNASCOE likes the idea of communicating in a transparent environment but we feel this environment is not happening in all areas of the STO. We have concerns as to why the DD minutes have stopped? Voice mail returns are not as timely as needed by the county office employees. Information from the DD's seems to flow from the STO but not from the county office to the STO.

MNASCOE RESPONSE: It is important to address and find ways that we can improve the lines of communicating to each other. We would like the DD minutes reinstated, better response times to voice mail messages, and for DD's to carry the county office message to the STO.

STO RESPONSE

DD minutes are not abandoned. The last two times the DD's have visited St. Paul, we have not had a traditional DD meeting with Specialists. The last two meetings have been Leadership Team meetings for strategic planning development and team development. SED has given an update on those sessions. We will continue minutes at the next meeting for the DD session with Program Specialists.

We will remind all STO staff to return calls timely. STO staffing has been reduced in the last year and has resulted in new responsibilities and absorbed duties per person.

We will also remind DD's to make sure communications are being forwarded to the STO as necessary. However, we are also working hard to resolve issues locally. This may be reducing some of the communication from the COF to the STO. STO staff continually communicate issues of concern and suggestions to the sections in staff meetings. We are very pleased with the level of communication we get from counties.

Transparency and communication remain a top priority for this SED. If there is a lack of transparency or communication, it usually occurs unwittingly. We remain focused on our county offices and providing them with information , resources, and direction. We are appreciative of county level solutions, ideas, comments, and concerns. We are all of the same team.

7) FLOT Training Program

What is the expectation of length of training program?

STO RESPONSE

**12 months to complete modules and testing.
18-30 months to obtain loan approval authority.**

Do we get cost effective training by moving FLOT's from office to office?

STO RESPONSE

Generally the first move of a FLOT has a primary focus of enhancing their training by exposing the FLOT to a different type of agriculture and different manager. The purpose of any additional moves is generally to meet the agency needs combined, when possible, with placing the FLO in a geographical area that they have a desire to live and work in.

A key focus of our organization is development of employees. We believe that the benefits of relocating to various offices are critical in the development of FLO's who hopefully someday will be an FLM.

Are we expecting enough of the FLOT's?

STO RESPONSE

We understand that the national office will be modifying the program. Our perception is that in some cases there is perhaps too much focus in the first year on testing and not enough on doing hands-on tasks.

This is a good question. Does MACS have an opinion of what the expectations should be?

Prior to advancement from grade 7 – 9 – 11 what specific tasks should the trainee be expected to be able to perform?

STO RESPONSE

See memo FLP-01-98. This memo is being updated and will be reissued shortly.

Do we have designated training offices?

STO RESPONSE

We do not have designated training offices.

Do the trainer's receive any training/coordination for use with their trainee?

STO RESPONSE

State FLOT Training Coordinator, trainee, and trainer meet soon after the trainee starts to discuss the training program, use of the modules, timeframes, trainers guide, etc.

Are we providing consistent and building training for the FLOT's as they move?

STO RESPONSE

FLOT's normally have completed the formal training program (modules and testing) prior to moving. The benefits of moving a FLOT is not related to formal training but to exposing the FLO/FLOT to different ag enterprises, different management styles, and different experiences to prepare the FLO for becoming an FLM.

What are FLOT's being told about the expectations for length of time for training, locations, expectations of moving up to an FLM position, etc.

STO RESPONSE

**Expect to move after formal training completed.
FLOT/FLO position is mobile and expect to work in several locations.
Ultimately we want the FLO to become an FLM.**

FLOT's are being told that they are considered to be in training until they get loan approval authority. FLOT's are advised of their training location when they are offered the job. They are advised that currently we do not have the authority to relocate them but it is our intent to seek that authority and they should consider themselves to be mobile.

Many of these questions do raise the issue of whether or not we have room for improvement. We believe it would be very beneficial to explore these discussions with a group of trainers to develop a more strategic approach to our FLOT training.

General discussion followed regarding the FLOT training program. The STO feels the same as MACS that sometimes there is too much emphasis on testing and modules and not enough on hands-on tasks. More emphasis should be spent on tasks. They are considering another "train the trainers" session. STO and MACS wants to improve the FLOT training program. This will require engaging the managers and formalizing issues. Recruiting is stepping up around the state.

8) **Lack of Retirement Training**

The current Dashboard information will be a big help for employees to plan for retirement. The tools and general information about the parameters of retirement are available but most CED's do not have the expertise to counsel employees on retirement decisions. These decisions need to be made early in retirement, not within a couple of years of retirement.

MNASCOE RESPONSE: We are asking that employees be able to attend retirement workshops conducted by Federal Executive Board and to be reimbursed for those that attend this workshop. It is our understanding that Rural Development will reimburse employees that attend the workshop.

STO RESPONSE

We will work to ensure adequate and timely retirement training through all necessary and appropriate means. Retirement is becoming increasingly important to all of us and we will do our best in a limited budget environment to ensure adequate training.

STO will work with the Federal Executive Board to see if there is some information (video, packets, etc) available for employees.

Dashboard has links to retirement information.

9) **Releasing of Workload Reports 1 & 14**

Reports 1 & 14 are very important reports for staffing in the county offices. Employees are retiring and workload needs to be distributed to the remaining PT's. These reports are great tools to determine equal distribution of workload.

MNASCOE RESPONSE: It is our understanding that the STO received these reports for a number of weeks before they were distributed to county offices. We are asking why the distribution of reports was delayed.

STO RESPONSE

The delay was purely due to Anna's priority to rework the new staffing charts, as the SED requested. The Report 1 and 14 sat on Anna's desk for 10 days so she could update the staffing charts with new workload and attrition. If she had

spent her time on sending reports 1 & 14, she would have had a delay in publishing the new staffing charts, which are more important right now. As a result, she was able to publish the first staffing chart with new workload on the 16th of Feb, ten days after we received the workload reports. Again, staffing in the Admin Section of the STO has been reduced. All sections are overwhelmed at this time and a lot of priorities are converging at once or we would have had other sections help out. However, we are already having staff cross over to help out other sections with demand beyond current staffing levels. We are running bare bones in the State Office at this time, not unlike a number of counties.

10) IT Responses

When county offices have IT concerns or questions, the response time is concerning to many county offices.

MNASCOE RESPONSE: If county offices are having troubles with response from IT, do county offices have alternative ways to communicate the problems?

STO RESPONSE

Let your DD know if you are experiencing unacceptable delays in IT response. We will have DD's contact the STO to convey the concerns to Tom Radermacher, IT Group Manager.

11) Hiring/Promotions

When hiring or interviewing for promotions, what relative weight is being given to the interview vs. the employees or applicant's performance and job history?

STO RESPONSE

Applicants are given an opportunity to highlight their job performance and explain how their job history and past performance makes them the best candidate for whatever position is being filled. It is not identified as a separate issue from the interview questions in the hiring process. In addition we do request input from previous supervisors.

The MACS and MNASCOE representatives met with the State Committee (Margaret Johnson, Andrew Quinn, Jay Nord, and Stevin Brake).

- The State Committee is very conscious on what is going on with the budget.
- Employees should let the State Committee know if there is anything that they can do to help alleviate concerns.
- Each employee and committee member shared items going on in their respective offices or areas.

MACS representatives met with Stuart Shelstad, Mike Walzak, Brian Hartman, Tom Decock, and Krista Schultz. The following issues and concerns were discussed:

FLP

1) Notices/Memos

The contact person in memo's or notices should be knowledgeable about the topic and aware the document has been released. EIN for joint operator's example.

Explain the need for the EIN for joint operations. Is this a problem/issue nationwide (MN issued)? Is this really not the agency's problem and if so, why are we making it the borrower/applicant's problem?

STO RESPONSE

As SCIMS, MAC, and PLAS share data, it is necessary for the data to be consistent. This is especially important for the applicant's name, tax ID number, and type (individual or entity) to be identical in all systems. Problems are

encountered when a producer is in SCIMS for FP purposes, applies for a FLP loan as part of a joint operation, and uses the producer's social security number as the tax ID. The problems develop since a different name representing the joint operation is added to SCIMS for an existing social security number and the type is entered as an entity for a social security number. These problems result in duplicate producers in SCIMS and prevent the application from being loaded in MAC. SCIMS will accept a temporary ID used for joint ventures for FP purposes but the temporary ID will not work in MAC and PLAS.

This is a national issue but the extent of the problem varies from state to state depending on the use of joint operations and the joint operators' participation in other FSA programs. Some states are requiring EIN's for joint operations while other states are not. An alternative to requiring an EIN is to enter the applicant in all systems as one individual. This option creates its own set of related problems.

MACS input and assistance in helping to find the best fix for this issue would be appreciated.

The EIN number is obtained from the IRS and the phone number was not listed in the notice. The STO will look at following up on this and will research this topic further.

Unreleased Procedure

Review 1927-B, 1955-A, and 1951-S.

STO RESPONSE

MN 1955-A and 1951-S each are very close to issuance. They each have 1 or 2 policy and/or OGC issues to resolve.

MN 1927-B has several issues pending with OGC and needs National Office concurrence before issuance.

2) Follow-up on 2005 Annual Meeting Resolutions – Progress Check

When offices are not meeting their goals or are greatly exceeding their goals, is oversight/investigation being conducted to see why or why not or how the greatly exceeding of the goals is being accomplished?

STO RESPONSE

District Directors have primary responsibility for monitoring goals and addressing the above concerns. On occasion, Specialists have been asked to review a sample of dockets to ensure that the integrity of the goal measurement process is being maintained.

In general, the difference in goal accomplishments between offices appears to have a lot to do with differences in geographic servicing areas and customer program knowledge. For example, an office serving one or two counties that has a limited number of lenders but who are high volume and perhaps PLP lenders will likely have a lower processing timeframe than an office working a larger, more diverse servicing area, with many lenders, and a lot of whom are low volume.

Staffing levels and efficiencies of the staff also contribute to different goal accomplishments.

The same issue holds true on the national level. The National Office establishes different goals for different states in an attempt to reach the overall national goals.

3) FLP Tech Newsletter

Improvements are sought in the FLP Tech Newsletter to be more concise, summarize issues, be frequent to make less lengthy, etc.

STO RESPONSE

Pat is aware of this concern. To address this concern, she polled the PT's for suggestions on how to improve the newsletter. Overwhelmingly, there has been support for the issuance of the newsletter on a bi-monthly basis. There are

five suggestions for improvement and to-date two have been implemented. They include 1) adding a table of contents (which unfortunately adds to the length) and 2) add notices, amendments, and software release summaries that affect FLP and include non-FLP notices, amendments, and release information (i.e. FI Notices).

Time constraints hinder the ability to issue the newsletter more frequently. Many issues are already summarized and we believe that further summarization will reduce the effectiveness of the material and increase phone calls to Pat. One of the goals of the newsletter was to reduce the number of phone calls to Pat as PT's would have this as a reference guide.

Specific suggestions or examples of how to improve the newsletter are always appreciated.

4) Streamlining Regulations

What is the status of the streamlining regulations and how does the state office plan to develop and issue the MN FLP re-written regulations?

STO RESPONSE

Review of the streamlining regulations appears to consume a sizable share of the agenda at the national training in Reno during the week of March 10th. We will relay to the field what we learn about this when we get back.

Once we receive the new handbook and know the new references, we will begin the process of updating, re-writing, and issuing the new Minnesota Instructions. These should be able to be released relatively fast.

MACS offered to assist with the Minnesota regulations wherever needed.

5) Year End Analysis Contracting

YEA contracting language flexibility needed to allow for non Farm Business Plan documents.

STO RESPONSE

We have previously contacted the National Office regarding this issue and they were not supportive of using contracting funds to purchase documents that we are unable to directly use when we have the FBP documents available.

Laura has also advised that she is not supportive of changing language in YEA statement of work for the same reason.

6) Other Issues

Overtime was discussed. The budget has approximately \$21,465 for overtime but there is the temptation to move overtime to travel.

FLOT training was discussed further. The timing of delegation of authorities was discussed, MACS fully supports the STO having another meeting with all the trainers, FLOT's need to focus on tasks during the first year in addition to modules and testing, and expectations of a FLOT need to be discussed further (preferably with FLM's who have been trainers).

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The State MACS/MNASCOE Joint Convention will be held on Friday, July 21, 2006 in Owatonna.

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
/s/ James D. Kruize

JAMES D. KRUIZE
MACS Secretary



MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF CREDIT SPECIALISTS

FARM SERVICE AGENCY
USDA



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date: March 7, 2006

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Location: Radisson City Center Hotel, St. Paul, MN (MACS Consultative Meeting)

Members Present: Mark Drewitz, President
Lee Crawford, Vice-President
James Kruize, Secretary
Sheree Krogstad, MACS Treasurer
Russell Miller, Past President
Becky Martinson, NASE State Contact

The MACS Executive Committee met the evening prior to the MACS consultative meeting with the State Office.

The following items were discussed:

- **AGENDA FOR THE CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON 3/8/06**
 - 8:00 a.m. – Meet jointly with MNASCOE
 - 9:00 a.m. – Meet with the State Executive Director and his staff.
→ Review questions previously sent to the State Office
 - 11:00 a.m. – Meet with the State Committee
 - 1:00 p.m. – Meet with Stuart Shelstad and his staff
→ Review questions previously sent to the State Office
- **OFFICE RESTRUCTURE REVIEW TEAM** – Mark Drewitz discussed the review team's meeting recently held at the state office.
- **MNASCOE NEGOTIATING ITEMS** – Mark Drewitz shared the negotiating items from MNASCOE. MACS will support all the issues they present.
- **MACS CONSULTATIVE ITEMS** – Mark Drewitz discussed all the items that he submitted to the state office for their review.
- **RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS** – Mark Drewitz discussed the volume of materials that has been passed down to him from past presidents. He really questioned the need to retain it. He plans on scanning majority of the information for retention in an electronic means. The Treasurer's information will need to be kept in accordance with IRS requirements.
- **ANNUAL CONVENTION** – The annual MACS/MNASCOE convention will be held Friday, July 21, 2006 in Owatonna. Pre-meeting activities will be on July 20, 2006. Watch for details coming on the state convention.
- **FUNDRAISERS** – The board discussed the status of the raffle fundraiser for NACS.

- **W P Cummings Award** – This is an award that hasn't been presented in many years and that the last recipient was Clayton Quade. It is a traveling award. Since Clayton Quade is no longer an employee of the agency, Mark Drewitz thought somebody should contact Clayton for him to return the award to MACS in case the board decides to start the award again. There are no plans at this time to start this award again at this time.

The Executive Board meeting adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ James D. Kruise

JAMES D. KRUIZE
MACS Secretary