

# Midwest Area Rally

## Springfield Ill

### March 11, 2011

- Scherrie Giamanco Ill SED made a few opening comments and introduced Ill STO and STC members
- Q/A session, we are here to answer any questions you may have, is a free for all
- IDP's what will they require at the COF? All employees are required to have an individual plan but leave a lot of latitude for local managers. Minimum one area focus, max or 3. Notice listed 28 possible areas
- STC changed NAP forage from Nov. 20 to September 30 to be consistent with RMA date, because forage became insurable in two counties.
- There were several more questions that were specific to Illinois.

Tony Augustine

- VP John Lore supposed to be here so we won't talk about PAC too much
- NAFEC initiative, COC's is what keeps us local. Makes us different keeps up more effective
- NAFEC can address issues that we as NASCOE members can not
- NAFEC can talk about what programs we would like to see implemented that we cannot like primary role in crop reporting and conservation administration
- We are going to have a more efficient government, but rather doing more programs with less people, lets advocate for better efficiency so we don't lose more employees we cannot afford to loose
- There is a packet available that needs to be delivered to all COC's on information to join NAFEC
- Two steps to join, can have automatic deduction, do a 444 and send to state HR person 3 dollars per meeting no matter how many meetings they have. Will be the most effective 3 dollars they spend, to send NAFEC to the hill to advocate for better efficiency in government.
- NASCOE PAC, over 200 people were on the hill this week to express concerns about employee issues and farm bill talks all for the membership
- We were not sure what we would face on the hill, hostility? But wasn't that bad. Not all visits were that great, but yet we didn't face major opposition, and that is a good thing
- Today we want to focus on the third leg of the stool we are standing on, 1 NAFEC, 2 cap-wiz and the third is the PAC
- All the tools have to be the best we have!
- Paul Newton with RASCOE said, it looks really bleak but you know we have been here before in the 70s they were looking at doing away with the agency all together. NASCOE

was born out of desperation; we are in desperate times now. We made it through then, will make it through now.

- IF you work hard enough they will believe your message
- We cannot stop there! That is where the PAC comes in
- Believe political contributions effect the process?? They do. Legislators want to meet with those that support them as well
- We can as individuals afford to spend the max 5000 on political contributions but all of our small contributions can add up to a large sum of money so they will pay attention to what we say
- PAC started in 05 was humble in beginning. In 05 we had \$1200 in contributions, but has grown and prospered to 37,000 this year from 30,000 in 2010
- Proves the point that we are dedicated
- We are getting to the size that we are starting to get to the point where congressmen are asking us if we need anything, and the PAC is doing that instead of us going to them, they are coming to us
- Mentioned sugar PAC of 1.05 million they get what they want
- If 16% of NASCOE members participated at \$3.00 we would be 3<sup>rd</sup> in agricultural PACs 17% at 5.00 we would be #2 imagine what that message would be, the difference we would make
- \$3.00 per pay period...good coffee? Pack of smokes, can of chew? 2 or 3 soft drinks per pay period
- Bob Redding makes recommendations on PAC expenditures
- The larger the PAC, the further we can spread it but for now the decisions are approved by president and leg committee
- **PAC promotions going on right now.**
- State with largest contribution by % will get 250.00
- Any member that contributes 3\$ allotment or a 3\$ increase will get put in a drawing for one of 5 100.00 drawings. At the next national convention
- Missouri leading the pack right now at 120%

Paul Newman, Leg Chair RASCOE

- RASCOE was on the hill carrying our papers, visited with several legislators and found the message coming back was better than what they thought it was going to be
- Dropped the windfall offset bill the 2 for 1 social security vs. CSRS retirement
- But these bills may come back to life
- Presidents commission on debt reduction proposed shifting health benefits Burdon to employees and reducing salary expenses by several billion
- Was really nice to sit off to the side and watch a whole new generation on the hill
- Need to keep Tony Augustine (NASCOE Midwest Area Legislative Chair) around for a long while!!
- FSA has a record for delivering services at least cost than any other agency out there. Do not take a back seat to anyone.

- Take your fight to them and RASCOE will be with us

#### Mike JM Marketing

- Nascoe has been working for several years to get the benefits that we have today
- Passed out an information packet on JM Marketing benefits.
- JM can assist with long term retirement training assistance, Contact a JM Marketing Team member if you have any questions.

#### Laura Schlote MIDAS Team

- System 36 on last leg
- Modernize and innovate the delivery of agricultural systems
- Brought people in from the field
- 2 year detail 12 people with total of 258 years experience
- Like taking an onion and peeling it away one layer at a time to find out what we can do to make the system better
- Just because we did it in the past, don't mean we are going to do it in the future
- In the past a lot of our policies were driven by system limitations
- Like FSFL if you want to make advance you have to do two loans because of limitation of software
- We are building a new house, right now we are in the blue print stages
- We are going to put a little out at first, like wiring a house and turning on a light switch, rather than turning on the entire house
- Right now we are relying on duplication and the 36 with two monitors wired together
- Improve access to our producers; allow them to do it from home. Only as an option
- Producers will be able to pick if they want a letter, email, IM Text for communication
- Will be able to decrease the amount of time to get a program to the field
- Improve compliance and oversight
- Less excel spreadsheets and data in multiple places
- Is a plan to change the business process with a core of changing software, not the other way around
- No more uploading downloading, everything will be in one bucket
- No longer need some procedure or handbooks because the software will be able to do what we need it to do
- Will not eliminate jobs or employees
- Not new hardware, not a stabilization effort
- Not an it imitative
- State of the art functionality
- State of the art software
- Will be commercial office software.

- SAP is the company we are going to be using, they started off with 3 or 4 employees went to Germany and did it better. John Deere, Wal-Mart Monsanto all uses this software.
- Effective and efficient business practices. Is amazing how many places we shove data in this agency and depending on what system you ask or who you ask the data out will be different
- Will be able to get a check out faster
- Reduce paperwork and increase security
- NO more paper form then information to the system. Put information in machine then print it out and have them sign them
- Our programs are like grants; money goes out but rarely comes back in.
- Hoping fiscal year 2012 we will be about to start using some of this software
- Will be released in phases
- 2014 full operation and the MIDAS team can go home
- We need to standardize our business process, standard our security, hoping this system will be the last password, one password, one portal one system
- Name file like skims, and farm system like farm records. You have to have a person and you have to have a farm before anything else
- Hoping to have a laptop at Corpus Christy to do a demo
- The goal is that everyone will be about to see the software at some point
- Every farm every program need an application, how do we make that as common as possible
- Every program needs the same things
- Should be able to apply for any program in any office, but get approved in home county
- Electronic signatures should be enabled
- Automatically enable letters after COC determinations
- All automated including appeal rights
- The ability to query will be greatly enhanced. Should be able to get whatever data we need to do our jobs
- Can even generate appointments through the system if you want
- Engagement of field office staff
- Can go to the MIDAS web page and submit q/a that will go to the MIDAS team
- When is the 36 supposed to die?
  - 4-1-2013 the maintenance contract ends
- We are going to be starting with something that works in the beginning rather than new software like the web based contractor built software that was started from scratch.
- Look at how many transactions Wal-Mart does every day! How often do you go to Wal-Mart and their system is down? We will be using this same software built by the same company
- Will have the opportunity to set up roles, to extend and limit access, and can set up notification. So if someone changes something that will mess up someone else, they will get an email that will notify them that there was a change that will affect their program

- Will be able to change systems in minutes to a day, and test with “HPQC” that can test the software instantly to make sure it is working. Changes can be instant with QC tests already completed
- Will be an internet application. Will work like the web based stuff, feel like web based stuff
- Will be limited by hardware, but will not have the software limitations like we have now. The problem will not be with software, although there may be hardware limitations.
- The server in our offices will not limit our abilities with MIDAS, limitations may be phone line out of the office

3-12-2011

Mike Wooden DAFO

- We have to make very serious decisions with the budget, he has canceled all travel so he couldn't be here
- Spend 75 to 80 percent of his day on budget issues
- Gets a sinking feeling with budget, but he shares what he knows
- We are in a c/r that expires on march 18
- Some compromises a 4 billion cut in spending FSA walked away with mohair program cut
- The two sides are not close enough to make a decision
- They are looking at two extremes HR-1 and the senate version but we will probably fall in the middle somewhere
- End of the day we will have to operate on less than what we had
- Pushing states to spend less fy11 less than 10
- Questionable areas in spending but we don't know how accurate they are due to the FMMI Accounting changeover, but we are less than last year, states are doing a good job
- Our goal is to get something out soon
- We are ½ way through this fiscal year now
- My words of wisdom are “be conservative with spending”.
- We don't have much room to cut within, supplies travel equipment we can trim a little but we don't know if we have enough room
- Is a hardship on us not knowing where we are
- Saddens him that we are relying on media outlets to hear rumors of where we are
- '12 budget, hearings are on the way, hearing proposals soon,
- The president Had a proposal out and there are calls for 10% cut in spending
- But for now we have to focus on 2011 before we look at 12
- MIDAS we are in a planning stage, to see where we want to go
- Happy to announce we are in developmental stage, getting ready to release demos to see how MIDAS will streamline our way of business
- We need expertise from the field
- Change agent network is a network of FSA employees that have a firm grip on it issues, MIDAS group is reaching out to those employees

- Conf call march 15 at 3 pm. Will be soliciting from each state 1 or 2 folks to represent state for the MIDAS team to work with
- Key PT position pts need room for upward mobility 27 states are participating asking SED's for report
- The intent of this position is to help the field not to help the STO
- Will be checking on the performance at this point
- Reemployment program having retired employees come back and mentor new employees, a tool to capture lost program knowledge. 25 employees across the nation participating in this program 20 GS and 5 co employees participating
- Win win for everyone involved
- Hiring freeze going on now Q-if state has COT's can they fill CED vacancies with the freeze in place? The purpose was to stop the bleeding currently we have 250 52's we are prioritizing those as they come up. Yes you can fill CED vacancies with cot's SED's can call me with questions.
- We do realize that pt's positions need to be addressed. We hope to have a budget to address this issue in the near future, look for a notice to come soon
- Could you talk briefly about furloughs? Tough question. The Secretary of Ag said the field staff will be the last people to be affected, not on the table right now but I am not going to put lipstick on this issue, they could happen, but we have not had conversations on who what when and where. But it is a possibility, we just are not working on that now
- Any talk on office closures? During fiscal year 11 budget not in the conversation, but in 12 that is probably something we are going to be looking at. This is something this budget conversation will hash out. A good business approach would be some shared mgt. anything that involves office closures has to start early in the budget year. If we started now we would barley realize those savings by the end of the year
- Will there be any guarantee that the savings will be kept within the agency. FSA tomorrow could not do that? Valid concern will not give any guarantees myself; do not have an answer there. Will have a conversation with the chief budget offer
- Web TA, year old still sluggish, any solutions? No improvements yet, still looking for some reports. There is a slow spot on Fridays and Mondays. Have heard concerns will be working with IT don't know what we can do but I feel your pain. Is a hardship
- Information reports on ARS? Have been told yes but I have not seen it yet
- Any discussion on buyout programs? The language was in presidents 12 budget, until congress gets together, we won't have an answer. That was just a proposed budget. I expect there will be a definite on if there is a buyout program or not. They must be executed at the beginning of the fiscal year to realize savings will have to work fast to get it in by October 1
- Will it land in dc or COF? Premature to speculate on what areas will be targeted.
- Is MIDAS separate dollars? Has a separate allocation. The secretary has discretion to pull some money from other areas. Not to say it is 100 percent safe but the sec will probably pull money from other areas to keep it going it is critical

- Do we need upgraded hardware to make MIDAS effective? Will have to talk to it to see if that is the case. But MIDAS is a software driven product
- Any progress on leasing? I have been told there is positive progress Carolyn Cooksey has established a SED task force. The learning curve is coming back into reality, we are making progress. They met with GSA and have a firm grasp on progress, but we need to make more progress, we are moving forward.
- What is the status of the leasing comparability study? I really don't know, I will find out and let Charlene know.
- Hopefully by National Convention we can get some representation to travel down there.

John Lohr, NASCOE vice Pres

- Gave a presentation on NAFEC
- NAFEC is really hurting for membership
- NAFEC can do things that we cannot in DC
- Funding fiscal 11 and 12 funding is close to the top of main topics
- Looks like a 3 week c/r will cost about 3 billion, but production agriculture won't see any cuts this round, but we may not be so lucky the further we get into it
- If they get very deep they may have to send us home
- 12 funding, there are buy outs in there for federal side, would probably impact the county some, that will probably be the high water mark, would probably get worse there
- 12 budget is moving faster than the 11 budget c/r
- The 12 budget may pass before the 11 budget
- Nascoe normally has two meetings with mgt, we were told we were only going to get one meeting with management, so we paid for the fall meeting last year
- In April planning on going to dc to do negotiations, but that is on hold till we see where the continuing resolutions are at that point
- 2012 farm bill, in our priorities that is our #1 that is what we do so that is our priority
- The debate is happening in the perfect storm of events
- Good Commodity prices except milk so it is not normally a good time to pass safety net
- Shrinking budgets
- Public worker backlash we are perceived as causing this deficit
- The good news is the Oklahoma delegation, national management met with Lucas
- We look at it and hope there are opportunities.
- Lucas is a commodity guy and says with a smile it isn't going to get any more simple. But it is good news that there will be stuff to do
- Legislative plan. 2010 NASCOE delivered two testimonies to subcommittees, one for IT and one for conservation.
- We do not need to keep score of how many times we keep testimony; the real score is when membership does the heavy lifting individual with members.

- Bob Redding will probably get us more opportunities in the future but don't read into that
- Meetings with Peterson and Lucas. Next year would be the time to bring up farm bill stuff but not just yet.
- Hopping that the pendulum will swing back just a little by the time farm bill talks start
- Things went well this week in dc lots of positive feedback
- Cap wiz, 8000 employees last alert we had 1400 responses. Have 3600 signed up for cap wiz. Somehow we need to find a way to deliver the message when it is time to deliver the message. Myron had a conference call looking for ideas. We need more than 1400.
- Send 9, send them for the wife, kids, COC, sister, brother...send 9 or 10 if you can
- Expand your cap wiz base. It costs the association thousands of dollars use it
- We have to do better
- Pac, we have to better there also. Have \$37,000 but that is not good enough. That is the way the process works is with money.
- NAFEC is a underutilized tool as well, need to encourage our COC's to participate in NAFEC
- Seize the opportunities! There will be opportunities, take advantage of them, there are others that want to do what we are doing, and we want to do the things that others are doing. The government works a glacier speed but we have to stay on it
- There may be a targeted fly in maybe later this year or early next year. Not a full blown fly in
- Pt opportunity Key PT position. It was not what we wanted but something came out, and we are moving somewhere.
- Nascoe formed a pt taskforce or 7 pts nationwide to look at opportunities. Mike wooden agreed to be a champion for this opportunity Carolyn Cooksey also agreed to be a champion and point of contact.
- When we are in town it is right in front on their desk, when we leave it gets buried, so we are trying to keep this issue up and in front
- Another opportunity was to be a representative on the joint association conference, joint conventions? To save money by DC folks coming out to those conventions? That is a tough row to hoe, we are currently decided we cannot get it done by 2013 in establishing guidelines, some bug hurdles to get over. We let the delegates decide where there would be conventions, but the other groups had some heartburn. More to come later in meeting
- John has been perceived as the devil because we have 60% of the folks we should have 60% of say and the other groups say "well there it is...."
- Negation process, Midwest had 200 items MWA had 100 plus, well over ½ of the items.
- Took more time than normal but they are pretty well packaged ready to go to dc
- Waiting on mgt to find funding to meet
- Nascoe leadership meets regularly with mgt, have made a lot of trips to dc, lot of the heavy lifting with mgt is done there. Not always smiles and handshakes.

- Coppess took Myron and John to the woodshed over conservation administration. NASCOE did an interview with local press and Coppess threw it at them and said I thought you were over this. He was afraid that we would upset the secretary, and we know it will upset the secretary of Ag. John could retire any day so we don't care; we have kids your age so... they said they will be around long after Coppess after he is gone. Myron said we must be doing something right
- Nascoe is the folks at home, not leadership.

Tony Augustine gave a presentation on the Pac/CAP-WIZ

- See the notes from the Leg Fly In. (Very similar presentation)

The rally then broke into committee meetings, and then committee reports were given. Those should be available soon online on the Area web page. Following that Charlene Neukomm Midwest Area Executive asked for resolutions, or concerns. There were none so the rally was adjourned after announcing Missouri would host the 2012 Midwest Area Rally