



MASCOE

PRESIDENT- -DENNIS RAY

VICE PRESIDENT- -KATHY POST

SEC.- -TERESA BUSH

TRESURER- -CATHY HEMME

FALL 2007

END OF THE YEAR PERFORMANCE

During October, rating officials must complete and turn in all Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 Ratings of Record to their servicing personnel offices. The rating of record is the name for the performance appraisal that is completed at the end of the appraisal cycle, and it is considered the final, official appraisal for that cycle.

The following are some guidelines to help conduct a successful end-of-year appraisal meeting

Before sitting down with your employee, take time to prepare with these four steps:

Review documentation about the employee's performance, which you should have been keeping throughout the performance period (e.g., work samples, logs, records and other documentation). Review the documentation to assess how the employee is performing and meeting expectations. Keep your observations of performance objective (focused on the behavior), not subjective. Have concrete examples to support your assessment. Don't hold the employee accountable for factors beyond their control; for example, changes in workload, priorities, duties and opportunities may affect employee performance.

Compare the employee's current performance with expectations. Compare your observations about the employee's current performance with the measurable standards in his or her performance plan. Identify areas of success and areas of concern.

Assess developmental opportunities. Has the employee completed developmental opportunities that have affected performance? Based on your concerns, determine if additional opportunities are needed in FY08.

Help the employee prepare for the meeting. Agree on a specific time and place for the discussion. Explain the purpose of the meeting and what will be discussed. Make sure the employee has a copy of his/her performance plan. Suggest that the employee bring additional work samples that highlight their performance. Ask the employee to think about his/her areas of strength and areas for development in FY08.

With you and your employee prepared, you are ready to have the end-of-year performance appraisal discussion. Follow these four steps for a successful meeting:

Open the meeting. Establish a relaxed, non-threatening environment in which the employee feels secure and respected. Hold the meeting in "neutral territory" and provide a comfortable environment. Eliminate distractions, such as ringing phones, e-mail, pagers, etc.

Establish a positive tone when you greet the employee and welcome him or her to the discussion. Review the meeting's goals and, in general, what you will discuss.

Discuss accomplishments and expectations. Provide a general summary of the employee's performance. Discuss areas of success and areas of concern, in light of expectations. Suggest further developmental opportunities.

Close the meeting. Summarize what has been discussed and agreed on; ask the employee for input. Confirm any follow-up actions. Express commitment to the employee's growth and success in FY08. Ensure that all the employee's concerns have been addressed. Ask the employee to sign Form 435, indicating that an end-of-year performance appraisal discussion occurred.

Complete any necessary follow-up activities.

One of these follow-up activities might be recognizing the employee with a Rating-Based Award.

A Rating-Based Award is given dependent on an employee's rating of record – which is in turn the result of their performance accomplishments over the course of the appraisal period. Such accomplishments include consistent high productivity or high-quality work in relation to established performance standards. The award may be in the form of a quality step increase, cash or time off. Making meaningful distinctions in employee performance will support the rewarding of top-performing employees. A "PM" notice on awards will be issued shortly and will give full details on how to give a ratings-based award.

Once you have "closed out" FY07 with a rating of record and any appropriate follow-up activities, it will be time to establish an FY08 performance plan for all employees. Both the FY07 rating of record and the FY08 performance plan must be completed by Oct. 30, 2007, so the next month or so will be a busy time in the performance management world.

Common stocks lead August TSP earnings

By Brittany R. Ballenstedt bballenstedt@govexec.com **September 5, 2007** Common stocks lead August TSP earnings

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Common stocks in the Thrift Savings Plan made the strongest gains for August, while only international investments -- the leader for yearlong growth -- lost ground.

The C Fund, which tracks Standard & Poor's 500 Index of stocks in the largest domestic companies, gained 1.54 percent last month. That increase brought the C Fund's 12-month total growth to 15.21 percent.

The S Fund, which invests in small- and mid-sized companies by tracking the Dow Jones Wilshire 4500 Index, grew 1.38 percent in August, for a 12-month increase of 16.38 percent.

The fixed-income bonds in the F Fund posted gains for August as well, coming in at 1.23 percent. The fund's 12-month earnings stood at 5.32 percent.

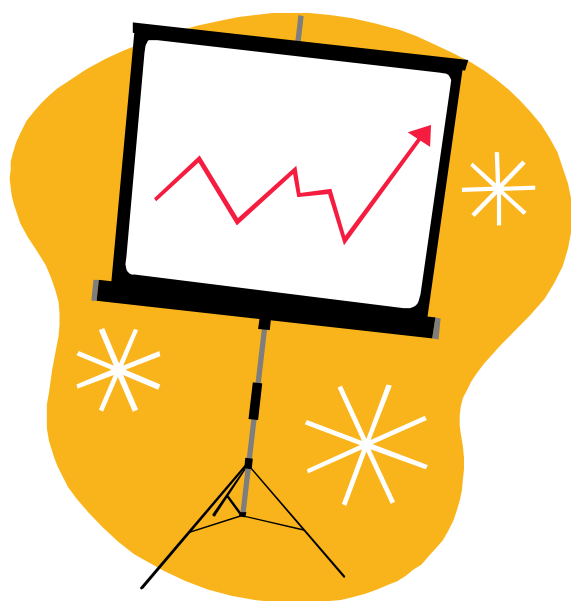
The government securities (G) fund -- which is the most reliable TSP option, with a guaranteed small but steady growth -- earned 0.33 percent last month for a yearlong 4.86 percent gain.

The I Fund was the lone loser for August, dropping 0.71 percent. The fund, made up of international investments, still had the highest 12-month earnings, coming in at 18.79 percent.

Participants in the 401(k)-style federal employee retirement savings plan also can invest in five life cycle funds, made up of a mix of the underlying basic funds. The L funds shift investments from riskier to more conservative blends as participants age. L funds with riskier allocations posted the strongest gains for August.

L 2040, intended for employees with a target retirement date around the year 2040, gained 0.90 percent. The L 2030 Fund earned 0.88 percent; the L 2020 gained 0.80 percent; the L 2010 increased 0.73 percent; and the L Income, designed for those with planned retirements in the very near future, grew 0.61 percent.

The L funds with riskier allocations also earned more over 12 months. L 2040 gained 14.82 percent, L 2030 grew 13.65 percent, L 2020 gained



JOIN MASCOE

HELP US TO WORK FOR YOU

\$78.00 for Grades 9 and above

\$52.00 for all other regular members, and

\$25.00 for all associate members.

MIDWEST AREA EXECUTIVE REPORT

July 19, 2007

I wanted to update you on the latest concerning the conservation language to transfer administrative function from NRCS to FSA as part of the new farm bill. As you may already know, the language was stripped out and something much weaker was substituted. While this appears to be a defeat I think we need to be encouraged that the House Ag Chairman felt strongly about this issue to put it in the initial proposal.

Please rest assured the proposal is not dead and may still land in this current farm bill language. If not, my sources indicate that the Reorg bill will be another opportunity to make the change. A couple of things went wrong for us that we need to get ready for the next time. When the language was published, NACD put on a lobbying blitz that was strong before any Ag Committee members had reviewed this proposal or had time to debate or discuss. NASCOE just didn't have enough time to generate enough push back to keep the language in the bill right now. With NACD pounding the Ag Committee we just couldn't muster enough contacts quickly.

So here is where we are:

- We still have many friends who want to make this happen in Congress.
- We have a new position paper that will be coming out as soon as the timing is right.
- The legislative committee will be meeting tomorrow to determine strategy and timing.
- House Ag Chair Peterson has made a very strong statement that NRCS will NOT get new dollars for employees.
- We need to get ready for a blitz of our own! Get your people signed up for Capwiz. Be prepared to mobilize NASCOE friends to make contacts. Word will be coming soon on when to start so get at the starting gate!

I hope you are getting excited about this legislative goal! It will take every one of us to make it happen so let's get ready to get in the game!

OTHER NEWS:

1. Our office closure amendment was accepted in the farm bill. We will have a moratorium for one year with no exceptions.
2. National training for the new disaster program will be held the week of September 17th so plan on training (hopefully) and the sign up soon after!
3. Our President and Vice President are going to WDC to meet with management and make some Congressional visits. You could probably still get any questions for management to Bonnie if you act immediately.

Submitted by:

Mark VanHoose

Midwest Area Executive

CAP WIZ

CAP WIZ

Tammy provided you with some great information on CAP WIZ and how useful of a tool it was during FSA Tomorrow. I feel because of bad press regarding erroneous payments and the upcoming Farm Bill deliberations, it is going to be vital that NASCOE members get involved just like they did during FSA Tomorrow, if FSA and the CO employees are going to remain an important part of the Federal Farm Program delivery system

WASCOE only has around 25% of our members signed up for CAP WIZ and we can do much better than this. It's easy and free. Just go to www.nascoe.org and click on the CAP WIZ icon. **Remember this must be done from your home computer.**

You will not be snowed under with junk email or put on a mailing list. You will only receive a message that says Action Alert that asks you to take action on certain legislation. You will then go to CAP WIZ and check out the legislation that NASCOE would like you to respond to. You will be provided a statement or letter that you can send to targeted members of congress; either the Representative for your district or the Senators for Wisconsin.

Tammy provided me with a list of people that signed up for CAP WIZ using bad email addresses such as the government one or there was some other problem that prevents you from accessing CAP WIZ. Hopefully, I will be in contact these folks during the next month so we can get the corrections made and get you on the list.

The other thing to remember is that whether you are using CAP WIZ or not, NASCOE is paying for this service. Your dues help pay for this and I personally think it is well worth the investment but we need to use it to see how valuable it really can be. We have barely scratched the potential. It's like getting a new Harley Motorcycle and letting it sit in the garage. It's nice to say you have it but the real enjoyment is using it. If you need help signing up let me know and I will be glad to help you out.

Jon Williams

WI CAP WIZ Coordinator



RECENT ISSUES SENT DIRECTLY TO YOUR HOME EMAIL ACCOUNT FOR YOUR ACTION.

ISSUES ARE PRESENTED IN AN EASY TO READ FORMAT.

YOU CHOOSE TO ACT ON THESE ISSUE OR NOT.

THE ACCESS IS EASY THE LETTERS ARE THERE STATING CONCERNS AND THE ACTION THAT NEEDS TO BE TAKE TO SUPPORT FSA.

CHECK THE ONES YOU WANT TO SEND.

AUTOMATICLY SEND TO YOUR SENATOR AND CONGRESSMAN.

FROM THE DESK OF THE MASCOE PRESIDENT

Are you part of the “V”

I am sure many of you have seen this before but I thought it was worth sharing anyway.

This fall when you see geese heading back south for the winter, flying along in a “V” formation, you might be interested in knowing what has been discovered about why they fly that way.

It has been learned that as each bird flaps its wings it creates uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in a “V” formation, the whole flock adds at least 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own.

MASCOE was formed to represent people who share a common direction and sense of community. We work together for the benefit of all because that is the purpose of the association.

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front. When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back in the wing and another goose flies point.

It pays to take turns doing hard jobs and I would like to take this time to personally thank Brian Mulherin, immediate past president, and other past leaders of MASCOE. Many have devoted a great deal of their annual leave, personal time and finances to represent me and all county office employees and for that I am grateful.

The geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

Please notice that they honk from behind for encouragement. We have several members around the state that have devoted many years of service to MASCOE. If you have the chance, thank them for all of their efforts over the years. Many of the benefits we take for granted now are a direct result of their hard work.

Finally, when a goose gets sick or is wounded by gunshot and falls out, two geese fall out of formation and follow it down to provide help and protection. They stay with it until it is either able to fly or until it dies, and then they launch out on their own or with another formation to catch up with their own group.

If you are a member already I want to thank you for your participation. If you are not currently a member, I hope you consider joining. After all, the sole purpose of the Association is to promote the welfare of the Association members. We need to stand by each other in good times and in tough times and it helps to have as many members as we can to help share the load.



BENEFITS

Exclusive Benefits for NASCOE Members

The following Benefits are offered through J.M. Marketing, Inc.

Cancer and Intensive Care

Long Term Care Protection (Nursing Home)

Heart/Stroke Insurance,

with option Cancer First Occurrence and Intensive Care Riders

Accident Policies

Disability Insurance

Life Insurance

Hospital Indemnity Plan

Final Expense Policy

Directors Liability Policy

Association Liability Policy

Dental

Critical Illness

All of the above policies are available any time of the year to our members with the exception of Dental Insurance.

*Dental Policy is a true group policy only available to members of NASCOE and during open enrollment.

Please call J. M. Marketing at 1 (800) 330-6223 or visit their web site at <http://www.jmmarketing.biz> for more details about the above policies and benefits.

OTHER EXCLUSIVE BENEFITS FOR NASCOE MEMBERS

Anheuser-Busch Theme Park Club

(Discounts at Sea World, Busch Gardens, cypress Gardens)

Six Flags Family Parks Discount Coupons

(Discounts to Six Flags Parks throughout the U.S. – Includes Hurricane Harbors, Water Worlds, and Magic Mountains) Requests must be at least 2 weeks advance notice.

** Please request discount Coupons through your State and Area Benefit Chairs. **

Agriculture Federal Credit Union, Savings, IRA's

Legal Services for NASCOE Members

Liability Coverage for State Affiliates during NASCOE related functions.

Cell Phone Discounts

Discounts available for Members only through Cingular and Alltel
See page on Cell Phone Discounts for more discounts and information

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR NASCOE BENEFITS: NASCOE Exec Policies – item #33 explains who is eligible and how. Ex) Current and Former FSA employees – if eligible for full membership in NASCOE – must be a full member to take advantage of the benefits. If a person is only eligible for associate membership in NASCOE – you must be an associate member. NADD and NAFEC – must be an associate member of NASCOE to take advantage of the benefits.

A basic exception) If the person is truly a retired NASCOE member then a RASCOE member that are not current FSA employees are eligible for any NASCOE benefit unless that membership is required by the company offering the benefit.

Other Discount Programs available for all Government Employees:

Apple offers Government Employees 17% off. For more information call 1-800-MY-APPLE or www.apple.com/r/store/government/epp.html

There is a web-site and program for USDA employees for purchasing many items and using payroll deduction to pay. No Credit checks! This site has specials and you will want to continue to check out their specials to see what would benefit you. Site is www.gov.purchasingpower.com

OTHER LINKS: AVAILABLE TO MASCOE MEMBERS:

<http://nascoe.org/pdf/Benefit%20to%20NASCOE%20Attorney.pdf>

<http://nascoe.org/pdf/AmusementParkAddresses2007.doc>

http://nascoe.org/INFO_CELL_PHONE_DISCOUNTS.doc

<http://www.jmmarketing.biz/>

2007 NASCOE Convention Notes
Myrtle Beach, SC
August 8 –August 11, 2007

I would like to thank MASCOE for allowing me to be the Missouri delegate for the 2007 convention. Once again, it is was an exciting experience to see the NASCOE officers and all those who are diligently working behind the scenes come together and show us the effects of their efforts.

Once you have attended a National Convention, you are hooked. They are so informative, busy and fun. There are a lot of meetings going on those days.

Wednesday, August 8, 2007

There were tours throughout the day to historic South Carolina. My husband and I chose to go on a ½ day deep sea fishing trip. We are glad we went, but don't have to do that again. We lost over ½ those attending to sea sickness. And just for the record, the taller they are, the harder they fall.

An informational meeting was held early Wednesday evening for State Officers and delegates.

Thursday, August 9, 2007

8:30 AM Convention Convened.

ROLL CALL:

MO answered roll call with 6 present. This included my family of 4 plus Mr. & Mrs. Jim Mace of J & M Marketing. We need to work on that for next year!

Illinois answered roll call with an outstanding number of 42!! Hurray for IL. I wish MO could have done that. They are our neighboring state. Some of them traveled a further distance than I.

I firmly believe each member should want to go and represent their state.

Larry Yonce, State Committee Chair, SC:

There are no subsidies or programs for specialty crops. The crop is not sold till it is in transit and you don't know who is going to buy it. He is hoping the farm bill will address that. He fears we are sending our Agriculture over seas. We need to keep Agriculture in America.

Teresa Lasseter, FSA Administrator:

Glad to be at the convention. She has always been a supporter of NASCOE and encourages everyone else to do the same.

The "deceased farmer" is another huge issue for us. When looking into the report, we did not pay as many "deceased" farmers as reported, but what we failed to do was document why we went ahead and made the payment. DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT!! We need to make sure we have documentation in the file to back up anything we have done.

The memo regarding "non-government" usage on government time was just released a few days prior to the convention. Employees are using government equipment and time for non-government activities. An incident of lobbying on government time was found. Mrs. Lasseter did not want to comment any further on this "issue". She will wait for the report to see what action will need to be taken.

Privacy is a concern. We need to be cautious and careful. If we see anything out of order or suspicious, report it.

Re-office structure: change is inevitable. Not happy with all office closures. Need to stay focused on what our agencies need to do. We need better staffed offices and modern tools to work with. She does not want to have office clo-

asures with a reduction in force. We need to use our resources more wisely and adapt with change.

Mrs. Lasseter and some of her staff visited Dan Root's, President of NASCOE, county office. They completed DCP, acreage reports, and some payment eligibility. They learned a lot!! She will be encouraging more of her staff along with DC folks to do the same so they have an understanding of what we do and the challenges we are faced with. All folders were not put away. (I personally talked with Dan later to ask if he candy coated her visit or did she really see the action we have. He said Mrs. Lasseter and staff were in on all the action. Those days the office was busy as usual. So they were able to see the "real" county office daily challenges.)

Washington DC is getting disaster ready. Good training is important to make sure we do a good job. Please be Very Careful!

Last note to office staff, take care of ourselves. She knows we are working harder with less. Take time off to rest and relax.

Formal Signing of Labor Management Agreement:

Bid for 2009 Convention:

Tennessee bid to have the 2009 National Convention in Gatlinburg, TN. Park Vista Resort Hotel. Voting to take place Saturday, August 11, 2007. Tennessee association had a cute skit with "Dolly Parton".

2008 Convention:

August 6 – 9, 2008 in Omaha, NE. Doubletree Hotel. \$99.00 - \$119.00 Room Rate. Make reservations early.

Budget Performance management System and Activity Reporting System:

Heide Ware, Chief Administrative Expense Branch
Bob McGrath, Agricultural Program Analyst
Vicki Larson, Section head of Co Budget & Work Measurement Staff

BPMS will better link together data and actual work being completed. Ties back to strategic plan time, outputs and cost. BPMS will be easier to complete reports such as cost management and efficiency reports. This program is set up to be able to pull specific data as needed.

Activity Reporting System (ARS). Employee's enter own T & A. ARS will track time daily. Scratch sheet is a tool to help us fill out T & A. It will take a lot of time in the beginning to get use to the codes and figure out how things need to be completed.

Clara Ruth Saint, RASCOE President:

1,386 members strong. RASCOE works for the same thing NASCOE does, but they have time to do it. RASCOE can say things that NASCOE can not. Help support their efforts my becoming a member today. We will get their some day. It is great and a lot more relaxed.

Michael Gibbs, NACS President:

Farm Bill wish list;
eliminate term limits for borrowing
increase loan limits, \$200,000 is not enough.

Committee Meetings: Awards, Benefits, Legislative, Membership, Publicity, Program

I went to the Legislative Meeting. This is where is would be extremely beneficial to have more than one person going to the convention. Each of these committees, have issues that need to be decided on and new issues that are going to be covered over the next year. Nothing replaces hearing the information in person. Since I couldn't split myself into six pieces, I wholly went to the Legislative Meeting.

Bob Redding: NASCOE Legislative Consultant

Chairman Peterson is very much behind us. NASCOE had everything in place for giving some slots for office closures, but Peterson lost the conservation piece he was wanting. After that, he said no, FSA will not close any offices. So, that is the stand we are taking. We will not bite the hand that feeds us for support. You can't go to the CHAIRMAN and say, that isn't what we wanted when he wants to back us.

Mr. Redding is very knowledgeable regarding how things work in DC. He is very interesting to listen to. More things can be said in this brake out session than in general meeting. I found myself listening and not taking as many notes here as I should have. So what I have is sketchy.

People to watch regarding the farm bill will be Harkin, Reid and Conrad.

Bi-Partisan cooking in Senate. All programs will survive.

Watch what happens with crop insurance.

Critical States: ND, MS, MT

5 year disaster bill with \$5 Billion to go with it plus another \$5 Billion with specialty crops. They will work on in DC Weds. after Labor Day.

CAPWIZ – if no email capability, then send letters to local political office.

Adjourned to Midwest Area Meeting.

Midwest Area Meeting:

Committee Reports were given. One of the most important issues mentioned, MWA (IL, IN, IA, MI, MN, MO, OH, WI) makes up 33.3% of total CAPWIZ members signed up. Southeast area is close behind with 26.1%. There are five areas total. So, MWA and SWA make up 59.4% of total CAPWIZ members. So, the effectiveness of CAPWIZ is coming from those two areas.

In looking at the individual state numbers, MO is the LOWEST in the MWA. We can do better than that!! This is such an easy tool to use and it cost us nothing individually except a few minutes! BUT WE HAVE TO DO IT AT HOME.

Adjourned for the evening.

Friday, August 10, 2007

Convention Convened.

Candidacy Announcements

Bob Redding, Redding & Associates, Legislative Consultant:

Reserve Fund – Markers, Place Holders, Targets.

PAGO – Pay As you Go. Difficult with base line dollars we have.

Rebalancing – Phrase used that should make Southern States nervous. Rice guys concerned on Payment Limitation. Cotton decrease price support. Grain increase Target Price Option. Vegetable & fruit big gain. \$1.7 Billion

Believes there will be a modified House & Senate Package. On calendar 3rd week September.

Mark-up bill week of September 17th.

Chairman Harken has not shared his version of the Farm Bill. Senator Conrad is the one to watch.

Grass roots getting better.

Education: White Paper. PAC continues to grow. Need more \$\$ to use. This is the future!

Steve Connelly, Deputy Administrator Field Operations:

Be very careful of using government computer for lobbying efforts!!! Read memo from Teresa.

Office restructure:

- 41 states have submitted plans
- 193 proposed office consolidation
- 7 plans have no closures and have been approved
- 14 states completing the required public meetings
- 9 states in Connelly's office under review.

Improper Payment Reports:

'06 good reviews. Below 2.5% threshold. Great improvement.

Non-Ceiling FLOTS & COTS:

Need succession replacement. Allotted additional 33 non-ceiling COT's and 20 non-ceiling FLOTS.

John Johnson, Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs:

*2007 Crop Disaster (CDP, LCP, and LIP CGP & DDAP III

*LCP & LIP Sign Up target 9/07. Training to take place after sign-up started.

*CDP – 2005/2006/2007 (National Training September 2007. October '07 start sign-up.)

*Dairy Indemnity III - \$16 million. 2005/2006/First two months Oct. '07. For Disaster Counties. No sign-up date.

*ECP on going.

*CP 617 & 618 Compliance Activities. 2005 Audit from OIG found we completed too many spot checks. Could redirect 368,000 work hours which is valued at \$3.7 Million.

John Williams, Deputy Administrator, Management:

'08 Budget \$200 Million. House version funds us at 50%. Senate version funds us at 2/3%. Technical adjustments. Both versions are below our current operating plan. Carry over funds being used. Look more closely at National & STO staffing and efficiency.

Questions & Answers: (This is my favorite. The questions are pointed and generally shows our frustrations)
Bonnie reviewed the rules for asking questions.

Q: Disaster programs require crop insurance or NAP coverage. Has this been waived?

A: John Johnson: Reviewed the requirements regarding insurance requirements for previous disaster programs. Section 90-12 intended different wording, but the final version did not contain the intended verbiage. Congress did delete 90-12 and the obstacles have been removed for forage producers.

Q: What options are available for COF's with no full time employees, especially in temporary shared management situations? Mrs. Lasseter asked to have the question repeated and not sure of what it was specifically asking. The question was clarified to describe how the COF employees are bearing the brunt of trying to administer programs with no resources.

A: Teresa Lasseter: The idea of P.T.'s traveling to two different offices is exactly what I am against and not the intent of the plan. There are no real options for employees at this time. Budget drives the number of employees and staffing that can be used. We are trying to do a lot with limited funding. We need to think about how we can modernize and do our job better.

Q: Why are performance appraisals also tied to one office? The question was clarified to describe the work done is not credited in the county where the work is done.

A: Lasseter: This needs to be investigated and it will be looked into.

Q: How will the new awards program be administered?

A: Johnson: It will be tied to performance appraisals and policy will be coming out in September-October. A % will be allotted for performance appraisals.

Q: How will supervisory grade classification be when consolidations are completed?

A: Farmer: There is a CED task force to research this issue.

Q: Much information was removed from 22-PM, when will this be restored?

A: Chott: The grievance policy will be restored soon and some of the information will go into another handbook.

Q: Employees are the most valuable asset for any company. The moral is at an all time low at this time. What incentives are planned for employees? Examples were sites: more insurance coverage, etc.

A: Lasseter: Government has restrictions on what is available to offer employees. She reminded everyone that we have good jobs even though we have a lot of work to do. We should all feel good about what we do and it's important to continue to have strong farming operations in this country to feed this country and the rest of the world. Moral: we need to stop and think about the benefits we are already receiving. We want to support COF employees and do everything we can to help, however, we must make an effort to make ourselves feel better. They are more than willing to listen to suggestions, especially if it is cost effective.

Farmer: There are restrictions on what is available to government employees. She reminded everyone of how good the benefits are right now. Awards are a bit moral booster. By working closing with employee organizations, Washington becomes aware of employee situations. AgLearn-we need to encourage our managers to participate in on-line training.

Q: Will CED and/or PT classification be considered in the future?

A: Farmer: There is a task force being assembled for CED reclassification. Nothing has been submitted to date regarding PT Classification.

Heinzman: NASCOE is going to submit PT Classification to HRM in the near future.

Lasseter: She reminded everyone that if there are increases in salaries, it has to come out of the budget and congress has not given enough money to cover these types of increases. We need to be cognizant of this when asking for such items.

Q: There are serious backlogs to have new employees approved for security clearance, is there any recognition of the problem this has caused?

A: Williams: Washington does recognize this problem and they expect to see a substantial improvement in this situation in the near future.

Q: It seems that some states are receiving 2007 imagery. How is it determined what states will receive current imagery?

A: Johnson: The agency had to decide how to fund IT needs, \$28 million was needed to accomplish this and so it was decided to use NAIP funding to aid in this need. This reduction caused a severe reduction in the number of states that could receive 2007 imagery.

Q: What IT items have been fixed?

A: Lasseter: Are you not better off than in January? The group consensus was that it was better. Washington has spent long hours in an attempt to rectify this situation. The system needs to be modernized and they are working toward that goal, within budget restrictions.

Q: What authorities do the STC actually have regarding implementation of ECP without input from the local COC?

A: Johnson: this is the first I have heard this concern and we will follow up on this.

Q: The new BPMS system, how will this indicate the difference between efficient and inefficient offices?

A: Taitano: This would be difficult to differentiate. We will be moving away from National Averages and untimely feedback. We want to benchmark each office in program delivery. Then comparisons can be done based on cost estimates to administer programs. It is difficult to determine how productive FSA is at this time with the present workload system and BPMS will aid in this area.

Q: How are the coefficients determined with each program?

A: Taitano: BPMS will not use coefficients. We must have standard data to use across the nation, using time, cost and units as a measure.

Q: Will pay grades be integrated into this system?

A: Taitano: Yes this will have to happen.

Q: How will BPMS actually reflect the true staffing needs across the nation?

A: Taitano: This new system should aid in this effort. The Pilot states have reported good success.

McGraff: Pilot states have been working on this and more states are to start. By the end of September there should be a report on the effectiveness of this system.

Q: Please clarify when all records that contain sensitive data need to be in safe storage?

A: Sanders: FSA is already mandated to have all sensitive data in locked storage. The cost of obtaining such equipment is under advisement and there is no good answer at this time. However, we are under the same restrictions as NRCS and other agencies to be accountable on how we handle private information. As far as electronic records, there are guidelines on sharing electronic data. Software will be sent that will encrypt information. This has started on some types of files.

Connelly: Replacing file cabinets with locking cabinets would be extremely expensive and this situation is being researched to find a cost effective means to provide the necessary security.

Lasseter: We must take extra measures to protect information. If we see any type of situation that could compromise sensitive information, please report such circumstances to supervisors.

Q: Performance plans are becoming more important and these plans are evolving. What efforts are being made to

ensure a solid standard is used?

A: Williams: There are plans to ensure that states are complying with the intent of the 5 tier performance plans and the results that are desired.

Heinzman: it is very important that supervisors review what is expected at the beginning of the year, so it is clear what is expected?

Q: What are the plans for GIS?

A: Johnson: he is frustrated with the integration of programs with GIS. The problem is that the entire county is not certified at this time and that is what is causing a delay in utilizing GIS in program delivery at a better level.

Q: What are the plans to provide reports that would identify inactive producers in SCIMS and Farm Records?

A: Sanders: There are some canned queries that are available. There are problems with creating reports using current data base systems. Canned queries can be developed. There are limitations to the canned queries. Washington can look into what can be done.

Q: Why do DD's have authority to override performance ratings on employees that they do not supervise?

A: Williams: the DD's are reviewers and this is appropriate for the DD's to perform this duty. There must be some objective basis to change the supervisor's determination.

Q: What is the minimum number of employees necessary for CED grade classification? DD's are required to have 3 FLM's to have a grade 13 classification.

A: Farmer: CED's already have the requirement to supervise 3 employees to keep the grade 12 level. There are other considerations that can be taken into account.

Q: What options are available to states that need 2007 imagery for COF's that cannot do field work effectively?

A: The states that will not get imagery, will have to work it out.

Q: Will DD's be able to use CED's to keep their grade 13?

A: Connelly-NO

Q: What is Washington doing to stop payments to estates and deceased farmers?

A: Johnson: There are many circumstances that the estate is eligible to receive payments; the problem comes in when the payments continue to be made to the estate. Currently, FSA is trying to tie into the Social Security database to stop incorrect payments because producers do not report such information directly to FSA. Independent 3rd party insight would be an effective aid in preventing this. He is hoping that a report can be available in a few months.

Q: Why are re-locations costs not available to PT's in combined offices?

A: Connelly: relocation reimbursement is available to anyone if over a 50 mile drive.

Saturday, August 11, 2007

Convention Convenes.

In Memoriam Power Point Presentation.

Resolutions regarding MWA Travel Policy and NASCOE Travel Policy

Secretary's Report

Treasurer's Report

Selection of 2009 Convention Site. - Gatlinburg, TN

Larry Mitchell, CEO American Corn Growers:

Described his position with the American Corn Growers and the work involved in the development of the farm bill.

Discussed crop surpluses, crop prices and the proposals for commodity payments in the farm bill. There has to be a portfolio of crops dedicated to energy and used for Ethanol.

There are concerns about the new compliance rules and the use of "statistical sampling" method to determine spot-checks. He remarked on how certain issues are headlined by the media and they force the focus off the real issues that FSA is dealing with.

There will be hearings later this year on crop insurance issues. There has been 2,000 spot-checks on AGI for millions of farmers. This caused a lot of concern with Congress regarding the few actually checked.

There is an attempt to privatize grain inspections for export. This is a real concern because it would directly affect grain prices in this country.

Office closings must be monitored closely. It doesn't make sense to close an office before the farm bill is passed

Q: Will we have a farm bill? A: there will be a farm bill, but it remains to be seen if the new farm bill is in place. Otherwise, the bill reverts to the old farm bill. He feels the Senate version is farther along than most people think.

Q: Where did he think the money will come from for IT? A: He didn't know where the money come from the Corn Growers are aware of the dire straights of IT.

Committee Reports

Report of Area Elections:

MWA – Jon Williams, Executive Chairperson
Charlene Neukomm, Alternate Exec

Election of NASCOE Officers:

Bonnie Heinzman – President
Myron Stroup – V. President
Secretary – Darlene Schouten
Treasurer – Shelley Odenkirk

Convention Adjourned.

Submitted by:

Kathy Post - Delegate

