

**The Iowa Association Of FSA
County Office Employees**

IASCOE

NEWS

March 2003

Newsletter



IASCOE Representatives In Front Of The Supreme Court
During The 2003 Legislative Conference Feb 22 - 26 2003

**Join Us At The
2003 IASCOE/IACS/IASE CONVENTION
April 4th & 5th, 2003**

Adventureland Inn
I 80 and Hwy 65
Altoona IA 50009

Phone: 515-265-7321

Room Rates: \$65.00 + tax for outer facing room
\$90.00 + tax for courtyard facing room

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER

Mark Pearson

Host of IPTV's Market To Market

will speak during the General Session on Saturday Morning

***GET INFORMATION FIRST HAND!
JOIN THE FUN!!!
CALL NOW FOR RESERVATIONS!***

**Enter your group in the Talent Show
at 8:00 on Friday Night
(no talent required)**

Meeting Schedule

Friday April 4th

IASCOE Past President's/Retiree's Luncheon 12:00 noon
Registration 1:00 – 5:00 PM
IACS Meeting 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
IASE Meeting 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
IASCOE Committee Meetings 1:00 – 4:00 PM
Hospitality 5:00 – 7:00 PM
Talent Show 8:00 PM
Dance 9:00 – 12:00 PM

Saturday April 5th

Registration 8:00 – 9:30 AM
Breakfast Buffet Banquet 7:30 – 8:30 AM
Awards & Scholarships 8:30 – 9:15 AM
IASCOE/IACS/IASE General Session 9:30 – 12:30 PM

Pre-registration is strongly encouraged! And it will save you money!!! Pre-register for all of the above activities for \$20. Registration at the door will be \$25.

Get the pre-registration form at iascoe.org

**Each county office is asked to bring a door prize or silent auction item.
It's your convention – let's make it a good one!**

IASCOE Presidents Report

By John Landgraf - IASCOE President
MARCH 2003

Hello Membership

From February 22 to 26, I was able to join 5 of your IASCOE Representatives at the 2003 Legislative Conference held in Washington D.C. Your Representatives that attended were Denise Dugan from Woodbury County, Tom Lane from Henry and Lee County, Joni Birkhofer from Muscatine County, Steve Kennedy from Jasper County and Tammy Eibey from Delaware County.

We spent the first two days in session with NASCOE Representatives from the other 49 States along with National Representatives from the Corn Growers Association, Rice Producers Association, Cattleman's Association, Farmers Union, Cotton Council and Wheat Growers.

The general consensus from all of these Ag groups is that they have a high degree of respect for the FSA County Office staff that has always assisted their membership as they participate in some really complex Farm Programs. They understand that our workload requirements generate immediate staffing shortages without proper funding and pledged their support as they continue to work on present and future Farm Bills.

During this same time we also heard from within the Department. Doug Frago – Deputy Administrator for Field Operations (DAFO), John Williams – Deputy Administrator of Management (DAM) and Diane Sharp – Production, Emergencies and Compliance Division (PECD). You can check the Legislative Conference notes to review the topics covered by these speakers posted on the IASCOE web site, iascoe.org. (and later in this newsletter)

The last two days we headed to the Hill and visited with each of your State Senators and Congressmen. We spent this time reviewing NASCOE position papers (see NASCOE web site) and explained current workload and staffing issues. During these visits we had the company of Don Mason, a special NASCOE Advocate from northwest Iowa. Don currently serves as the Director of Grower Services for the Iowa Corn Growers Association (ICGA). He has an interesting background that you can read about in this issue of IASCOE news.

Over all the Legislative Conference was very successful and worthwhile. I am always amazed by the commitment and effort put forth by all of the NASCOE Representatives from every State in support of their co-workers back at the County Office. When you get a chance, thank those Representatives that I mentioned earlier. They volunteered their personal time and quite a bit of their own funds to represent you.

Your membership in this State and National organization is YOUR VOICE that enables YOUR REPRESENTATION. NASCOE calls attention to the important work you do and insures that the Institutions that develop and implement National Farm Policy don't forget who's out here pulling the Farm Program Plow every day. I think that is one of NASCOE's most important functions!

Your dues are workin'!!

John Landgraf

Vice Presidents Report

Thoughts From Down the "Lane"

By Tom Lane - IASCOE Vice President

March 2003

You have seen athletes “play over their heads” at times. Why? Because of the challenge and its acceptance. It is the people who look at struggle as a blessing who achieve the big rewards of life. The hard surgical cases- ones where life hangs in the balance- are given to skillful surgeons who know what it takes to save those lives. The tough engineering problem goes to an engineer who has always accepted a challenge and found a way to succeed.

The same can be said for employees of the Farm Service Agency. Over the years, FSA employees have been challenged to provide needed services for the producers/borrowers of their counties, with very limited resources and extremely tight timeframes. Every time, FSA employees have accepted those challenges and found ways to succeed.

Challenges abound again for us this year. From finishing DCP sign-up – to a new CRP sign-up—to the disaster program just enacted by Congress—to whatever life holds. I encourage you to accept all challenges that lie ahead, find a way to succeed and achieve the big rewards of life.

A challenge I have for you is to attend the IASE/IACS/IASCOE State Convention at the Adventureland Inn in Altoona on April 4-5. Mark Pearson, host of ‘Market to Market’ has consented to speak. Additionally, you will have the opportunity to discuss topics/problems with your peers and, possibly, learn ways to resolve those problems and achieve the desired results.

I wish all of you a safe and happy spring.

Tom

NASCOE Emblem Merchandise

For information on how to order NASCOE Emblem shirts, pants, caps, cups, tote bags, and pins, contact Sandy Johnson of Washington County.



Reports From 2003 Legislative Conference

It was my privilege to represent IASCOE at the recent Legislative Conference in Washington DC. WOW, I sure wish that all FSA employees had the opportunity to see NASCOE at work for them. There are so many dedicated NASCOE members that volunteer their personal time to help ALL employees of USDA-FSA. Without the voice of NASCOE, we would not have most of the benefits we have today. Of course the biggest issue we faced, was budget and staffing. It seemed that our Senators and Congressmen understood and agreed that we do need permanent staffing, but with the budget it doesn't always work out that way. They listened very closely to our concerns about the April 1st deadline. Could we make it? Did we want an extension? And if extended, to when? We asked for their bipartisan support on increasing the government's share of our health insurance premiums from 72% to 80%. We left position papers with them on our role in Homeland Security, Crop Insurance Reform and E-Gov. NASCOE supports all of these initiatives. If you would like to read the position papers they are posted on the Nascoe.org website. Be sure to scroll down to the 2003 papers. It seems to me that my dues are a very small price to pay to keep NASCOE working for me.

Iowa's membership stands at 85%. We have gained some over the past two years. If you have ever considered becoming a member but just didn't take the time or had some questions, now is the time. Our membership drive will be beginning in May or June for the new year. Your support is vital for IASCOE/NASCOE to survive and continue to work for all FSA employees.

Denise Dugan
Woodbury Co

I was one of 5 people that attended the legislative conference in Washington D.C. We met with 7 different congressmen and Senators. We addressed the need for permanent staffing to replace the 38% reduction in workforce since 1994. We also discussed FSA's responsibilities in crop insurance reform. We pointed out the lack of permanent full time employees that we need to fully implement the intent of the law that requires reconciliation of both acreage and production reports. Our final concern was Federal employee health benefit program. We presented papers that supported an increase in the government's contribution from an average of 72 % to 80%. We all felt that the senators and congressmen would try to help with the items that were discussed.

Joni Birkhofer
Muscatine County



left to right

Steve Kennedy – Jasper County, Denise Dugan – Woodbury County,
Joni Birkhofer – Muscatine County, Tammy Eibey – Delaware County

LABOR MANAGEMENT MEETING

Iowa State FSA Office

Des Moines, IA

February 11, 2003

The annual Labor Management Meeting was held on February 11, 2003 at the Iowa State Office. In attendance for the State Committee was Chairperson; Merlin Plagge, Members; Rozanne King, Bill Northey, Dan Petersen and SED Derryl McLaren. Those in attendance representing IASCOE were President; John Landgraf, Vice President; Tom Lane and Secretary/Treasurer; Sue Beemer.

The meeting started at 12:45 P.M. with President John Landgraf extending an invitation to the SED and State Committee for the IASCOE Convention on April 4th and 5th in Des Moines at the Adventureland Inn. John briefly discussed the purpose of the convention and our gratitude to the 125-150 members who continually show their support by taking annual leave to attend. It was suggested at our last director's meeting about the possibility of combining a wellness day with our annual convention, thus resulting in much more participation. Hopefully something can be worked out for future conventions.

Vice President Tom Lane handed out booklets he had prepared concerning IASCOE. He briefly discussed the following:

Exhibit A: Introduction to NASCOE. NASCOE is an organization that represents the county level employees of the Farm Service Agency. This professional association represents the interests of all county office employees of the FSA, regardless of membership.

Exhibit B: EEO/Civil Rights 2003. NASCOE and the National Association of Farmer Elected Committees (NAFEC)

have a policy of absolute zero tolerance for any civil rights or equal employment opportunity violation. NASCOE and NAFEC will continue to support USDA's serious, comprehensive response to these issues.

Exhibit C: FSA and the Department of Homeland Security. The purpose of the defense preparedness program in USDA is to maintain a state of readiness for carrying out food and agricultural programs under wartime conditions. FSA's present responsibilities in administering farm, commodity, natural disaster and conservation programs, and in managing CCC operations already allow us to assist the newly established Department of Homeland Security, at minimal taxpayer expense.

Exhibit D: FSA County Committees find themselves addressing local agricultural and environmental issues for which federal programs are designed and funds are appropriated. The County FSA Committees are the local authorities responsible to fairly and equitably settle any technical and administrative disputes related to participation in all USDA conservation and commodity programs.

Exhibit E: FSA Responsibilities in Crop Insurance Reform. This ACT recognizes and utilizes the Farm Service Agency as the premier data-gathering agency of the USDA. The FSA has the skills and the

infrastructure to continue to serve in this capacity. NASCOE/IASCOE welcomes the opportunity to continue its service to America's farmers and their government.

Exhibit F: Freedom to E-file 2003. The "Freedom to E-file Act of 2000" is specifically focused on providing electronic services to the agricultural producer customers of USDA. This internet-based service is to provide an alternative method to the traditional service delivery mechanism, which is principally, based on face-to-face interaction between customers and agency staff.

Exhibit G: Pre and Post Farm Bill Required Funding and Staffing Adjustments for FY 2002 and FY 2003 – USDA Farm Service Agency. The current and existent farm programs already justify recruitment of additional permanent employees, but the need for increased permanent staffing becomes magnified with any of the proposed new Farm Bills.

Exhibit H: Is a map showing the IASCOE districts with the directors' names and addresses.

The IASCOE directors then addressed some questions from the Committee. We discussed the legislative conference coming up the last of February. Iowa will be sending five members to meet with Senators and Representatives, NASCOE officers and departmental officers. Tom briefly explained how the E-file process works. Jasper County was one of the pilot counties. We also discussed the morale of employees and if anything could be done to make the delivery of the new Farm Bill easier for the county offices.

The Labor/Management agreement was then presented and signed by everyone in attendance.

Our portion of the meeting was then adjourned at 1:30 P.M.

Secretary
Sue Beemer



left to right; Rozanne King-STC, Dan Peterson-STC, Derryl McLaren-SED, Bill Northey-STC, Tom Lane-IASCOE VP, John Landgraf-IASCOE Pres., Sue Beemer- IASCOE Secretary, Merlin Plagge-STC Chairman

----- Original Message -----
From: Congressman Jim Nussle
To: Tammy Eibey
Sent: Tuesday, March 04, 2003
Subject: Ready Campaign

Dear Tammy:

Iowans know to take steps to prepare our families for natural emergencies such as a tornado or blizzard. We should each also consider applying that same common-sense approach to the potential threats we face from terrorism. I want to ensure you are aware of some valuable resources.

Please consider visiting the "Ready Campaign" web site recently made available by the Department of Homeland Security at www.ready.gov. You may also request a brochure at no charge prepared by the department by calling 1-800-BE-READY.

The Ready Campaign suggests actions to help prepare yourself, your family and your community for any emergency. The campaign materials are factual, clear and helpful.

The comprehensive and accurate web site and brochure can help alleviate some of the confusion that circulated recently.

We can each do three simple things to be more prepared: Assemble an emergency supply kit, develop a family communications plan and be informed.

When I was a volunteer firefighter in Manchester, we helped families map escape routes from their homes in case of a fire and asked them to regularly change the batteries in their smoke detectors. While we all hope further attacks will not occur, there is no reason not to apply the same sensible steps to planning for potential terrorist emergencies.

If you have any questions about this or any related issue, please visit my web site at www.nussle.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Jim Nussle
Member of Congress



Visit's Nussle's office

Congressman Jim Nussle welcomes fellow Manchester resident Tammy Eibey to his Capitol Hill office in Washington, D.C. A USDA farm loan officer with the Delaware County Farm Service Agency, Eibey is a member of Nussle's agriculture advisory committee. *(photo submitted)*

Visit our web site at www.iascoe.org

NASCOE ADVOCATE – DON MASON

Don Mason and his wife, Julie, who is originally from Bogota, Colombia, live in Nemaha, Iowa, with their son Justin, 17, who is a senior at the Storm Lake Community High School. They also have a daughter, Jessica, 23, who lives in Denver, Colorado. Julia teaches English as a second language at the Storm Lake Community High School.

Don has been farming since 1978 near Nemaha in Sac County raising corn, soybeans and hogs on the farm where he grew up. He graduated from Iowa State University in 1974 with a Bachelors of Science degree in Public Service and Administration in Agriculture and a minor in International Studies. He participated in a Peace Corps Training Program in Technical, Cross-cultural and Spanish language skills in 1974, and then served four years as an Agricultural Extension Volunteer for the U.S. Peace Corps in Colombia, South America. In 1995 he received his Master of Business Administration degree from Iowa State University, specializing in agribusiness.

He is currently Director of Grower Services for the Iowa Corn Growers Association (ICGA) and previously was District 4 Director on the Board of Directors of that organization. He served as secretary, treasurer, and president-elect of the ICGA before resigning from the board to take a job on staff for the organization. He is a member of the Iowa Corn Growers Association, the Iowa Soybean Association, the Iowa Pork Producers

Association and is a former director of the Sac County Cattlemen's Association. Don served as Northwest Iowa Coordinator for Ag Connect and as an Adjunct Instructor of Business at Iowa Central Community College in Storm Lake. He served as a guest professor at the International Ag-Tech Schools in Cuba in 1995, returned to Cuba in 1998 on a U.S. Grains Council humanitarian and fact-finding mission and again in 2002 as part of a delegation working to develop new markets for Iowa agricultural products. As a director and staff member of the Iowa Corn Growers Association, he has worked extensively with value-added opportunities for agriculture, ethanol promotion and legislation, foreign market development and transportation issues.

Don was on the initial board of directors of AGRA, a Sac County value-added agriculture group, served on the USDA Diversity Focus group in Storm Lake that initiated a "diversity gardens" project, and was on the board of directors of the Howard Center in Sac City.

He served as a school board director for 10 years and was Board President for seven years for the Crestland Community School in Early, Iowa and the Schaller-Crestland Community Schools.

In his spare time, Don enjoys golf, skiing, astronomy, classical music, and salsa dancing.

While on a recent trip to Cuba, Don Mason met Cuban leader Fidel Castro. Castro admired Don's Iowa Corn Growers lapel pin so much, Don gave it to him.



IASCOE DIRECTORS MINUTES

Adventureland Inn
Des Moines, IA
January 17th 2003

Officers Present: John Landgraf, President; Sue Beemer, Secretary/Treasurer

Directors Present: Rosie Kahl, Alan Donaldson, Vicki Heeren, John Bahnsen, Tammy Eibey, Ron Mauser, Denise Dugan, Connie Safley, Steve Kennedy, Joni Birkhofer, Rich Kleppe, Dan Wells and Terry Pauling.

Alternate Directors Present: None

Guests Present: None

President John Landgraf called the meeting to order at 8:05 P.M.

SECRETARY and TREASURER'S REPORT

The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed. Rosie moved the minutes be approved and Terry seconded. Motion carried. The Treasurer's report was reviewed. We currently have a balance of \$20,306.47. The directors audited the checking account.

OLD BUSINESS

Ohio Convention

John gave a report on the Ohio Convention. Many topics were discussed such as DCP deadlines, SCIMS, POA's and CRP. Extensions for DCP sign-up will not be decided until the deadline gets closer. POA's will eventually be linked with SCIMS. Hopefully when a new CRP sign-up is announced there will be software on the PC's for a fillable contract. The do's and don'ts on the Internet were discussed as well as workload. Ken Nagel from EDSO was the guest speaker. He reviewed shared management, which is basically up to the individual state. They are considering allowing the COC Advisor voting privileges. At the present time Program Technician re-classifications appear to be at a stand still.

NAFEC and RASCO Updates

Any retiree can contact Tammy Eibey in Delaware County and she will get you in touch with the contact person for RASCOE. We discussed how important NAFEC is and how much influence they have in Washington, D.C. Would be great if we could get most of COC to join.

NEW BUSINESS

Election

Ballots were counted for Districts 4 – 6 – 8 – 9. The elected directors and alternate directors will serve for the 2003-2005 IASCOE years. Following is the election results:

District 4: Program Technician Director – Cheryl Nickolisen, Monona County
Alternate Program Technician Director – Lynette Irwin, Shelby County
CED Director – John Landgraf, Sac County
Alternate CED Director – Steve Luke, Shelby County

District 6: Program Technician Director – Joni Birkhofer, Muscatine County
Alternate Program Technician Director – Carma Reiss, Benton County
CED Director – Richard Kleppe, Cedar County
Alternate CED Director – Randy Madsen, Muscatine County

District 8: Program Technician Director – Shari Bush, Madison County
Alternate Program Technician Director – Elaine Gordon, Union County
CED Director – Terry Pauling, Warren County
Alternate CED Director – Dave Lundquist, Lucas County

District 9: Program Technician Director – Sandra Johnson, Washington County
Alternate Program Technician Director – Judy Dameron, Louisa County
CED Director: Tom Lane, Henry/Lee County
Alternate CED Director: John Bartenhagen, Louisa County

Congratulations to all the above and we really appreciate their time and service to IASCOE. We also appreciate the willingness to serve from the other candidates on the ballot and hope we have their continued support for IASCOE. John moved and Dan seconded to accept and destroy the ballots.

Legislative Conference

John brought us up to date concerning the conference. We reviewed the schedule for each director attending the conference as to which Representative and/or Senator they would contact. NASCOE would like for each state to bring a farmer out to the conference. Don Mason from Sac County will be attending a corn growers meeting and if his scheduling works out he will stop by Washington to attend the conference.

2003 Convention

The IASCOE Convention for 2002-2003 will be held at the Adventureland Inn in Des Moines the 4th and 5th of April in conjunction with IACS and IASE. The directors and committee members will be reimbursed for their rooms at the rate of \$65.00 plus tax. All directors and committee members will be responsible for making their own reservations. IASCOE has a block of room reserved for the convention. The outer facing rooms are \$65.00 plus tax and the courtyard rooms are \$90.00 plus tax. We encourage all members to attend and get first hand information plus have an enjoyable weekend. Call 515-265-7321 for reservations. The guest speaker will be Mark Pearson from Market to Market. We also hope to have someone from Washington but as of this date it is undetermined who it will be. Denise prepared a flyer with the schedule of events for the convention along with a pre-registration form. All directors are encouraged to get goodies for the hospitality bags. We hope to have around 125-150 bags. The directors also are to bring food items for the hospitality room.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Benefits and Legislative

Terry gave a legislative update for the conference in Washington D.C. at the end of February. The position papers are on the web site and a report will also be posted there after the conference concludes.

Awards and Scholarships

Rosie presented the awards report. There have been three certificates of appreciation given

to retirees. She needs people to write nominations for the three different categories of awards. There are three types of Distinguished Service Awards: (1) Service to IASCOE/NASCOE (2) Service to FSA Agriculture and (3) Community Service. A copy of the NASCOE Awards Booklet can be obtained by logging on to www.nascoe.org. The rules and requirements are listed in this booklet. Nominations can be sent to Rosie Kahl, 2750 160th St. Rock Rapids, IA 51246 by February 10, 2003. Counties need to send in the names of permanent employees who are IASCOE members that have accumulated 1000 – 1500 – 2000 - 2500 hours of sick leave as of December 31, 2002.

Vicki presented the updates on scholarships. Rosie made the motion and Joni seconded to have 4 - \$300.00 scholarships again this year. The parent of the student applying must be in good standing with IASCOE.

Membership

Denise gave an update on membership. The tabulation on our membership percentage for this year is 85.4 %, which is up a little from the previous year. Membership is a very important part of our organization. Our overall percentage of membership is especially important when delegates attend the legislative conference in Washington. Denise handed out a map showing the enrollment for each county.

Publicity

Tammy gave the publicity report. Anyone having an article or pictures they would like to have in the next newsletter would need to contact Tammy by March 15th. The newsletter will be posted on the web site after it is completed.

Emblems

Sandy returned all the items she had on hand. These items will be for sale and pictures will be displayed on the web site. The prices on these items will be drastically reduced hoping for quick liquidation.

ADJOURNMENT

Alan moved and Terry seconded that the meeting be adjourned at 10:45 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted

Sue Beemer - IASCOE Secretary-Treasurer

IASCOE SICK LEAVE AWARDS

Sick Leave Awards are given to permanent employees who are NASCOE members that have accumulated sick leave of 1000, 1500, 2000, and 2500 hours. The national level recognizes 3000 accumulated hours. Send the names of people with accumulated sick leave hours as of December 31, 2002 to Rosie Kahl, 2750 160th ST, Rock Rapids, IA 51246.

NASCOE MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

SUMMARY OF BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO NASCOE MEMBER

NASCOE offers the following benefits to its members. It is the member's responsibility to carefully consider their individual needs and to compare as many sources as they deem necessary before making any financial commitment.

CANCER INSURANCE:

American Heritage through J. M. Marketing (1-800-330-6223). Policy pays in addition to other coverage, in and out of hospital benefits, transportation and lodging allowances, guaranteed renewable for life with many benefits having no lifetime maximum.

SUPPLEMENTAL HEALTH/ HOSPITALIZATION:

Intensive Care-American Heritage through J.M. Marketing (1-800-330-6223). Pays in addition to other coverage, in pays in addition to other coverage, in and out of hospital benefits, transportation and lodging allowances, guaranteed renewable for life with many benefits having no lifetime maximum.

“SHIP” – MASS Benefits (1-800-330-6223). Supplements all Federal employee health benefits up 100% coverage.

HOSPITAL INDEMNITY – through American Heritage through J.M. Marketing, offsets co-pay charges required by other insurance coverage, pays directly to insured, intensive care available.

LONG TERM CARE POLICY – through Mutual of Omaha through J.M. Marketing (1-800-330-6223). This new policy is designed for long-term nursing and home care income.

HOSPITAL INTENSIVE CARE INSURANCE – offered by Consec Health and provides daily pay benefits for up to 30 days when confined to an intensive care unit.

LIFE INSURANCE:

Guaranteed Issue-American Heritage through J.M. Marketing (1-800-330-6223) requires no physical, immediate coverage, available to NASCOE members and their spouses only, not children or other family members.

Group-MASS Benefits (1-800-330-6223). Term insurance that pays up to \$250,000. It can be tailored to meet your particular needs.

ACCIDENT/ACCIDENTAL DEATH & DISMEMBERMENT:

Accident-American Heritage through J.M. Marketing (1-800-330-6223). It pays in addition to other coverage, hospitalization, covers dislocations and fractures, disability income for primary insured, accidental death and dismemberment benefits.

Auto Insurance – GEICO Preferred (1-800-368-2734). Offers 8% (10% in IL & WDC) with additional discounts such as multi-car discounts and a 3-year good driving discounts.

PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL:

Vision-Specs through J.M. Marketing (1-800-330-6223). Savings on all eye care purchases and eye exams at over 1,600 participating optical outlets.

Professional Liability – Wright & Company (1-800-424-9801). Specifically designed for Federal employees to assist with legal costs, damages against you, suits by other employees or the public.

Legal Counsel – NASCOE has secured legal counsel which will be available to its membership at the direction of NASCOE to advise and consult with individual employees or their counsel concerning specific employment problems. This period of consultation is limited to one hour of time. To receive this benefit, a NASCOE member must be referred by the STATE ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT through the respective Executive Committeeperson to the NASCOE President or his designee. Under special circumstances, such as a conflict of interest, NASCOE Vice President, Steve Morrison may be contacted directly.

OTHER BENEFITS AVAILABLE THROUGH J.M. MARKETING (1-800-330-6223):

1. New Disability Insurance
2. Final Expense Policy (Burial Policy)
3. Drug Card (Prescription)

VOLUNTARY DENTAL PLAN – This plan has been discontinued and will no longer be offered. NASCOE has been advised that all outstanding claims will be honored. If you have any concerns, please call your area benefits chairperson.

The Benefits Committee is still working on obtaining a travel agreement with a Travel Agency and Dental Insurance for NASCOE members.

REMINDER – Walt Disney Magic Kingdom Club Membership cards should be requested through the respective State President or State Benefits Chair who will submit your request to the Area Benefit Chairperson for processing. All Area Benefit Chairpersons will contact Craig McCain, SE Area Chairperson, for needed supplies at 3730 Government Street, Alexandria, LA 71302.

REMINDER- J.M. Marketing's contract with NASCOE requests that they be extended an invitation to attend a respective state convention. In most cases J.M. Marketing will provide the necessary information to the State Benefits Chair for them to distribute and hold them responsible for entertaining questions. In return, J.M. Marketing will furnish that respective State Association a \$200 check (donation). This allows them to pass the savings on to each respective state. If a State Association feels that it is imperative that a representative of J.M. Marketing be present at their convention they are to stress this in their request. **REMEMBER AN INVITATION MUST BE EXTENDED TO RECEIVE THE \$200.**

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Do you want to receive new IASCOE newsletters by email? Send an email to news_subscription@iascoe.org and indicate the email address that you want it sent to.

RASCOE NEWS

Hello everyone and greetings from Rascoe. Rascoe was organized in 1994 for employees retired from ASCS/FSA. Our purpose is to promote the welfare of the association's member by alignment with other organizations and active lobby to maintain the integrity of benefits. Iowa has increased their membership and we are currently at seven members. Our benefits of Long Term Care and Cancer Plus Insurance and vision plans are a few of the benefits. I would welcome any retiree to contact me and I will be glad to discuss membership. Thank you to Denise Dugan for keeping me informed of the retirees and to Tammy for letting me know when the IASCOE newsletter is going to press. We really do appreciate this coverage. We will keep plugging away, and I know you IASCOE members will too, as I hear it from the farmers as to how difficult the program is, but the staff is doing a great job. Consider a vacation this summer and go to Salt Lake City for the National Convention July 23 - 26th.

We have had several new members join the RASCOE organization. We constantly have work that needs to be done in Washington D.C. to keep our benefits and increase some on certain issues. Please consider joining RASCOE. Also, support the Iowa Association IASCOE. The convention is coming up soon and maybe we can get together and chat.

Pat Sorgenfrey
Rascoe member
Email - hpsorg@netins.net

LIFE STYLE CHANGES!!!!!!

Certificates of appreciation were given to the following people who retired from FSA

IRENE ZIEMAN – POCAHONTAS COUNTY
ROSALIE VIER – STORY COUNTY
MARIE BROWN – JASPER COUNT
CONNIE KINSER – MADISON COUNTY
KAREN WHEELER – FRANKLIN COUNTY

We wish you the best and hope that you are enjoying your retirement!!

FSA Employees are encouraged to let retired office staff know about RASCOE. Iowa's contact is Patty Sorgenfrey, retiree of Jones County FSA Office. She can be reached by email at hpsorg@netins.net

Connie Kinser, the CED of Madison County, retired on Jan. 3, 2003 after 25 years of service with FSA.



At her retirement party, Connie was presented with a NASCOE Certificate.



Connie received a cake at the December Manager's Meeting

**Best wishes for a
Happy Retirement!!**

Franklin County Hosts A Retirement Open House For Karen Wheeler



Karen received a NASCOE Certificate at her party.



The Franklin County Staff

*Best wishes and Thank You
for your years of service!!*

TAYLOR COUNTY HONORS CAROLE DAWSON



The Taylor County Staff honored Carole Dawson for 40 years of dedicated service in December.

During the County Committee meeting in December, Carole was presented with a cake recognizing all the programs she has been involved with – PA, Recons, PIK, LDP, PFC, LCP, EQIP, CRP, etc., etc., etc....What a cake!!!!!!

Office staff also enjoyed an evening out and presented Carole with a Montana Silversmiths watch and supper at the Bedford Country Club.

Through her dedicated years of service, Carole has accumulated over 3000 hours of sick leave. Carole is an enthusiastic employee who is always willing to pitch in where needed.

Jefferson Farmers' Market Receives Award

The Jefferson Farmers' Market placed 2nd in the 2002 Iowa Farmers' Market Improvement Competition. We were placed in the 5000-20000 population category. A cash prize of \$750 was awarded along with a plaque. The prize was awarded at the 2003 Iowa Farmers' Market Managers Workshop and Organizers Conference held Sat. Feb 22, 2003 at the Des Moines Botanical Center.

The Greene County FSA Office sponsors the Farmers Market in Jefferson



Left to right

- Barbara Lovitt: Bureau of Horticulture & Farmers' Market, Iowa Department of Agriculture
Dave Miller: Iowa Farm Bureau Foundation
Candy Hoyle: Jefferson Farmers' Market Manager, PT in Greene County
Ken Shelly, Jr.: Chairman of Iowa Farmers' Market Association and Market Manager at Lyon Farmers' Market

A Note From Kossuth County

Here in Kossuth County the new program has been keeping us hopping. Actually, jumping hurdles would be a better phrase to describe the workload that we have encountered. But like Derryl says, we'll get through it, one farm at a time. I try to set my mind frame by looking at each producer as a scavenger hunt because that is how some of them end up and I love scavenger hunts. Especially the producers that have gained and lost acres over the 4 years. We do have some really helpful tools that fellow FSA employees have shared with us. Shelly's spreadsheet is a lifesaver along with Carol's queries on bushels and farm numbers. You can plug all that in and you're off to the races. I hope that all offices have been given these valuable tools. My thank you goes out to the both of them. I talked to coworkers in my office and have come up with a list of stress relievers that we find helpful here in beautiful Kossuth County where the work never ceases!

1. A strong cup of coffee and a ten-minute break.
2. TGIF!!!!
3. Lots of chocolate.
4. Friday
5. Happy Hour.
6. April 1st - no foolin!
7. Backrub, bath, and body
8. Go Fish!
9. Massage, hair appointment, and chiropractor all in one day.
10. Have a coke. (soda)

We hope that these suggestions may help you overcome your stress and remember that Spring is just around the corner.

What a beautiful winter we have had so far this year. I was talking with a friend the other day originally from Wisconsin and he is a winter lover. As a child growing up in Wisconsin, winter was his favorite time of year and still is as a matter of fact. He shared with me stories of all the winter activities they did there. Like packing a lunch and ice skating up and down the river all day. They went sledding when the snow came and cross country skiing. He thoroughly enjoyed the winter days. He was very discouraged when he came to Iowa and mentioned ice skating and was laughed at. He described Iowans view of winter by looking out a window waiting for Spring to come and missing the season. That made me think because he was right in many ways. So this year my family all started ice skating and what a beautiful year for that. Many of the lakes have had the perfect freeze that kept the ice smooth. And with the lack of snow, the days have been endless for the sport. We have been traveling to different lakes and ponds but finally built our own in my town. The Fire Department was kind enough to take a truck and dump water on the basketball court and we ice skate almost every night. I am so proud of our youth and how everyone has improved in this sport. Now we are into hockey but I still get really nervous when I see a puck near my skates because I know there is a child with a stick nearby! I have not mastered the turning and stopping like they have. So chins up people, you live in Iowa, enjoy the winter season.

Lisa Forburger
PT - Kossuth County

From District 8: Decatur County

The friendly people, beautiful parks and quiet neighborhoods of Decatur County will make you feel right at home. Old-fashioned charm and courtesy with the luxury of modern comfort and convenience add to the ambiance of the area.

In 1846, Brigham Young led the first Mormon group through Decatur County establishing the Historic Pioneer Mormon Trail. Trailside Park near Garden Grove was a winter stopover and burial site. Some of the cabin locations are marked. Decatur County was organized in 1850 and named after Steven Decatur who was a naval hero from the War of 1812. Leon, Iowa was selected as the county seat and the original courthouse was built in 1854. The area attracted a well-minded collection of settlers diversified by their ethnic backgrounds and religious beliefs.

Many visitors enjoy the fine selection of antiques, collectibles, and quilts found throughout the county. In Decatur's countryside lie several county and state parks that make a perfect getaway for nature buffs. Also, there are several beautiful game preserves and well-stocked lakes that are sure to please those who like to hunt and fish. Pack a picnic, go hiking and make camp under the stars. Decatur County has a number of beautiful locations to choose from with both primitive and modern camping facilities, sandy beaches, and nature trails. Take a drive and feast your eyes on the graceful architectures of our ancestors.

IASCOE Membership

SOME THOUGHTS

Do you receive a yearly cost of living adjustment?

Do you want to improve yourself professionally and serve agriculture better?

Do you believe that the USDA should treat all employees with fairness and equality?

Have the achievements of IASCOE/NASCOE made a difference to you and your pocketbook?

If you answered "yes" to these questions, you should join this great association known as IASCOE/NASCOE.

If you have not yet joined IASCOE, you may contact the membership committee person in your district, an IASCOE director, or Denise Dugan, the membership chairperson.

**BE PART OF THE CONSTRUCTION GANG,
NOT PART OF THE WRECKING CREW!**

Blessed Are the Elderly, Some Day It Will Be You

I was selected as a PT Trainer this past year, a job I thoroughly enjoyed. Every time I had a new training session, I learned so much, from the material I presented, from the discussions we had as a group, and the conversations I had with fellow PT's at break. One of the sections I trained on each time was stress management and this involved support systems for us when we are experiencing stress in our life. I found this all plays an important part in my life.

My Dad at the age of 85 moved into town from the farm where he had enjoyed all of his life. He loved the land, the farm, the horses, and everything farming had to offer, but he knew it was time to go, because he needed help with his failing health. Mom was called away when she was only 49, and left him widowed at the age of 62. He moved to an apartment in town, 2 blocks from my house. Not only was the move upsetting for him, but he had a slight stroke shortly after that and it was a big setback in his life and losing his drivers license was soon to follow. It was tough for me to enforce that decision but he handled it. He just had to become more and more dependent on others.

As he became less active, not being able to get out and drive around, he became weaker. He always looked forward to 5:00, suppertime, when I would bring or fix him his supper and every night at 9:00 I would return to make sure he was in bed and resting comfortably. I would sit in the rocking chair in the dark while he laid in bed and we would talk about anything and everything. Sometimes I would doze while he dozed, it was just comforting for both of us.

We made many trips to all kinds of doctors and Family Leave was very important to me. I was able to go with him and help him understand the tests he took and the results. Even though I have many brothers and sisters, it was important that we went together because then we understood what was going on. It was very discouraging for him to watch his health fail, and for the longest time he could not understand why he was not getting better. Then one day he realized he was like that old tractor, that could not be fixed anymore, that was just plain worn out. There were no more parts available to make him run.

I looked and found support systems for myself so that I could deal with the cross I was carrying. I found many fellow employees that were in the same boat as I, or similar, that cared. I golfed every Wednesday with a wonderful lady, with a medical background, that could give me facts, and help me understand the changes that he was experiencing. I knew where to find my friends for support when I needed to unload frustration. Then I could go back to Dad and listen to his complaints and make him feel

comfortable. I have a wonderful husband, that was also doing the same for his Dad, and 2 children that also took part in taking care of Grandpa. They were very understanding and knew when Grandpa needed them and when to leave Grandpa alone!! I am very proud of them.

Lifeline was a wonderful service that we had. Not only were they there in an emergency, but also you could always push the button just to talk and we did. They were always friendly, even if you did not need help. I think of that when I go to the counter to help the elderly absent landowner. A smiling face, gentle voice and a quick explanation of the letter they received is all they need. Time is of no importance to the elderly. That is one thing they have lots of.

I learned so much from my Dad during the last years of his life and I miss him dearly, but feel at peace because I know that he was ready to leave this world for eternity. His faith was strong and he had no fears of dying. He lived a good life of almost 87 years. I know that I have done all that I could do to make the last years comfortable for him.

My sister found the poem from an old book at the farm and she read it at Dad's funeral and I would like to share it with you:

Beatitudes for the Friends of the Aged

Blessed are they who understand my faltering step and palsied hand.

Blessed are they who know that my ears today must strain to catch the things they say.

Blessed are they who seem to know that my eyes are dim and my wits are slow.

Blessed are they who look away when coffee is spilled at the table today.

Blessed are they with a cheery smile, who stop to chat for a little while.

Blessed are they who never say, "You've told that story twice today.

Blessed are they who know the ways to bring back memories of yesterday.

Blessed are they who make it known that I'm loved, respected and not alone.

Blessed are they who know I'm at a loss to find the strength to carry the cross.

Blessed are they who ease the days on my journey home in loving ways.

If I can ever be part of your support system, do not hesitate to call on me.

Lisa Forburger
PT - Kossuth County

The Legend of Jockey Hollow

Submitted by Dee Lehn
CED OF Keokuk County

Iowa's history is filled with stories of small towns and communities that no longer exist. This is a story of one of those small settlements from Iowa's past.

Jockey Hollow was once a booming little community located in Jefferson County approximately nine miles east of Fairfield. Legends and stories emanating from the former stagecoach stop said two men were killed in a fight while working on a big landfill. The big fill was made when the railroad was changed from a single track to a double track right-of-way. According to the stories, instead of notifying the authorities, members of the work crew buried the two bodies in the fill. One of the deceased was referred to as Peg Leg Pete. Legend says that during certain times of the day, Pete's ghost could be seen rushing hither and fro, seeking his killer. Strange sounds could be heard at night that were described as ghosts wailing--the ghosts of the two men buried in the fill.

Jockey Hollow existed over a century ago and served as a tent town for the men and mules working on the railroad project. Stagecoach drivers stopped there to change horses. Perhaps Jockey Hollow was selected as a stagecoach stop because of an "ever running" stream nearby. It is said that the stream was a lifesaver for area farmers who faced a two-year drought around 1900. Most wells were nearly dry and only produced enough water for household use so the farmers hauled water from the spring to sustain their livestock.

Another story is about the local tavern owner. It is said he built double walls in his tavern so he could slip between the rooms and eavesdrop on his customers. He wanted to be the first to know of any planned stagecoach robberies or any other shady dealings in the making. Local residents were reluctant to dwell long in Jockey Hollow, as it was a favorite stop for bums and vagabonds.

Following the arrival of the railroad in 1858, the overland stagecoach route from Keokuk and Fort Madison to Des Moines was abandoned, thus leaving no valid reason for the Jockey Hollow Inn and Tavern to exist. So unlike many communities, Jockey Hollow died because of the railroad coming, not because the railroad was taken away.



Contribute To The Next IASCOE Newsletter

If you have any stories, photos, jokes, quotes, or information that you would like to include in the next IASCOE Newsletter, send them to Tammy Eibey at tammy.eibey@ia.usda.gov.

THE PERILS OF POLLY P.T.

PART SIX

By Roseanne Woerner
PT From Wapello County

Visit our
website at
www.iascoe.org
for the first five
parts of "The
Perils of Polly PT"

Lunch today is a bag of Cheetos and a quick perusal of last weeks People Magazine, which is why I am contemplating some fairly weighty issues as I return to my desk like, will there be a sequel to Joe Millionaire and just how many times can J-Lo throw a fit before Ben calls it quits. Up at the counter, my next appointment, Chester Hulsinki awaits.

Chester recently retired from his 'city' job, selling insurance for some fly-by-night company, which has doubled his time at MJ's, our local coffee shop, much to the dismay of the waitresses there because he never leaves a tip.

Chester is a robust man with a big, booming voice and a slightly manic manner. He is the rumormonger of his township; oftentimes purposely spreading fabricated falsehoods just to get a rise out of his neighbors. Because his stories usually bear some small speck of truth, his coffee buddies are most always taken in, at least for a time, although you would think that they would have learned by now. On the other hand who wouldn't want to believe that Congress intends to relax the rules on the DCP program, thereby giving every producer a one-time, two-week shot to receive 150% of the average county yield.

Chester is twenty minutes early, which is a slightly lesser annoyance than the fact that he is telling everyone within earshot that he and I

have a date, and not just an appointment either. He is suggesting that we have a 'datie' date, as he whips out a box of chocolates, a free sample from the Piggly-Wiggly uptown and a couple of wilted flowers that he probably picked up at the flower shop for half price because they are nearly dead.

I grab his farm files from my desk and I walk toward the counter. He gives me a wink as I approach and extracts a sheaf of papers from a shoebox that are fairly wrinkled and pretty well stained. This sort of shoebox briefcase has been a joke at several meetings, but I have never seen one before, so I am instantly grouchy, which means that my tone might be less than forgiving for his early arrival and his referral to our aforementioned date.

"What's that Chester?" I ask.

He spreads the papers across the counter, rudely jostling Ben Quigley, another producer, in the process. "This is my production for corn," he tells me. "Now these papers here have been on my dash," he points to some documents as he piles them up in a heap. "So don't mind the marks. They're probably just coffee stains. But these," he says as he points to separate pile. "I found these on my floorboard in the truck, so the brown stains could be about anything that you'd like to imagine. I do keep a few hogs around you know."

I take a step away from the counter and I notice that Ben Quigley has just followed suit.

“I want you to figure up my production in case I decide to go option four,” Chester says.

I grab a blank form from a stack at the end of the counter. “Well, first we have to fill out this 658P,” I tell him. Block five is where you enter your settlement sheet invoice numbers and then you just put your bushels in the corresponding year. See, like this.” I grab one of his sheets from the ‘coffee-stain’ pile and enter the bushels in the form, just to get him started.

“Now that’s going to be a problem for you,” he says. “You’re not going to be able to come up with all of my production, cause I fed some of my corn, but I brought in some scale tickets for my proof.”

Chester is digging through the front pockets of his green, quilted jacket now and pulling out little swatches of paper along with a few

kernels of corn, a piece of straw, and a small wad of blue-colored lint that must have formed on the last occasion that his jacket was washed, which was most likely a year or so ago. He plunks all of his little treasures on the counter and sorts the paper from the debris, completely unconcerned about the mess he’s making that I am going to have to clean up as soon as he leaves.

As he unfolds the papers, I am thinking that they look a little more like the fortunes out of Chinese cookies than scale tickets because, not only are they written by hand, they are written in pencil to boot. I shake my head as I open the box of candy, pop a piece in my mouth and wonder how J-Lo would handle Chester. I wonder if I should put the flowers in water and try to save them. And most of all, I wonder if the chocolate I’m eating has been riding around on Chester’s floorboard, neatly tucked between his production evidence and whatever else. Yuck!!!

THE END

*If you love something, set it free.
If it comes back, it will always be yours.
If it doesn't come back it was never yours to begin with.
But, if it just sits in your living room, messes up
your stuff, eats your food, uses your telephone,
takes your money, and doesn't appear to realize that
you have set it free, you're probably related to it.*

Legislative Conference Notes

February 23-26, 2003
Washington, D.C.

Crystal City Marriott
February 23, 2003

Steve Morrison-President

- ◆ Welcome to Washington DC
- ◆ Visits to the hill are very important. They will want to hear how things are going in the field.

Keith Whiteneck - Legislative Co-Chair

- ◆ We have told Congress that we need employees.
- ◆ Paid out over \$12 Million in late payment interest over the last 3 years. This affects the farmer. This money could have been used to pay for additional employees
- ◆ Introduced the National Legislative Committee.
- ◆ Doesn't appear that we will be receiving the permanent employees that are needed in FSA. Reviewed NASCOE's attempts to try to convince Congress that additional baseline was needed.
- ◆ Disaster legislation included \$70 Million for farm bill implementation.
- ◆ Encourage you to stop working overtime if you are not being compensated. Do what you can do in 8 hours and then go home. It hurts all of agency.
- ◆ We need to let Congress know who NASCOE is and what our goals are. Need to let them know about farm bill sign up, how disaster will affect our offices and our farmers.
- ◆ FSA could do acreage reports for crop insurance on a reimbursable agreement. This would save us time and would also provide us some dollars. Crop insurance already requests our 578's.
- ◆ Need to consolidate STO's of RD, NRCS and FSA. In some states they are not collocated in the same building. A GAO report says this would save \$9 million.
- ◆ There are going to be some items that FSA could assist with in Homeland Security that could be done using a reimbursable agreement.
- ◆ We are here representing NASCOE NOT FSA. Ensure you distinguish between the two.

David Vidrine - Vice President

- ◆ Roundtable discussion group will be held tomorrow. Questions need to be submitted in writing before the roundtable discussion
- ◆ Build on these visits. Keep in contact with your legislator following your visits.
- ◆ Budget and staffing will be the most important topic.
- ◆ Office structure will be an issue
- ◆ Need to stress employee benefits

Robert Redding - New NASCOE Legislative Consultant (The Redding Firm)

- ◆ Worked for 12 years on the hill
- ◆ Been in this business for 11 years
- ◆ Take you back to the 1990 Farm Bill. Farm organizations were at the top of the list to determine policy of the farm bill. Conservation was of particular interest in that farm bill with the different Conservation groups. However, they did not give particulars to the way they wanted conservation in the farm bill and they did not get many things that they wanted.
- ◆ Land grant universities funding continue to go down.

- ◆ Conservation funding has gone up in the last farm bill.
- ◆ Something has not worked for NASCOE in the past. NASCOE requests for additional money were relatively small, but we did not get this. Need to learn from this and develop a more aggressive approach.
- ◆ Need to make the case for more help at the COF level. USDA leadership comments play into this known fact.
- ◆ Make it a personal goal this year to develop this relationship with farm group producer leaders and legislative aides.
- ◆ Need to continue to improve commodity organization relationships. Need to do a better job of getting them to move NASCOE's agenda forward.

Douglas Frago - Deputy Administrator for Field Operations (DAFO)

- ◆ Introduced by Mark VanHoose, National Legislative Co-Chair
- ◆ Came on the job April 21, 2002.
- ◆ Likes a common sense approach.
- ◆ Listen seriously to Mr. Redding and his approach.
- ◆ Will determine how many temps will go to states in the near future.
- ◆ Recognize the need for permanent positions.
- ◆ In preliminary discussion on how the \$70 million will split by the end of the week
- ◆ Looking at the state ceilings for permanent employees. That has not been done for the last couple of years. That is always going to cause concern for states that are considered overstaffed or "less understaffed".
- ◆ Take advice from Farm Program side and the Farm Loan Program side
- ◆ What happened to PT classification? It is in a third party review at this part. Don't want to get into the same position as the FLM's, where the current grade may not be justified. This is being looked at by an independent source.
- ◆ Do not want CED and FLM to be battling back and forth on grades
- ◆ Office consolidation - He represents FSA along with 3 others. They will be meeting all day tomorrow on this issue (Feb 24). Try to come to some resolution on the 200 office consolidations. Also 2 SED's on this task force (North Carolina and California). Will not repeat privileged information. Can't see that tomorrow's meeting will be a final meeting. Many more will be coming. The Secretary wants this done fairly quickly. Think FSA is in a good position since we did many consolidations in the past. Look at what is best for FSA. We have consolidated offices in the last 6 to 8 months. If it makes sense to do it now, then let's do it.
- ◆ County Committee members - will be presenting to the Secretary options for who has voting rights on the County Committee. March 7, FSA will have options to the Secretary on this issue.
- ◆ Bring regards from James Little and Theresa Lassiter (Administrator and Associate Administrator)
- ◆ April 1 date will not be extended. Past year's register has been used. That is not on the table.
- ◆ Question to DAFO on CED Compensatory/Overtime. Thursday will have a full SED conference call and he will bring this issue up to the SED's along with other issues. The \$70 Million could be used for overtime or temporary.
- ◆ Question to DAFO on whether there will be a buyout in FSA? Doesn't know anything about a buyout. Thinks it would be inconsistent with our current work.
- ◆ Question on crediting workload from 101 and 111 to GS and CO? Not familiar with that specific issue, but do look at this issue of workload. Leave that question for John Williams tomorrow.

- ◆ NRCS, RD and FSA need to agree on what constitutes a Service Center
- ◆ NAFEC expressed that the advisor should be elected and that they get voting rights on the COC if they are elected to the COC

Kenneth Hood - National Cotton Council

- ◆ Highly active in many organizations
- ◆ Mississippi State University graduate
- ◆ Many awards and recognition of service
- ◆ Pleased to acquaint you with the National Cotton Council
- ◆ Commend NASCOE for doing an outstanding job for your members. Can attest to the fine work that NASCOE does.
- ◆ Appreciates the work that you do back in the COF.
- ◆ Cotton Council is made up of producers, ginners, manufacturing etc. All segments are represented when they go to the hill.
- ◆ Enjoying 78% membership of all of the cotton growers in the US. This is quite an accomplishment.
- ◆ Concerned that this farm bill may come unglued. Wanted a bill that had a safety net that was WTO and budget compliant. The press was very negative on the farm bill. Sixteen farm organizations came together for one unified voice in the support of the farm bill. Need to watch for any damaging amendments that may be proposed in the future.
- ◆ 62% tariff on our farm products going abroad. Only 11% tariff on products coming into the US. US is limited to farm subsidies at a lower level than other countries by the WTO.
- ◆ Priority issues that affect both of us. Recommended that additional FSA dollars be provided for farm bill implementation. Remember who you partners are. Those are the producers and the farm organizations that represent them. This farm bill did not just happen. It took 3 years.
- ◆ Work closely with your partners on budget issues facing FSA/USDA. Always disappointed in the appropriations process and how it negatively affects FSA. What are we going to do when we lose friends in Congress that always support FSA?
- ◆ Fight the urge to resist change! We need to be the lead player on this change.
- ◆ Need to be results oriented.

Gary Broyles - National Association of Wheat Growers

- ◆ From Montana
- ◆ Immediate Past President
- ◆ Served together on roundtable with Kenneth and he summarized farm bill issues very well
- ◆ Has a brother who is a CED in Montana, so he calls his brother Bob quite often on FSA issues.
- ◆ You at FSA are all about service to the producer.
- ◆ Don't like to make FSA life miserable when it comes to ideas for farm bill and disaster bills.
- ◆ Wanted to keep it simpler than it turned out but that could not be done. However, we stand by and support the farm bill even though it is more complicated than we would have liked.
- ◆ Put 4 or 5 issues on NAWG radar screen. Disaster bill was at the top of the list. Wheat industry has been hit hard by disaster. Cochran bill was not supported. Wanted it to be by loss even though it caused more work for the COF employees. NAWG did contact FSA at the field office level to discuss this issue. Conservation title needs to be completed and implemented. Risk management needs to be improved. Do not want to continue to request disaster funds. Brainstorming as to how the crop insurance program can work better. Farm

groups have defended this farm bill. Most of the population is 2-3 generations removed from the farm. Farm groups need to work together to continue to have a viable farm bill in the future and encourage NASCOE to be a part of this process.

- ◆ At each state level, get involved with your state association commodity groups.

Paul Clark - NAFEC

- ◆ Talked about overtime and quoted a lady in a local office who said she worked 20 hours of overtime a week because she "wanted to get the money out to the producers".
- ◆ On behalf of the COC's commended the members for their work
- ◆ Talked about temporaries and need for permanent employees.
- ◆ Won't get everyone signed up by deadline.
- ◆ Too much on plate right now. Not sure NRCS is equipped to administer EQIP. Hopes he is wrong.
- ◆ Pledged to help us with our work here. Permanent employees, offices closures/combinations, None should be closed. Not fair to the producers.
- ◆ Meeting Tuesday morning with a special assistant to the Sec. To discuss office closures/combinations. Wished Mr. Frago could have stayed to discuss further.
- ◆ Utah had a meeting of all COC members and wished all states could do so.
- ◆ Office closures/combinations has been a problem since 1973.
- ◆ COC should be consulted by SED before any closures/combinations. That's proper procedure.
- ◆ Grassroots organization - that's what President Roosevelt had in mind when COC was created.

Clayton Bruce - RASCOE

- ◆ Main purpose is to protect the benefits of retirees.
- ◆ Here this week to bring those issues to the attention of the Hill.
- ◆ Introduced Legis. Chair and Sec.-Treas.
- ◆ Will be contacting key people who can help with these issues.
- ◆ 1340 members nationwide. Goal is 1500. Started with 200 in 1995.
- ◆ Asked that we contact retirees in our states to encourage participation in RASCOE.
- ◆ "There is quality life after retirement."
- ◆ If you are working 20 hours overtime - quit it! Your not showing a true picture of workload.
- ◆ Will accept anyone with \$10 as a member.
- ◆ Great to be here.

Mark VanHoose - National Legislative Co-Chair

- ◆ Need to be patient as we go through this process
- ◆ Develop relationships with your Congressional aid so we have a network of persons that we can contact. Each state needs to have an active Legislative Committee.
- ◆ Need to also develop relationships with state farm organizations and get on their agenda for their annual meeting

Legislative Committee Review of All Position Papers

- ◆ Don't have to review every paper with every Congressional Office. Choose the once that best fit the Congressional person you are visiting.
- ◆ County Committee Position Paper - The COC system keeps USDA the people's department. This will be presented to mostly new Congressional aids and new legislators.

- ◆ Introduction to NASCOE and the Farm Service Agency Position Paper. Ensure that legislators know the difference and that we are here on our own time and our own dime. This is the introduction phase of the visit.
- ◆ 2004 Appropriations Position Paper - Emphasize the increased participation and the staff reductions and how that has affected timely payments. Emphasize programs that affect producers in your area that are not being serviced properly or timely because of staff reductions.
- ◆ Freedom to E-File 2003 - be honest with how the e-file initiative is going. NASCOE fully supports it if the applications still come through local service center.
- ◆ Homeland Security Position Paper - use this as an educational tool as to what we do now on emergency issues and additional items that we could. We are the best equipped to do this even though we are overworked now. Could receive some additional funds from Homeland Security.
- ◆ FSA Responsibilities in Crop Insurance Reform Position Paper - we are now doing the reconciliation on acreage and production reports. We need to have a reimbursable agreement with RMA. We need to take one set of crop reports only (FSA) and RMA could reimburse FSA for that acreage reporting.
- ◆ EEO and Civil Rights Position Paper 2003 - NASCOE has zero tolerance on violations of EEO and Civil Rights. Advisors need voting rights through changes in the County Committee election procedures.
- ◆ Employee Benefits Issues - Focus on the FEHBP and the Windfall Elimination Provision. Bills have been introduced to ensure increased government contribution of the cost of health insurance.

Robert Redding (The Redding Firm)

- ◆ Distributed a booklet on how the laws are made.
- ◆ Instructed the group to ensure the position papers are reviewed and that you know the contents
- ◆ Get the 2004 Appropriations to Congress first thing at the visit. What can Congressman do to help if they ask? Letter to OMB or meeting with OMB Ag Chief. Need state delegation to write a letter to OMB to increase permanent employees.
- ◆ Make the same pitch with a staffer that you would with the Congressman
- ◆ Follow up is the most important. Ask them to lead the state delegation or meeting with OMB. Adrienne Lucas is the Chief of the Agriculture Branch (OMB).

Legislative Conference Notes

Crystal City Marriott

February 24, 2003

David Vidrine called the conference to order. Steve Morrison offered opening prayer. The group recited the pledge of allegiance.

Bryan Dierlan - National Cattleman's Association

- ◆ Director of Legislative Affairs
- ◆ Texas A&M University Graduate
- ◆ Livestock Compensation and Livestock Assistance Programs helped livestock producers during the drought. Want to thank you for your work in implementing those programs in a short timeframe. Groups are briefed from DC on issues affecting membership and they convey this into a press release or summary to their members.

- ◆ Know that FSA needs to have additional monies for salary and expenses to implement these programs.

Larry Mitchell - American Corn Growers Association

- ◆ CEO of the American Corn Growers Association. From North Central Texas
- ◆ Worked with NASCOE and NAFEC for many years from his time at Farmers Union and FSA.
- ◆ Worked well with NASCOE and you have staved off the office closure procedures in the past.
- ◆ Why do we care? Until we get to utopia corn prices, we need the government assistance to survive.
- ◆ Farmers Choice Customer Service Program - Hear both sides of the debate on genetically engineered crops. They publicize information on this issue on a weekly basis.
- ◆ Have lots of problems with the farm bill and did not support it, but commend those that did improve it.
- ◆ Concerned about the lack of leadership in the passing of the disaster legislation.
- ◆ Thinks FSA needs more staff and resources. One more full time employee in every county in the nation. Need to maintain the County Committee system. Need to maintain County Office employees unless a fair system of conversion can be implemented.

Bill Hawks - Under Secretary USDA (Marketing and Regulatory Programs)

- ◆ Served 9 consecutive years on the County Committee back in Mississippi. Kenneth Hood is my personal friend and is the consummate giver.
- ◆ Thank you for the hard work that you do. I have been on the other side of the counter.
- ◆ Thank you for bringing your message to capital hill.
- ◆ APHIS, AMS and GIPS (Grain Inspection Packers and Stockyards). Wants to build broader bridges. Wants to interface with our customers who are numerous in the public sector.
- ◆ Working with Biotechnology around the world.
- ◆ Need to invest in infrastructure. Disease prevention/surveillance, laboratories
- ◆ Take care of our farmers. Selling agriculture as a profession. Agriculture represents one third of the economy for Mississippi. Our numbers are small, but our contribution to the economy of the US is huge.
- ◆ Maintain a healthy and wholesome food supply
- ◆ You are where the rubber meets the road. Understands the farm bill is a monumental task. Understands you are going through a transition and that you would like additional employees.
- ◆ Wife serves as chairperson of the State FSA Committee.
- ◆ We are concerned about what is going on in the countryside and we are listening to you. My mother told me you were given two ears and one mouth and you should use those proportionally.
- ◆ Question: Concerned about the April 1, 2003 sign up date. Are we going to get any relief on this? Answer: Those type discussions are going on but that is a better question for your agency folks. To my knowledge, there is not going to be an extension of the April 1 date.
- ◆ Concern on the complex DCP options were conveyed to Mr. Hawks as well as the new yield options that were announced by the Secretary of Agriculture.

Walt Smith - Congressman Bonilla's (Tx.) Office

- ◆ Receive phone calls everyday from the district. In every call he receives, the farmers recognize the work that FSA doing on the new farm bill.
- ◆ Starting the ball again for this upcoming year. It was a long process but it is finished. First hearings for FY04 is this week. Realize things need to be done for implementation.

- ◆ Question: Will more permanent staffing be possible? Answer: It is possible. But getting the dollar figure in the baseline is going to be very difficult. They understand the need is there especially with the turnover of temporary employees. May be difficult to get OMB to agree with this.
- ◆ You have a connection (NASCOE) here in Washington and I know who to call when issues that affect NASCOE arise.

Dave Ebersole - Congressman Goodlatte (Va.) Office

- ◆ House Ag Committee Staff
- ◆ Committee is not fully organized yet. They have 18 new members on the house agriculture committee (10 Democrats and 8 Republicans). We are 10-14 days behind schedule in organizing, but it will be completed soon.
- ◆ Will be doing some oversight on the farm bill and working on the conservation issues.
- ◆ Looking at healthy forest initiative and trade issues as well.
- ◆ Several of our members have been talking about crop insurance. Spent \$8 Billion on crop insurance reform in 2000, but we still seemed to need disaster payments. Put in "plug yields" in the 2000 Crop Insurance reform but evidently more needs to be done.
- ◆ Comment was made to Mr. Ebersole that FSA should take acreage reports for crop insurance. He responded that he would look at that and anything that could streamline the process would be a positive step.
- ◆ Question if the April 1 deadline is statutory or is that a USDA decision? Does not think it is a deadline in the farm bill, but no discussions have been held with USDA on this issue.

Hunter Moorhead - Senator Cochran (Mississippi) Office

- ◆ Thank you very much for being here and Bob Redding is a long time friend .
- ◆ Thank you for coming here to the hill. It is important you visit your legislator and share your ideas.
- ◆ Mr. Hood has been involved in NAFEC and Cotton and we look to his leadership.
- ◆ Sen. Cochran is now the committee chair.
- ◆ Hunt Shipman is back as the Senate Ag Committee Staff Director.
- ◆ Trying to address some of the lingering issues of the farm bill. Budget has delayed some things.
- ◆ Received additional money thanks to Hunt Shipman who addressed the needs of FSA salaries and expenses. Disaster legislation was highly debated. The biggest debate was held in conference. Sen. Cochran put a bill on the Senate floor to get the debate going. Farmers will be looking for the money coming in the mail on this bill.
- ◆ Budget for FY 04 is being reviewed now. Ag Committee members will defend the farm bill and the programs that are in the bill. Congress is aware of the deficit and understands that the farm bill is a target. If you hear rumors, call your congressman.
- ◆ Number 1 legislative program is the Child Nutrition Act (school lunch program). Will have additional hearings on many issues on this act.
- ◆ Will have hearings on farm bill implementation. It is a challenge, as you know, to sign up farmers. Confident that is a USDA deadline NOT a farm bill deadline. If they are not in, an option will be chosen for them.
- ◆ Livestock issues are on the hot burner (packer owner). Country of origin requirements will also be discussed.

- ◆ Hired a Trade Professional Staff Member on the Senate Ag Committee. This is the first time we have had someone just for trade. US has problems in trade with genetically modified crops. Problems with WTO need to be addressed. This person will be fully engaged in these issues.
- ◆ Going to have hearings on crop insurance. Crop insurance program is not working. It is that simple. Premiums are just too high for the levels of coverage that many farmers want. Other farmers have a problem when yields are low because of drought years (APH).
- ◆ Going to start the 04 Ag Approps in the near future. Secretary will testify about the budget proposal being made. FSA staffing has come up every year since I have been here. Once that entire process is complete, then we will look at the actual appropriations. Farm bill issues will try to be amended in this process, most likely payment limitation. My dad is a farmer. I understand the issues. The affects of payment limitation limits payment on certain crops to 2000 acres and 450 acres on another crop.
- ◆ Country of origin labeling is another issue that will be addressed and this could affect the livestock farmer.
- ◆ USDA will make the decision on how the additional \$70 Million will be divided within FSA. Congress will not get into this discussion with the Department.

Kristi Schlosser - National Farmers Union (Government Relations Representative)

- ◆ You are the front line that provides the assistance to our members. We recognize fully your value to the farmer and we understand the need for additional employees and have supported increases in staff in the past and will continue to support this position in the future.
- ◆ We continue to monitor farm bill implementation
- ◆ Wanted to share our appreciation for all that you do for our farmers.

Roundtable Discussion (Participants are John Williams (DAM), Diane Sharp (PECD), Larry Mitchell (ACGA), Steven Meeks (Sen. Chambliss), Ben Noble (Rice Federation))

1. How/why did FSA receive an ineffective OMB rating? Been a effort by President to improve financial records as approved by outside auditors. Received a clean audit opinion from the outside source. We are "green" on this issue. Have an excellent record in my opinion.
2. Why hold up on automated POA? Redesign it on the new platform. One of the new phases of SCIMS and it just takes longer.
3. Does ag industry members support e-government initiatives? Our leadership is moving ahead on this, but those in rural America do not have the necessary servers for high performance. Need to work toward this in the future. Many will always want the hard copy application at the office. Don't want it to erode COC authority.
4. Do you see a role for FSA in Homeland Security? Yes to some extent. Activities you see in the communities. Farmers may convey something to you, then you need to report this. More of an observant role. Also have information in FSA that some people are interested in. We are a valid information source. We have a plan in place also if KC or Washington is hurt by homeland security. ACGA want farmer owned reserve to enhance bushels of storage to have adequately stored crops for future food uses in the event of a homeland security incident.
5. How to be more involved in crop insurance? ARPA involved the COF on this issue. There is a role for FSA in this issue and want to continue this. FSA is working hard now and if take additional responsibility, then we need additional employees

6. Could FSA acreage reports be used for crop insurance? Should be a mechanism in place. There is \$8 million in the farm bill for FSA and RMA to look at how there could be acreage reporting information sharing. Not just a matter of FSA and RMA. We also have the private insurance companies in the mix that would need to have common information/equipment, etc. to accomplish this.
7. Unable to complete reconstitutions for 2003. When will it be available (software)? Had to redo the reconstitution software. Testing has gone well. Available target of March 4th and will leave 02 and 03 open at the same time. 03 Tract Divisions and farm combinations will not be issued in the first release. Only farm divisions will be available. Tract divisions will NOT be available in the first release.
8. What is the problem with keeping the reconstitution software open all year long? In normal year, only close them long enough to do rollover. It was extended this time due to DCP.
9. Will there be changes in payment limitation? Sen. Chambliss does not support this, however, other efforts will be made to change these payment limitations. Will continue to be discussed throughout the coming year. Rice Federation does not support changing the rules of the game after farm bill was approved. This will be contentious. This is going to be a serious challenge. Concerned about the negative publicity of the farm bill debate and if this issue comes up again, then concerned agriculture will suffer. Administratively no changes unless Congress changes payment limitation. Payment limitation team is in place.
10. Is the April 1, 2003 deadline a drop-dead date and will a notice on a register be issued? April 1 is a drop-dead date. This continues to be monitored. Not sure what we are going to do. Will have a mechanism in place. Planning to continue with this date. Bottom line is, all farmers will be accommodated. Something will be coming out.
11. Notice AO-1276. Workload allocated to GS for administrative items 101 and 111. Will this be used to determine ceilings? I will send an email response. Not sure on this issue.
12. What does EWG want to achieve from their website? Press loves to quote this website. However, it only tells part of the story. Rice for example, the first 3 on the list is a Rice Cooperative that represents MANY producers. Data was misleading from some perspectives. Would like the public to know the amount of farm debt and that would put those payments into perspective. Misconception that this is gravy money, but it is being reinvested in the farm operation. Net farm income per farm household is \$4,000.
13. Will states be receiving new ceilings? DAFO will assign those numbers. Will there be changes to state ceilings? That is a job for DAFO.
14. Will all service center agencies be closed if a closing is made or could just one agency? The group is just in the initial stages of developing this methodology.
15. Need to have adequate IT equipment for our employees. We also have too many passwords. Software is being distributed before the bugs are worked out. Any response? Looking for a solution to the password problem. A team is in place to review this. Hope to have new PC's in August and keep the old ones for existing temps. Understands the printer issue. Do not release software knowing that there are bugs. Thank you to those CO employees that come in to test software. Can never guarantee that it will be 100% correct all of the time. Always under pressure to develop it quickly.
16. How about PT Classification? In house review showed that we saw no reason for PT upgrades. Sent this to a third party for review. Will let NASCOE review this in 30 days or so.

17. Does Congress ever look at funding on the Administrative side as opposed to the program side? Recognize the work that FSA is under and that admin funds are needed when funds are authorized for new programs. \$70 Million is for Disaster and Farm Bill implementation.
18. Any timeframe projections on Disaster enactment? Secretary has put a team together headed by Keith Collins. Did not get a jump start on the legislation since it changed. Secretary will announce a timeline after reviewed by the team. A website will be developed this week and they open to suggestions for implementation.
19. Status of CRP sign up? Having training this week. No decision on when the sign up will be announced. Any thought to extending CRP contracts for this year since we have many items on our plate? Not at this time.
20. Where are we on COC advisors? Can't respond.
21. Recent yield change procedure caused us more workload. Will you change the software to make it a more simple process to correct. Not planning on redeveloping the software.
22. CED's interested in being a DD must be certified in loan approval process. Feel this puts CED at a disadvantage to FLM. Being told that this will be used as tiebreaker in the selecting the position? Not official policy. We receive comments from both sides that the other has the advantage. We must be doing something right if nobody is happy.
23. Comment. Sen. Chambliss did want me to convey his appreciation for the work that you do.



Tom Lane - Henry County



“I want to know who’s responsible for the April 1st deadline!”

Steve Phillips - State Office



“Don’t look at me. I had nothing to do with it.”