**NASCOE Conference Call with State Presidents**

**3-3-15**

**Called to order**: March 3, 2015, by Mark VanHoose, NASCOE President

**In attendance:** Hunter Moorhead, Mark VanHoose, Wes Daniels, the majority of the executive committee and many states. It was decided not to take roll call of the states.

**Purpose of call**: to increase communication with states and ask questions. Each area will have the opportunity to ask questions.

**Hunter Moorhead: Crossroads Strategies**:

* He did a quick review of 2015 Appropriations which that included language regarding: office closures, MIDAS, and many other items.  About $30 million was used last year from S&E for MIDAS and the approps committee determined not to permit this for FY 2015 .  FSA did receive over $60 million above the presidents’ budget for the year and that was good for the agency.
* Congress put notification and approval language in approps bill for moving employees and closing offices.   In some cases, people were told to move and this caused problems.  A research station reported it was to be closed and congress had appropriated money for their research, so this was reviewed.  The language requires notification and approval by congress before transferring employees.  There is nothing that prevents the department from moving people around when up for promotion.  When department sends a letter regarding this, it should clear up some misconceptions about moving people.
* Cash awards are back
* 2016: approps process.  The President’s budget lowers the 2016 budget by $12 million but it is better starting point than last year.  We don’t want to fund IT at the expense of employees, but MIDAS has come a long way and hope to see the project finished.
* Farm bill implementation: $100 million was appropriated for this and it looks like the money will run out, so they are exploring ways to address the lack of funding for certain temporary employees.
* GSA rental agreements: hearing a lot about these agreements and they are trying to put FSA in GSA space.  If you hear about any rental space situations, send to Mark and Wes and Hunter.  They are starting to get interest in looking at GSA and their arrangements.  Doesn’t know if this can be put back to the COC system, but trying to get it back to USDA control
* Hearings are being done on farm bill implementation.  Congress will address appropriations bills around the first week of May.
* Q: NWA: WA: are other states authorizing overtime to get the farm bill done?  A: most states are providing an opportunity for comp/overtime.  The money should be there for such use.  Let the execs know if this is not happening.
* Q: MWA: MI: Discussed the promoting employees-two employees/office issue.  Hunter: USDA is required to send a letter to approps committees regarding promotions and moving employees.  This is a normal practice that has been in place for many years.   The approps committee will respond to USDA and then the information will be filtered down.  There is no real timeline on this. Could hear about a draft of the letter soon.
* Q: MWA: IN: will be sending information on leasing to Mark and Hunter.
* Q: SEA: none
* Q: NEA: none
* Q: SWA: OK: workload assessment: what is the impact of that and do we have what we need?  Hunter: There is language calling for a workload study.  USDA is not justifying office closures and reduction of employees because there is no workload study available.  The workload info is based on the old farm bill and the statement was made that this is old information and not very helpful.  Hunter is pushing for a full assessment of workload.  There is no deadline for the report at this time.
* Q: IA- does receipt for service play into this?  Don’t know how that will work yet.

**Wes Daniels:**

* He and Mark have received many adverse employee action reports and he wanted to remind everyone that they are entitled to one free hour with the NASCOE attorney. Members need to put their situation in writing and send it to the Area Exec, and it will be reviewed with the NASCOE VP, who will contact the attorney. The attorney will then contact the member directly regarding their situation. She is very good at her job and has helped many members over the years. This year alone they have had over 20 adverse action cases reported. NASCOE doesn’t want members to handle these situations alone.

**Accuracy Project: Curt Houk, MWA Exec**

* Crop reporting streamline project: the goal is to have producers report to RMA, FSA or directly via computer. IA and IL have been selected as pilots with 15 counties in each state. Each office picked 10 producers to participate in this project. This pilot will be used to determine how crop reporting will be done in the future. NASCOE understands the need for change and to remain positive about such change.
* Mark discussed a conference call with DAFP regarding this subject. NASCOE is vigilant and will stay on much focused on this project.

**Negotiation Process:**

* Your executive committee and negotiation consultants are heading to WDC to meet with management the week of March 30th. There are a number of items that will be worked on and a report will come out very soon. Please remember to participate in the process and let your Area Exec know your concerns.

**New Employees**

* Will be providing letters that can be sent to new employees, but it is important to do that personal contact early in their career. Please take time to do that.

**Questions:**

* Option of employees earning comp time? If your state does not make comp time available, please contact area exec know and NASCOE will contact management.
* Personnel actions: reminder about the NASCOE attorney is available for members. NASCOE works with DAFO on these
* Network: working slowly: NASCOE has brought this up numerous times, but the answer is to send in a remedy ticket, so if it slow, put in a ticket.
* NAFEC: comment, if any office has a vacancy and the state is slow to fill these, encourage the COC to send a letter to the state committee and let NAFEC know about the situation.
* MT: ARC/PLC extension: has there been any talk of extending the March 31 deadline? Mark stated that there are some hard and fast deadlines in the farm bill and some cannot be extended. He doubts that any information will be out before the very end of the signup. It is very discouraging that management allowed employees to spend time on gathering the register and then not use it.
* NY: There seems to be disagreement in some states that a register is still required. Is this happening in other states? Rick Csutoras will look into the use of register now. Some states are still requiring these. Comment was made regarding a weekly survey requested national office. See Rick’s comments on this below under Programs report.
* ID: new employees are coming on and there is just no time to train them. Is there talk about new employee training? Mark stated that he has not heard of such. He will look into this. See Jenae Prescott’s comments on this below.

**Execs Reports:**

* NWA: Phil: Rally- June 4-6 in Cody, WY. Be sure to get registrations in ASAP.
* MWA: Curt; April 24-25, in Grand Rapids, MI. MI has been working hard on the agenda. The registration is on the NASCOE website
* SEA: David: April 16-19 in New Orleans. Raffle tickets must be sent in and all information is on the website.
* NEA: Rally: April 24-26 in South Portland, ME. Raffle is 29 lobsters. Banquet Sat night.
* SWA: Brandon: SWA rally was planned for UT; it has been cancelled for this year. The SWA presidents will get together at some point and maybe organize a joint rally next year with one of the adjoining areas.

**Committee Reports**

***ASE: Micki Crider***-the scholarship applications should be in. Award nominations have been received and if you need a plaque, let her know ASAP. Emblems: “show me your emblems” promotion going on. State conventions, can have emblems packet sent to the states and orders can be taken there. If you have any suggestions, let her know.

***Benefits: Elyse Musil***: Sam’s club discount: they currently are taking that away and will change how they do incentives and discounts. More coming on this

***NAFEC: Billy Wayne Denison***: they have been working on getting membership packets to states and hopefully to COF’s. He encourages everyone to have NAFEC members attend state conventions and area rallies. In states that are having COC training, they are requesting time to present information on NAFEC at these meetings. We should all be associate members of NAFEC as an example of support.

***Membership: Angie Bierman***: there are still some states that have not sent in dues to the treasurer. There is an instruction sheet on entering members in the database and she will be sending that out very soon.

***Publicity***: the publicity chair could not be on the call.

***Legislative***: Hunter discussed legislative issues earlier.

***Programs: Rick Csutoras***: there has been a good turnaround on questions and he is working with Mike Schmitt, DAFP. The registers: an actual register is not required, but a weekly report of scheduled appointments is necessary.

**Other**

***Jenae Prescott***: she is on a task force for onboarding new employees. This has been on hold for now, but in the meantime, management knows we are bringing on many new employees and wants to have input on working with the process that could help. If you have suggestions, send those to Jenae.

***Questions***: OR: there was a request for questions for management-where is that at? Mark: They had a conference call with the administrator, but no questions were taken at that time. The questions brought up will be addressed through the negotiation session.

Let execs know if you feel this call was worth-while.

Adjourned 2:15 pm Eastern Time.

***Respectfully Submitted,***

***Deb Esselman***

***NASCOE Secretary.***