

**AGRICULTURAL LANDS RESOURCES COMMITTEE**  
**2005 MEETING NOTES (DRAFT)**

**Meeting Participants:** Luther Waterland, Chair, MT; Kurt Heyman, OH; Terry Pepper, DE; Randy Loutzenhiser, CO; Jerry Snodgrass, IL; Paul Stoker, WA; Chris Herron, WA; Jim Summers, NC; William Thomas, TX; Paul Kalass, NCDEA, MN; Greg Foley, NASCA, KS; Deb Ryun, State Association Execs, IA; Bill Berry, Buffer Notes Editor, WI; Rich Duesterhaus, NACD Staff Advisor, DC; Deb Bogar, NACD Staff, CO; Bob Stephenson, Mike Linsenbigler, Beverly Preston, FSA; Gus Jordan, NRCS

**Monday, December 5**

Chair Waterland opened the meeting at 8:00 am and welcomed everyone. Participants introduced themselves and their backgrounds. Bogar reviewed the briefing book.

Duesterhaus provided information on the committee history, meeting purpose and objectives, and current initiatives. Travel expense vouchers should be sent to him.

The agenda was reviewed. Relevant sessions at the annual meeting were referenced, including the resolutions committee meeting on Saturday afternoon, a brief policy committee meeting on Sunday morning, and resolutions hearings on Monday afternoon.

Each member was asked to share his/her thoughts and concerns about the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in general. Feedback was recorded on flipchart sheets. (Draft of this exercise is attached)

Duesterhaus provided an overview of the **CRP Technical Assistance (TA) Project** NACD is doing with FSA. A high TA workload is expected but there is not enough technical staff.

Linsenbigler provided information on numbers and their pilot program. Looking at having decisions made at the state level as to what resources and who are available to do TA via 1) contracts with one county or multi-county and 2) cooperative agreements. FSA is providing agronomic practice training to their staff on whether plans submitted are ok or whether they need to check with NRCS; engineering practices will be left to NRCS. The pilot program is being conducted in 10 states to do 5% of the workload in 2006 through technical service providers (TSP). The FSA model of deliverables or work products includes: eligibility of determinations, conservation plans, design and layout, certification of practices, and status review/follow-up. They have to be able to track performance, as required by OMB.

Committee members asked questions, including how they can maintain tort liability coverage if the agreement isn't through NRCS. This will need to be addressed in the NACD report along with a range of options to give states ways to meet their varied levels of need. Members cautioned not to handicap NRCS state conservationists and or FSA

state executive directors and county executive directors with a pre-determined numbers of providers.

Stephenson gave a presentation on CRP forecasting (see handout provided). Members discussed and were encouraged to visit more this evening and prepare to give recommendations in the morning.

In response to **policy review** discussion, *Stoker made a motion and Summers seconded to prepare an omnibus resolution on proposed changes to ag policy for the 2007 annual meeting; motion carried.* Lamb offered to prepare the first draft and work with the Committee through 2006.

*Stoker made a motion and Heyman seconded to adopt the Suggestions for NACD Policy Book as written on the handout; motion carried.*

The 2005 resolutions - ALR2, ALR3, ALR5, ALR6, ALR7 - were reviewed with no further action deemed necessary.

A list of potential issues for resolutions, culled from USDA Listening Sessions and focus groups feedback, was reviewed. Several additional ideas were given by members. These will be discussed in detail tomorrow.

Berry gave an overview of the publication, Buffer Notes. Emphasis will continue on CRP, especially CREP and continuous CRP. Focus will be on programs and partnerships, not the agency. It is mailed to an audience of 9100 including FSA, NRSC, district and congressional offices. The publication can also be used as a carrier for special inserts.

NACD President Bill Wilson stopped by to thank the Committee for their work and respond to questions.

## **Tuesday, December 6**

Chair Waterland called the meeting to order at 8:00am.

Duesterhaus handed out the draft outline for the CRP TA report and members provided their feedback on issues, content of which were recorded on flipcharts.

A Homegrown Energy booklet prepared by the Natural Resources Defense Council was distributed. Discussion centered around the perception of NRDC and how it may affect NACD. *Stoker made the motion and Snodgrass seconded the booklet would be acceptable if the logos were removed and NRDC was only referenced in the cover letter from President Wilson; motion carried with one opposed.*

The list of potential resolutions resulted in the following recommended actions. The NACD staff will draft appropriate wording for those approved or combine with others

submitted from states, regions or other committees, and send to the Committee for review and action in Houston.

1. NACD calls on the Congress and the Administration to provide the reward concept of conservation to all producers. (concept approved)
2. NACD encourages the use of conservation planning as the basis for all conservation work on farms and ranches. (tabled) (current policy)
3. NACD requests that the tools for farmer use in making self assessments and other inventories be standardized and used for all programs. (turned down)
4. NACD supports an adjustment in the farm bill program technical assistance accounts that will smooth out the funding cycles and provide for a better transition from one fiscal year to the next. (concept approved)
5. NACD calls for a reduction in the frequency of program and handbook rule changes for conservation programs. (research to see if current policy)
6. NACD requests that the findings from the innovative grants and pilot programs be used to promote new and creative conservation approaches. (concept approved)
7. NACD calls for maximum flexibility in program implementation as possible (research to see if current policy otherwise forward as proposed policy)
8. NACD calls for the preparation of a plan for future technical assistance that assures both adequate expertise in variety as well as volume for the future. (concept approved)
9. NACD encourages full-accountability and reporting of accomplishments ~~from~~ ~~conservation program~~ so that the conservation benefits are better understood. (concept approved)
10. NACD calls for Congress to hold to their commitment made in 2002 farm bill for conservation funding. (concept approved)
11. FSA should work directly with conservation districts (incorporate into CRP TA report)
12. Establish a task force on CSP such as was done for EQIP. (concept approved)
13. Counter the one year ownership required for continuous CRP in regard to grass waterways. (concept approved)

General discussion was held with Krysta Harden, NACD CEO, on bringing together the various Farm Bill program supporters to prevent fights among them.

- find common ground

- all part of conservation toolbox, fill niches that others can't; help see overall value and value of each to over all, via one-pager
  - farm operation self-assessment tools
  - lost momentum on CSP with limited funds, access; not equitable to all
  - educate each other on what's major for own areas and help see conservation is bottom line
- including addressing urban views
- have behind-doors dialogue but come out with public solidarity
  - send best folks forward
  - keep concepts really big
  - establish ground rules early
  - don't be wishy-washy, take a stand

The committee set plans for a conference call on December 28<sup>th</sup> to review the Draft CRP TA report and to hold a brief meeting in Houston for those members that are attending the annual meeting.

Chairman Luther Waterland thanked the attendees for their input and discussion.

The meeting was adjourned Tuesday shortly after lunch.

Separate attachments: Accomplishments; CRP issues list;