Minutes

Roll Call ................................................................................................................................. Orval Gigstad, Region Chair
Kansas: Allen Roth, Bevin Law, Jerry Clasen, Cindy Pulse, Dan Meyerhof
Montana: Steve Hedstrom, Dean Rogge, Dick Iverson
Nebraska: Orval Gigstad, Craig Derickson, Kent Zimmerman
North Dakota: Keith Bartholmay, Sarah Tunge
South Dakota: Karl Jensen, Angela Ehlers, Fran Fritz, Bill Smith

Salvador Salinas (NRCS), Mary Scott (NACD), Coleman Garrison (NACD)

Approval of Minutes ................................................................................................................. Board Members
Approved as presented.

Executive Board Report ............................................................................................................. Bevin Law
Discussed some activities that Kansas has taken to inform members of congress about support needed for CDs. Involved the Executive Director (Dan Meyerhof) in communications. Stewardship and Education committee work:  Stewardship week is April 26-May 6. Everyone should have this on their list and be sure to reach out to people (church, TVs, Media) to share the resources online. The committee is working on 2021 theme “Healthy Forests, Healthy communities”. They looked at some logo samples for selection.

Legislative Report ..................................................................................................................... Coleman Garrison/Mary Scott
Introduction of Mary Scott, (NACD) Natural Resource Policy specialist. Mary introduced herself and gave some background from her experience. She will be based in DC and will also be staff lead on Public Lands RPG.
Coleman Garrison: Provided Govt affairs update and recent work. Described the recently submitted letter from Tim Palmer outlining what districts need to survive COVID-19. NACD has been looking to hear where districts are struggling, how they’re coping, etc. Since there is so much variability in operations, the situation is different from state to state. Some are struggling with reduced revenue and reduced sales. Coleman outlined the letter content and the areas where it requests support for districts (extending public tax credit, availability of payroll protection program to cover districts. This program has gotten a lot of media coverage, all fund have now been spoken for so this would need to be added to and made accessible. Hospitals are in the same boat, so there is a high demand for the funds. NACD created a template letter that districts can fill out (or any constituents) getting the message out about the need (attached in this email). Most contacts should have received an
email from Jeremy with this, Coleman is happy to chat with any other questions. The letter also requests support for NRCS direct hiring and program support. These are helpful for districts and local economies.

Coleman discussed the Virtual fly in: Documents were provided on the website. Letters and conference calls were used. Coleman heard from many region leaders that already had relationships with officials, which made his follow up more effective. It’s a new world- NACD will continue to reach out to contact lists and the policy staff welcomes input and feedback.

There was discussion (prompted by SD) on impacts to livestock production and processing and the need for a disposal program.

Salvador Salinas: NRCS is discussing situations regarding carcasses. State cons in a number of states are putting together a plan for how to handle these practices. The program is almost done, just fine tuning and training staff. The details of the funding for the states to be able to address this emergency are being discussed.

NRCS: They have also submitted for the stimulus package pertaining to watershed program and wetland restoration projects. There will be opportunity if funds are available for on the ground needs.

NACD Report ..........................................................Sunni Heikes-Knapton

- Third quarter invoice dues have gone out. See attachment from email yesterday. Region dues are at 95% of where we were a year ago, and 90% of total dues paid during the last fiscal year. Thanks for describing the value of NACD to our member districts; their support is key for our operations.
- Pollinator webinar (April 16). The recorded webinar is available online.
- Stewardship week: Where would we BEE without pollinators? April 26- May 3. The pollinator guide is getting a lot of downloads and we are also going to be posting a webinar featuring how to use the guide.
- Conservation Planning Bootcamp: Sessions cancelled: April, May and June.
- Technical Assistance Grants: MOAs have gone out to most all priority requests, and the RFP was announced April 1. The April 14 Webinar now online. We are so glad for the support of the state partnerships on this effort and we are proud of the accomplishments to date with this program.
- Envirothon: Cancelled. NE is working on trying to see about hosting in 2021- this is an ongoing discussion.
- District spotlight: Need an example from a Northern Plains state district who has been successful in continuing to work during COVID 19.
- Region meeting: Waiting to hear about the Summer Conservation Forum and Tour in North Dakota- the Executive Board will be discussing later this month.
Missouri River Team Update:
Dick Iverson: Working below Fort Peck on border of ND/MT on a test flow to benefit pallid sturgeon. They are doing an analysis- want to get an idea of how it will impact pump site and ag economics. ACOE plans to do May 15 release of the Draft Impact statement but the survey of the sites wouldn’t be done until July, so they will continue discussions on this.

Other Region News:

Updates: States, Committee, RPGs, NASCA, NRCS, NCDEA Updates

NASCA:
Kent Zimmerman:
- NASCA remains open, but staff are teleworking.
- Most state conservation agency staff are teleworking. Many offices are open to the public, but are staffed by skeleton crews, working parts of days or trading days in the office. Teleworking is the norm.
- NASCA recently submitted comments on the RCPP interim rule. Our key issues were:
  1. RCPP projects should address natural resource concerns identified by local workgroups, which are led by conservation districts.
  2. State Conservationists should be given the authority to award RCPP projects from the State pool of funding.
  3. The rule defines the "RCPP plan of operations" for any given property. NASCA believes conservation planning should be more holistically defined, and the conservation plan should be tailored to the natural resource concerns of the property rather than to satisfy the needs of the program.
- NASCA’s spring Board of Directors meeting has been cancelled, but as of now, our annual meeting is still planned for October 5-7 in Spokane, WA.

NRCS:
Salvador Salinas: NRCS is still working alongside CDs, sometimes under different situations, often rotating and doing telework. They are still doing field work with social distance guidance. Employees have embraced and adjusted well and they are learning a lot. New employees are coming on during this timeframe, which is a challenge because the office staff approach is different. Some training is being developed to keep them engaged and oriented while they work from home.
Craig Derickson: The NRCS Field staff is working hard to get the backed up work done in Nebraska.
Sarah Tunge: NCDEA
Glad to announce that NCPP.info is live (https://www.nationalconservationplanningpartnership.com/). Which is a milestone with gov delivery going live. Bulletins have gone out and info has been distributed regarding COVID-19 and work. She encourages everyone to go to website and sign up for updates; they have “contact us” and suggestion boxes. They want to hear from partners and individuals about what is going on. Summer meeting is a bit on hold. NCDEA meeting is under discussion for late June. Northern Plains Leadership conference is postponed. Trying to stay in touch with employees to make sure needs are met- technology, field needs, communications.

**NE:**
Dealing with weather challenges in Lincoln.

**KS:**
Lots of notice emails were sent out for controlled burns in Flint Hills- lots of smoke going into Nebraska (sorry!). Most all KS events have been cancelled or postponed. Virtual meetings: board meeting next Thursday to set up appointments with congressional delegation. KS was approved for RCPP in Greeley county; Bill Simshauser and Playa lakes joint venture are both significantly involved. The focus is the improvement of Oglala aquifer and well head protection.

**MT:** Working on MACD reorganization studies.

**SD:** Planting and tree season has started. They’ve been doing weekly calls with the state, covering a host of topics. They will be doing an Arbor day essay program on NPR. Area meetings under discussion- exploring opportunities. Commission will be meeting next week virtually. RCPPs in SD: BFRWP Irrigation Efficiency and Soil Health and Big Sioux River Watershed Partnership Project.

**ND:** (Submitted by Roger Christensen) Districts in ND are moving ahead with their tree planting plans. The challenge of social distancing while doing so has to be addressed for transportation and installation. Districts will be working on this.

**RCPP Story map** that describes all funded projects and their locations.

Meeting adjourned at 12:01 Central time

Next meeting: May 15, 12 PM Central, 11 AM Mountain