Notes

Roll Call.................................................................................................................. Orval Gigstad, Region Chair
Kansas: Allen Roth, Jerry Clasen, Dan Meyerhoff, Cindy Pulse, Bevin Law
Montana: Steve Hedstrom, Dean Rogge, Dick Iverson
Nebraska: Orval Gigstad, Kent Zimmerman
North Dakota: Roger Christensen, Keith Bartholomay, Sarah Tunge
South Dakota: Fran Fritz, Karl Jensen, Jack Majeres, Bill Smith
NRCS: Salvador Salinas
NACD: Mary Scott

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

Executive Board Report.............................................................................................. Bevin Law
Executive board call: The board got input and had discussion about concerns for Summer
Meeting for travel, attendance, and logistics. After lengthy deliberation, the board decided
upon cancellation of the Summer meeting. It was a hard decision to make. Thanks to North
Dakota for all the planning they put into the effort. Jeremy Peters has invited ND to host in
2023, there are some logistics (hotel, conference facility) that are being worked out right now.

Does the region want to hold a separate in person meeting? Or do we want to not hold an in-
person meeting and instead do the monthly calls. It was proposed that the upcoming June
26th call could be the region meeting. A vote would be needed on the June call to make this
official. South Dakota requests that a date be set for 2021 Northern Plains region meeting.
KACD will discuss this at their next meeting and provide an update when they have made a
decision.

Stewardship and education committee: Had a call on May 12. Talked about the 5 year
curriculum and particularly the soil health topic. Talked about the Spanish language translation
of the pollinator guide and also the 2021 theme for stewardship week, “Healthy Forests,
Healthy Communities”.

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

- Following last month’s discussion about livestock disposal, there is a NRCS program to
  assist with disposal. The pdf is sent with this email and can be found online. Mary:
Hasn’t heard much more on it. The program is looking at what makes the most sense for the producer.

- **Urban Ag Webinar**: May 21: 12-1 PM Eastern. Stormwater Management. Featuring examples from Tahoe (California) and Snohomish (Washington) conservation district projects. To register, click [here](#).

- **District Profile from Lake County CD in Montana** is on the NACD blog.

- Stay tuned for District Story from Beadle County CD in South Dakota that will be in the upcoming Resource!

- **Technical Assistance Grants**: Deadline for the current request for proposals is June 1, 2020. States partnerships should be moving forward with prioritizing the requests and instructing preferred districts to complete the online application. The signature sheet with the ranking results should be submitted to Meg Leader and myself.

- **National Conservation Foundation Annual Report** for 2019 is now online. Includes great profiles of Next Generation Leadership Institute and the Envirothon program.

- NACD has extended the remote work and no travel requirement for all staff until June 8, which aligns with the recent mandate by the mayor of Washington, DC.

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**Missouri River Team Update:**

There will be no in-person meetings in May in Sioux Falls this year. This does reduce the costs for the program. Major workgroups of the team: Fish, Bird (Jack serves on this), Human Considerations (Dick serves on this). They are making recommendations to be included in the strategic plan that is being drafted. The Bird workgroup is finalizing recommendations in the coming week. Most efforts involved in their recommendations are USFWS tasks. They want them to recognize the value of off channel habitat for bird populations.

Human considerations workgroup has been discussing the test flow project by the ACOE. They are proposing a spring discharge to mimic the pre-dam hydrograph. Peak of 35k cfs is projected. Typically it’s been max of 20k cfs. They are doing an EIS to look at impacts to hydropower and other areas. There was an attempt in 2019 to get a pump site survey done in advance of the test flow. The response was that the EIS would be done and a post flow survey if needed. They continue to have regular calls. Asking for a delay in the EIS to have the proper data relating to the irrigators. Calls will continue. A lot of focus has been on the fish in this area. There are plans to construct interception rearing complexes to provide habitat for larvae for a year of growth. There are 2 currently built in Missouri and they plan to build 10 more below Sioux City, IA. It’s an issue for barge traffic, as they could impact their operations. Technology and science behind the structures is still being gathered.

Niobrara: Has been flooded most of the year. Jack will be following up with them- they were planning to get funding for tributary work to address sediment and flow.

Jack has copies of the 2019 annual report- people can let him know if they want a hard copy. He will find out if there is an electronic copy and it can be sent out.
A September meeting is being planned, but unsure of confirmation. This would be a cost to the budget for the program. This needs to be a discussion item for the June 26 agenda.

Other Region News:
- NRCS announces Urban Ag Grant: July 6, 2020 deadline.
- Montana Association of Conservation Districts Executive Director Position Advertised
- Pollinator Partnership Award is accepting nominations for Pollinator Advocate and Agricultural Pollinator Conservation Awards. Deadline: August 28th

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

Kansas:
Kansas did have several contacts with elected officials. Did virtual meeting Marshal, Roberts, Moran and met with office staff. They are hoping to connect with Estes. Most districts are working under current restrictions. Allen has been appointed by governor to the water authority. General Mills project in Reno county is getting a lot of attention. Soil testing is being done and landowners have been identified to look at carbon credits and conservation tillage.

SD: Area meetings- working on a plan to hold them. It could be a hybrid of in-person and remote formats. The weekly calls with the districts have been done by Angela. Most districts are working on tree planting and are keeping work going.

ND: Cancellation of summer meeting for this year- working on the potential for hosting in 2023. Tree planting is underway, varying on location and ability to get work done. Some spring moisture has slowed progress. Districts are continuing to work and are doing a great job. Seems like rural district areas are doing really well. They are talking about their upcoming board and area meetings.

MT: Board is doing in person meeting in June. The merger continues to be discussed and the by-laws will need to be adjusted. ED position is still open- interviews are underway. Districts are keeping going with virtual meetings. Steve recommends that we consider the region meeting in June be done via video. The state has fared well with the virus- phased approach is underway. Weather has been cold and wet. NRCS state con is starting face to face meetings next week.

KS: They are working on filling the dept of Ag Executive Director position. All staff meetings have been done virtually. They’ve used Microsoft teams (security is a bit better than zoom) and it has been helpful, even with training. NASCA call yesterday: discussed doing state meetings virtually. Cindy is on a committee that is working on that. The future of our work should adapt to some of these new virtual meeting tools.
NE: Staff has been working remotely, boards are doing virtual meetings. Smaller meetings (less than 10 people) might start up soon. Recreation sites: Fees for the use of these has elevated because more people are using the sites.

NRCS: Still operating under COVID guidelines from the administration. New guidance is coming out shortly for state cons to work within state guidelines. It’s still under review. Employees who are going out to the field were restricted to 1 vehicle- yesterday they raised it to 2 people (with precautions in place: sanitation, ventilation, PPE).

Urban ag grant: New farm bill (2018) relates to setting up an urban office within USDA. Several cities in US will be selected for urban office locations, Sal will let us know where those offices will be located. A committee will be part of the office, so there is an opportunity for districts to be involved with the committees.

Thanks to districts and NRCS staff. Challenges have been high- signs of improvements are being seen. Guidance is forthcoming about NRCS offices reopening. NRCS will be working with districts to have continuity to provide service to producers.

Meat packing plants: some are reopening. NRCS has program to get EQIP support for carcass management: Pork, poultry. Some concerns about what impacts could be for beef. Limited applications are coming in. Perhaps this is related to FEMA FSA program that could be better fit for producers. National industries have been very vocal to the agency. NRCS does have a support program in place: districts can help with getting this information out.

Working with producers for program applications- some virtually as needed. CSP renewals have been a recent focus. New CSP applications deadlines (each state has own deadlines) coming soon. Districts can help with getting these program updates out as well.

NASCA: 2020 annual meeting: looking at postponing a year- no decision yet. Executive call forthcoming. The recent webinar was very good featuring a lot of districts who had great information to share. It was recorded and is available now online.

There was discussion about the platform and the details of the NACD July board meeting. At this point, July 20th has been discussed, but the details are still being considered. Sunni’s goal: whichever platform gets used for the NACD board meeting should be the same platform that we use for the June 26 region call. It will be important for everyone to be able to use the video option to be able to see documents.

Next meeting: June 26, 8 AM Central- 7 AM Mountain. Virtual platform (NOTE NEW TIME)

Adjourned: 1:06 pm Central time