Northern Plains Region Board Meeting: Notes
Friday, June 26, 2020: 8:00 am Central, 7:00 am Mountain

Roll Call ............................................................................................................................... Orval Gigstad
Kansas:  Bevin Law, Allan Roth, Jerry Clasen, Cindy Pulse, Dan Meyerhoff
Nebraska:  Orval Gigstad
North Dakota Keith Bartholomay, Roger Christensen
South Dakota:  Fran Fritz, Karl Jensen, Jack Majeres, Angela Ehlers, Bill Smith
Montana:  Steve Hedstrom, Jeff Tiberi
*Note:  There were several attendees who accessed the meeting via phone line and they were muted due to meeting settings, so they may not be reflected in the roll call.

Approval of Minutes ........................................................................................................ Board Members
ACTION ITEM:  Approved as distributed

Executive Board Report...................................................................................................... Bevin Law
(Submitted)  Discussing financials and budget, particularly regarding 2021-22 meeting planning.  Quite a bit of discussion on board proclamation regarding diversity and race that was recently released.  Final wording is being drafted.

Legislative Report .............................................................................................................. Coleman Garrison
Corona virus response:  House passed 5th package with provisions for local and state governments (not necessarily going toward special districts, but a benefit locally- cities, counties, states).  NACD continues to voice support.  Nationally, the medical needs are high priority. Payroll tax credit should provide some financial relief in the future.  A smaller but more targeted bill is expected.  There is a lot of uncertainty.  Districts are encouraged to reach out to members of congress to talk about the needs of districts.
Prevent plant: NACD is encouraging that NRCS make the flexible date permanent.  Also encouraging flexibility in CRP acreage management to allow haying or grazing.
Senate:  Looking more at carbon credit training.  NACD will be providing input.
NACD responded to climate committee request in October, and the full report is expected soon (report here: https://climatecrisis.house.gov/sites/climatecrisis.house.gov/files/Climate%20Crisis%20Action%20Plan.pdf ).  The focus of the NACD comment was to encourage existing partnerships.
Rule writing is underway and to be released in the coming months (NACD commented on this).
Public lands authorization to permanently fund LWCF is going into house, and it is expected to pass.  A portion was designated for maintenance, but with a one-time funding status.  There is concern about the permanence and the way it impacts the oversight of the program.
Drought:  Prevent plant is going to be more important this year in North Dakota as it appears things are drying out; likely in South Dakota as well.  It’s expected that the date could be applied again this year, but the better approach is to have the dates changed permanently.
NACD Report

- NACD Membership report. See displays and these will also be sent out.
- Be sure to note Jeremy’s email from June 23 on the NACD July 20 BOD meeting, 5-7 PM Eastern Time. This will also be a Zoom format. More instructions are to come.
- NACD has been providing some input on communications relating to the St Mary’s Irrigation situation in Montana.
- District Profile from Nebraska NRD is on the NACD blog.
- District profile South Dakota Beadle County CD in latest Resource.
- Technical Assistance Grants: Processing applications. More information to come.
- NRCS Boot Camp: All sessions cancelled.
- NACD 2021 Elections: elections to be held during the 2021 NACD Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana February 6-10, 2021. Elections will be held for the positions of First Vice-President, Second Vice-President, and Secretary-Treasurer. The deadline to receive candidate applications is Friday, November 6, 2020.
- Urban Ag Webinars: July 16, 2020 12-1 pm EST. Prince George Maryland: Urban farm legislation and a property tax credit for landowners engaged in urban agriculture activities. Register here: https://nacdnet.z2systems.com/track//servlet/DisplayLink?orgId=nacdnet&emailId=8f8457f9364d8294ab51b5b619ef46ce8m97221168f8&secureId=3xLWc1CKjRonFRz6O8y9Kw%3D%3D&linkId=48270&targetUrl=https://nacdnet.z2systems.com/eventReg.jsp?event=654
- Seeking proposals for 2021 webinars. Submit your presentation proposal(s) by sending a brief paragraph describing the program/project you would like to showcase to Deb Bogar at deb-bogar@nacdnet.org by August 1, 2020.

Missouri River Team Update
MRRIC: There have been no in person meetings this year, but many calls. They are working on updating strategic plans. Jack will follow up with the Middle Niobrara NRD in Nebraska about their new project.
Dick will continue to be involved in his calls and activities; in person meetings are slated for November and December, pending confirmation.
ACTION ITEM: Motion made by Montana to send out invoice for $400 to support Conservation District representative travel to MRRIC meetings. Second: North Dakota. Motion carries.

Montana: Thanks to NACD for help with Milk River Irrigation communication. The state is seeking support to repair failed structures and to assess the whole system. State association met in June; still looking for new ED. Lots of zoom meetings.

North Dakota: Working on their association Convention planning; waiting to make the final call on details. Menoken farm tour was yesterday; exceptional tour featuring John Sticka. Great quotes include: “Tillage never does anything good for the soil” “Fix problems with seeds, not steel”. Conditions in the state are challenging right now; really dry. Conservation is helping
crops. Dealing with some conflict with a retail seeds entity who wants the list of landowners.
SD: NRCS owns that list- it is confidential.
South Dakota: Socially distanced area meetings will be attempted in July. Discussing planning for September conference. Soil health legislation discussions underway.
Kansas: Officers are following the USDA guidelines for meetings. Annual meeting: November 2020 is still scheduled.
Nebraska: First in-person meeting will be held next week. The building where NARD is located was damaged during riots and planning is underway for a new office location.

NRCS: Phase II has started in national headquarters. Phase III starts July 6th but July 13th will be when most folks come back to the office. Field offices: 1500 at phase II, 500 at phase III. The COVID status is impacting the phasing and opening. Positive tests have happened with staff. Animal mortality: Ongoing and requests are easing up. They haven’t used as much of the funds as they had expected.
Continuing to work with districts, employees, producers to get farm bill funding on the ground, even in a challenging year. An agency purchased face masks and will be available for all FSA and NRCS employees, as well as conservation district employees. Let your state con know if they don’t show up. CRP: Helping some states with development of grazing plans for CRP. Be sure to work at the local level to develop those as needed.

NCDEA (submitted):
The NCDEA Northern Plains region and North Central Region are working on revamping our annual leadership conference into several shorter lunch and learn type opportunities that will be available over Zoom or some similar platform. We’re excited about that and there will be more information coming.

The NCDEA board is working on beginning the process to update our strategic plan, this is a bit more challenging in light of our current situation. We held two days of conference calls this week in place of our normal mid-year meeting.

Two things emerged from the meeting; the work that’s being done to keep connected with district employees and how they are working through the changes in how we deliver conservation programs. There was talk of putting together a guide for employees, similar to the one that was developed for use during government shut downs. We are also working to put together ideas and examples of innovative methods of education delivery.

The other big item that came forward is working on planning a nationwide leadership conference. This is still in the early discussion phase but we’re excited to be talking about the possibility of moving forward with it and bringing the Conservation partnership together.

Finally, work continues with NCPP and the website. We are working on updates for the website and developing some next steps for the site and what the possibilities are for the future.
NASCA (submitted):

NASCA is applying for a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) in the upcoming grant round. We have already been in contact with numerous state agencies, organizations, and others who are eager to be involved with the project if approved by NRCS. The following is a very brief project description:

*NRCS has adopted a number of practices to enhance pollinator habitat. However, most of these focus on establishing pollinator habitat by planting species that pollinators will utilize for foraging or nesting. In practice, these projects generally take place on field edges or corners, where cooperators are encouraged to take land out of production to support pollinator populations.*

*The average field office is neither prepared nor experienced in providing technical assistance for managing woodlands for pollinators. This project seeks to change that by developing specific forest management prescriptions to provide various successional plant communities in association with managed forest stands. These prescriptions may then be used by NRCS to develop more specific practice standards, which can be used by field offices across the country.*

NASCA will hold our 2020 annual meeting in virtual format October 5-7, 2020. NASCA’s 2021 annual meeting will be face to face and is scheduled for October 4-6 in Spokane, WA.

**Tim Palmer:** Getting ready for NACD Board virtual meeting in July. Attendees will need to be up to speed on the content, because decisions will need to be made on budget and by law change.

**Other Region News:**
- Northern Plains Region Meeting, Kansas: June 9 – 11, 2021. Additional discussions about location and activities will take place at the KACD July meeting.

**Next meeting:** The full NACD Board Meeting July 20, 5-7 PM Eastern. Virtual format. Proposed (By Region Rep): Northern Plains Region call August 14 at 8 AM Central.

**Meeting adjourned:** 9:10 AM Central Time