Northern Plains Region Board Meeting Notes
Friday, September 18, 2020: 8:00 am Central, 7:00 am Mountain

Agenda

Roll Call ................................................................. Orval Gigstad, Region Chair
Nebraska: Orval Gigstad, Craig Derickson
Kansas: Allen Roth, Bevin Law, Bill Simshauer, Cindy Pulse, Jerry Clasen
North Dakota: Roger Christensen, Keith Bartholmay, Sarah Tunge, Mary Podell
South Dakota: Fran Fritz, Karl Jensen, Bailey Gullikson (attending for Bill Smith), Jeff Zimprich, Jack Majeres
Montana: Steve Hedstrom, Dean Rogge, Dick Iverson, Rebecca Boslough

NACD: Kim LaFleur, Michael Crowder, Mary Scott
NRCS: Salvador Salinas, Astor Boozer

What value did NACD provide to your state this year?
Partnership and working together
TA Grants
Daily round up
Website and supervisor training resources online
Work on WOTUS
Work on the Hill and telling the conservation message
Conservation Clips
Information sharing
Providing a national voice
Zoom meetings to stay connected
eResource
Work of RPGs to give states and local issues a voice
Honest advice from people who know the scene in DC
Urban (Community) outreach and webinars
Northern Plains Region Representative
St Mary’s Diversion support
Idea sharing
COVID support
Participation in NCPP
Maintaining district connections

Approval of Minutes ................................................................. Board Members
Approved as presented
Missouri River Team Update
Jack Majeres: Niobrara river has some progress being made. Jack talked with Chandler Schmidt, working on Long Pine Creek Watershed. Their NRD has an NACD TA grant. They have several projects in the works on that tributary, which is a big watershed located in central Nebraska. They’re working on a RCPP grant. He wasn’t able to talk with the other 2 NRDs in that watershed yet. The work is a start to addressing sediment in the tributaries.
Dick Iverson: MRRIC: Two focuses areas: Upper Reach: There is an existing CREP program and Liv Stavick (MRCDC Coordinator) is working on improving the program. Lower reach: This is the area below fort peck. The CDs working with 160 irrigators to understand the implications to irrigation from the flow work. They’ve surveyed 80% of sites now. Test flow may result in loss of water access for some sites; flows both too high and too low. Some progress is being made with communications with ACOE to be on the same page. They’ll release the data from the survey and continue discussions.

NACD Officer Update: Kim LaFleur and Michael Crowder
It is business as usual for NACD staff. They are adapting to the working conditions well. Some follow up from summer board meeting: the DEI task force will be having first meeting next week. The group is made up of advisors, partners and regional representation. They will be looking at NACD as an organization and how to support state associations and districts to make sure conservation is available for all. Planning for the annual meeting: The website does have a COVID statement and the board is monitoring the situation. There are several factors that are influencing the decision, including local and state restrictions and vaccine development progress. An official decision on the format of the meeting (in-person, virtual or hybrid) is on their October agenda.

Executive Board Report................................................................. Bevin Law
The had their meeting 3 weeks ago which included a lot of good discussion. Alex Schmidt described Iowa storm and the damage from the event. They heard updates from by laws committee, nominating committee, NCF, CTIC. If anyone has questions, reach out to Bevin and talk with him.
S and E Committee: Working on forestry theme for stewardship week, including social media outreach. Marketplace now has masks available. Conservation careers workshop planning is underway for 2021 and for bigger event in 2022, both including additional partners. The 2021 will include a forestry theme. Talk to Keith Owen (keith-owen@nacdnnet.org) if you have questions on the careers workshop.

NACD Invasive Species Resource Policy Group .................................. Bill Simshauser
RPG started 3 years ago and Bill has been on the group from start. They developed a list of 15 species of concern. This has opened many doors that have been valuable for the RPG. Bill Whitacker with WGA has been involved with a central database for invasive species and they’re talking about how to work together. Mary Scott gave the group a document from DOI:
Invasive species strategic plan. The document is now open for comments. The group is working on comments to submit, including supporting the database approach of WGA. They also referenced specific projects that districts are working on for relating to topics like feral swine, and aquatic invasives.

District Perspective .......................................................... Dean Rogge (Montana)
Huff Fire Video

Garfield county has been prone to fire since 2003. They have had about 600,000 acres burned and there are 1200 people living in the area. They have state lands, refuge lands, BLM; a checkerboard. With a fire, emotions are really high because the people have strong connections to the land that go back for generations. This is where the district can play a really important role because they have that connection to the community members. Many landowners have never dealt with federal agencies.

Strategies the Garfield Conservation District has used during disasters: Get everyone together in a meeting and ask: We are here today to talk about solutions, what can we do to help? Steer the conversation away from just talking about the disaster. When dealing with multiple landowners, build relationships with all of those members, which will help in times of disaster.

This includes inviting federal partners to events and in outreach. Build trust by getting to know each other at the events. Their relationship with NRCS is priceless, they work hand in hand to organize meetings. This week, they saw another group try to organize a meeting and it lacked the needed community connection.

In 2017 they had a fire where 275,000 acres burned. BLM had standard to defer grazing for 3 years after a fire. But they changed to grazing at a reduced stocking capacity after the growing season the following year. The refuge offered relief grazing on the refuge right after the fire until November 2017 on allotments that haven’t been used for up to 25 to 30 years. Much of this was because many partners (local/state/federal and NGOs) were able to attend a presentation by Fort Keogh Research Center about post-fire grazing. Their partnership with the Refuge helped with that transition; the directive came from above to offer the relief grazing.

The relationships also help with funding, where the district can fill in gaps. They got 250K for a weed grant from BLM to deal with weeds. The state gave them 70K to help where others couldn’t (fencing, etc). They got a national award from BLM for their stewardship and that is a strong reflection on the value of their relationships.

This is a very emotional situation for community members. Many are struggling, losing everything is devastating. They’ve lost a year and many don’t know if they can pull through.
The market is low and most ranchers have spent a lifetime putting the herd together. So the community relationships are most important during this time. It is important that the district takes the lead, put meetings together, and build the relationships ahead of the disaster: local, state, federal, private, everyone.

Livestock dispatching: When you have to put animals down, be sure to have a group you can call. The stress on the landowner is too much.

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

- Wade Troutman: A go fund me account has been set up for Wade and Jane, who lost everything in the Pearl Hill Fire earlier this week.
- The August Forestry RPG Webinar series recordings have now been posted online.
- TA Grants: Several job opportunities are now being advertised in the region for these grant funded staff positions. These might be good to feature on NACD or state association job boards.
- Hat Promo on Marketplace: a dozen with your logo embroidered for $84! These were really popular last year and a great way to get your board and staff looking sharp! Facemasks are available too.
- Beth Mason facilitated an excellent zoom call with state association Eds to discuss conventions, and she is planning on doing a follow up session relating to revenue. The dialog in these events is really valuable for everyone. I hope the northern plains region EDs are able to make the next one as well.
- Soil Health Champions continues to gain momentum and has nearly 300 members now. They have a very active facebook page where great information is shared. If states are interested in targeted support to promote the network, let me know!
- Region leaders: Be sure to read the latest email from Coleman regarding NACD Call for 2021 Resolutions, Bylaws Amendments and Sunset Challenges.
- Region dues: Our fiscal year ends September 30.

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Other news/events:
• **NASCA Public Speaking Webinar: Sept 15: 9 AM Central, 8 AM Mountain:** Featuring Chief Matt Lohr and Randy Frazier - two accomplished and inspiring conservation speakers.
• **Nebraska feature on buffer strip program by NRDs.**
• **Farmers in SD, ND, NE who prioritize soil health more likely to rotate 3+ crops and graze, study finds.**

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

**NRCS:** Thanks for the work being done. The state cons and district staff have been doing good work and have come through the challenges so well. All the goals that have been set are achievable. They were short handed this year, but they are making steady improvements. NE NRCS: They are working on the current deadlines to enter into new contracts. Many in the offices have worked really hard even though it’s been hard on the staff. Thanks for support with Farm Bill work. It’s a pleasure to help producers, and the help from districts has been really valuable.

**NCDEA**
Working on updates to website for training. Continuing with monthly leadership trainings. They had 80 in attendance at their last one. Working on strategic planning (virtual/in person).

**Jack Majeres:** Thanks for the eResource write up.

**Next meeting (Proposed): October 9, 2020 8 AM Central time, 7 am Mountain time**

**Adjourned: 9:08 Central time, 8:08 am Mountain time**