



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FSA SUPPORT EMPLOYEES

July 23, 2018

USDAConnect – <https://connections.usda.gov/>

MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

NASE strives to:

- promote the betterment of the Farm Service Agency through improved service to the public
- Improve our programs
- Establish a cooperative relationship at all levels of the Agency
- Help accomplish the mission of USDA and FSA
- Improve support staff effectiveness
- Improve morale, esprit-de-corps, and efficiency
- Promote self-motivation, self-education, and career enhancement
- Promote the social, economic, civic and personal welfare of support employees

NASE - NOT JUST FOR FARM LOAN PROGRAMS ANYMORE

To start with more about me. I hail from the state of Montana. Although born in Wyoming, I have spent most of my adult life in Montana. I have been a farm loan specialist in Montana since 1997 and a support employee now for over 32 years, beginning my Farmers Home Administration career in 1977 in a small county office in eastern Montana. After about four years in two different county offices, I took a short break (four years) and then returned to FmHA in 1986 as the Montana State Office as a file clerk, part time contracting and part time farmer programs. From there, full time farmer programs clerk, then assistant, then a loan technician several years later. I trained as a FLOT before becoming a state office specialist. I also served a short stint in the National Office Loan Servicing and Property Management Division as a Senior Loan Officer.

As the state office assistant and technician, and now as a loan specialist, I have been involved in the training and support of the farm loan programs technicians and farm loan officers from 1988 to the present. I consider myself to be a long time “cheerleader” of employee development and processes that rule our daily job lives.

I was a member of the original association of support employees, the National Association of County Office Assistants and Clerks in Farmers Home Administration and a long time, although not very active, member of NASE. Several years ago I became more active in the Montana association (MASE) and eventually NASE.

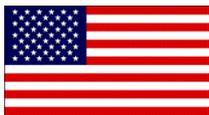
I wanted to tell you all this because my whole employment history revolves around farm loans AND I want to tell you that **NASE is not just farm loans anymore**. Since our (FmHA/ASCS) union in 1994-1995, there has been and continues to be varying degrees of separation between farm loans and farm program personnel at the county, state and federal levels. This separation at the county level is many times fueled by larger degrees of separation at the state and national level.

In today’s environment of reduced staffing and budget constraints, we do not have the luxury of having totally separate duties in our county offices and many of you are taking on both farm loans and farm programs duties. Those that are familiar with NASE’s operations are bringing their concerns about farm programs to our attention, asking us to help resolve some issues and get some improvements made. We (the NASE board) are happy to do this. We want each and every one of you to know that if it is an issue or concern to you as a support employee, it is an **FSA issue**.

We recognize that we are one FSA and we must all work together to make it work. If our processes are **ruling** our daily job lives, they need to be changed to something that supports and enhances our working environment so that we can enjoy what we do, both in the office and away, in our personal lives.

MASE will represent and/or move your comments/concerns forward even if you are not a member, however, it is your membership that allows us to unite and represent you in talks with our agency program managers. EVERY support employee (non-management/non-supervisory) can become a member of NASE. The others (management/ supervisory) can become supportive members for a lesser amount.

NASE’s primary role is very specifically devoted to program improvement. While we are very in touch with the personnel issues that face the employees of this agency, they are not really our mission area. We do though, through program improvement, have the opportunity to make our jobs more efficient and effective, and as an unintentional result, NASE can possibly improve some of the personnel issues that we are all faced with.



Wear **red** on Fridays to show support for our troops at home and abroad.

**2014-2015 NASE
Board**

Marilyn McMullen
Montana
President

Angela Biester
Nebraska
Vice-President

Heather Culwell
Kansas
Secretary

Rhonda Hoffman
Nebraska
Treasurer

Cindy Porter
Nebraska
Past President

Jill Monson
California
Zone A Representative

Teresa DeLaCruz
Texas
Zone B Representative

Barb Painter
Illinois
Zone C Representative

Beth Perkins
Louisiana
Zone D Representative

**NASE Executive Board
Spotlight**

Angela Biester
Nebraska
Vice-President

NASE - NOT JUST FOR FARM LOAN PROGRAMS ANYMORE

Many of you know that the lives of our loved ones sometimes, actually many times if you have small children, take precedence over our own and knowing that we have some say in our destiny within FSA is important to our future well-being. NASE allows this. While it may seem like such a small say in the matter, if you stick with it you will soon see the benefits and improvements that things we do within NASE really do make a difference. We have a voice and avenues to make a difference. This is why I stick with it and volunteered to step up for NASE.

Every employee can ultimately make a difference, if they just put forth the effort a little bit. Support employees across this great nation can truly make a difference if we can collectively band together to make the changes and/or suggestions for changes needed to “build a better mouse trap.” In order to do this there is one thing that each of us/you need to do – STEP UP!

I ask each of you to STEP UP! If you are not already a member of the National Association of Support Employees (NASE) please, STEP UP, and join us in our mission to improve our daily life at work. Membership does have some benefits besides having a say in your future. Being a dues paying member helps to support our mission and allows us to finance our work. The dues are actually quite reasonable at \$52.00 per year (\$2.00 per pay period through payroll deduction). If you have a state association, you must also belong to it and dues vary from state to state. Managers and supervisors may join as associate members for \$20.00 per year (plus any state associate dues).

ALL FSA employees can belong to NASE (either regular or associate). We do not discriminate based on your employment status (federal or county), we do not discriminate based on your program (FLP, Conservation, Disaster, etc.) Even SEDs and National Office staff have been associate members. We do not discriminate if you are administrative staff, COR, SFLO, FLO, District or program specialist. Our only requirement is that you must be a non-manager/non-supervisor to be a regular member of NASE.

You can be a member of both NASE and NASCOE (so don’t believe it if you are told you cannot belong to NASE if you are a county office employee or NASCOE member). There is no such rule. NASCOE has a little different agency role that is also respected by our agency’s leadership, as is NASE. They also work for program improvement. The difference is they have several other objectives (management policy, lobbying, county committee system, and personnel matters) and NASE devotes **all** of our efforts to working with the agency administrators to improve the programs we have. Many program technicians have indicated they feel “left out” of the NASCOE circle and have come to NASE. While we have no stake in whether you are, or are not, a NASECOE member (and you can belong to both; I do), we encourage you to join NASE if you want to get involved specifically in the support, development and/or improvement of the programs and/or just be kept in the loop. We are after all the National Association of **Support** Employees.

Always available and thank you for allowing me to serve as your NASE’s President for 2014-2015.

Marilyn Jo McMullen
PO Box 1774, Bozeman, MT 59771-1774
406-599-8181 (cell)
mjomcmullen@aol.com or marilyn.mcmullen@mt.usda.gov

Let me introduce myself, I am Angela Biester, Agricultural Specialist, from Columbus, NE. I began my career with Farmers Home Administration in 1986 and have been in my current position since October 2010. I graduated from Bellevue University with a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Management. I had been married for 19 years prior to my husband’s passing. We didn’t have children but I have nieces that I enjoy spoiling. I have been involved with NASE most of the years of my career. The question always comes up, “What does NASE do and how would it help me?” NASE supports the work and efforts of program technicians. Our resolution process provides an avenue for our members to provide input and suggestions to our leadership. The resolutions range from forms change recommendation to requests for new reporting capabilities to software changes. I am sure there have been days when you were sitting at your office thinking “if this could/would only be changed” my job would be easier. That’s where the resolution process starts. I encourage you to submit your resolutions.

I look forward to representing you as Vice-President. Your input is very important and I encourage you to contact me at angelabiester@gmail.com or 402-984-5273, if you have any questions or concerns.

Angela Biester, Vice President NASE

NASE MEMBERSHIP

Joining NASE is easy – National NASE dues of \$52.00 can be paid either directly to the NASE Treasurer or to your state association’s treasurer or withheld by payroll deductions of \$2.00 per pay period. State dues vary from association to association. To join NASE, complete the [NASE Application form](#) and an [FSA-444](#) if you elect direct withdrawal to pay your dues. Send the FSA-444 to your state office payroll administrator with a copy to your state association’s treasurer. State Treasurers should send a copy on to Rhonda. If you have no state association send a copy of the FSA-444 (or your dues check) to Rhonda Hoffman @ the address below with the NASE Application form. **Members, it is also time to pay your annual dues if you are not on direct deposit.**

“Open by Addressee Only”

Rhonda Hoffman, NASE Treasurer
107 E Highway 20, Suite C
O’Neill NE 68763

2014 RESOLUTION OVERVIEW

Fourteen resolutions were introduced at the 2014 National Convention in Chicago. The majority of these deal with farm program software issues. Resolutions are summarized below –

- 2014-01-FLP-FP: Recommendations for revisions to the FSA-603 collection register was defeated. The membership felt the existing form meets the necessity of the information required and provides adequate space for individuals to make comment, if needed.
- 2014-02-FLP and 2014-03-FLP: Recommendation to add a pop-up or warning message in DLS that would indicate the loan had not been tied to EFT or to ask if we want to tie the loan to an EFT were passed. The current EFT system is owned by RD and they are looking at a new system called Enterprise Cash Management.
- 2014-04-FP: Recommendation to allow for NAP insurability exemption from 3/5 year requirement for new producers, producers with crops that change insurability (GMA to WIN), and producers that acquire new land for the first 4 years the field is reported was passes. A notation was added that this would be benefit to a targeted group (beginning farmers) and we could provide examples before submitting to the National Office.
- 2014-05-FP: Recommendation that NPS software be modified to show the items certified and waiting for signature to all persons, yet still restrict certifier from also signing payments. This would be similar to the functionality in NRRS for unverified deposits was passed.
- 2014-06-FP-IT: Recommendation that Financial Services search be modified to use fill SCIMS search capabilities to include partial names, partial id, etc was passed. (This idea was discussed in June with WDC and it may already be on their list of enhancements.)
- 2014-07-FP: Recommendation that NAP APH data be able to be input for anyone that has ever had NAP coverage, regardless of subsequent coverage was passed.
- 2014-8-FP: Recommendations that CARS software be modified to allow loading intended acres without a plant date, that reports be made available with the ability to export to Excel, to show farms with intended acres, or at the very least those with fallow or unreported acres were passed. As CARS is moved (replaced by a MIDAS application) these this would be considered in the new system.
- 2014-9-FP and 10-FP were withdrawn by the sponsor before discussion
- 2014-11-FLP: Recommendation to eliminate the Annual Statement of Loan Account with information available in DLS was defeated with a recommendation that information be provided to NFCAO for consideration during the electronic

2014 RESOLUTION OVERVIEW (Cont)

- folder/file development.
- 2014-12-FLP-FP-IT: Recommendation that a method for extracting name, address, and possibly farm number be devised so that county office employees do not need to maintain separate lists/databases of information for mailing or setting up file folders passed. FLP has this available through DLS datamart but a similar method needs to be available for FP purposes.
- 2014-FP-IT: Recommendation regarding reporting acres in tenths versus hundredths passed. It was noted that this is either already done or in the works and there will be no need to send this resolution forward.
- 2014-FLP-IT: A recommendation that GLS software be updated to open a pop-up reminder when the lender marks the terminate guarantee block. The reminder would remind the lender to mail the original loan guarantee back to the FSA servicing office. This resolution passed and it was agreed that this would also be helpful with the final Interest Assistance Agreement and payment.

ALL EMPLOYEE TRAINING

Freedom of Information

Mark your calendars - All employees of record-holding offices are **required** to have an understanding of the FOIA process to ensure the success of the FOIA program. Therefore, all FSA employees **must** complete this introductory training by **October 31, 2014**. [INFO-64](#), Mandatory FOIA Training for FY 2014 (FOR FSA Employees)

Security and Situational Awareness

All employees will also need to complete Security and Situational Awareness Training by **December 31, 2014**. Notice [SEM-34](#) informs FSA employees and contractors that the General Security and Situational Awareness video will be placed in each FSA employee's and contractor's AgLearn to-do list. Employees are encouraged to complete the training by **December 31, 2014**. The video is approximately 18 minutes long and a short survey is required upon completion of watching the video.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

AgLearn, what we affectionately call aggravation learning, has recently released their [Summer 2014](#) e-newsletter containing discussion on the following:

- Best Practices Award
- Windows 7
- Using USDA Connect
- Follow AgLearn on Twitter
- Microsoft eLearning Courses
- 2014 Strategic Workshop
- EEMS Update
- Building Your Knowledge
- Financial Training

Farm Loan Program
Cathy Rakes
Nebraska
Committee Chair
cathy.rakes@ne.usda.gov

FLP Hot Topics Online Training – [Notice FLP-680](#) addresses FLP training on areas of concern and frequently asked questions. There will be 10 sessions (2 hours each) scheduled between July 29th and August 26th, 2014. You pick what works best for you.

This training is **not** mandatory but is intended to provide National Office guidance on hot topics including, but not limited to, the following:

Wetland Screening Tool	Streamlined OL's
Borrower Training	Outreach
Microloan Review Findings	Guaranteed Loan Updates.
Farm Bill Update	Digital Signature Pilot Project

Farm Program
Jill Uffelman
Montana
Committee Chair
jill.uffelman@mt.usda.gov

Farm Bill implementation continues to take the center stage in the agency this day. Livestock program sign-up, acreage reporting, and coming very soon the farm storage facility loans automation implementation into DLS. National training are being planned and more information on these will be coming very shortly.

Stay tuned, lots of stuff coming.

NASE COMMITTEES The NASE By-Laws identify six committees within the association. Three of these stand out as program improvement committees – Farm Programs, Farm Loan Programs, and Information Technology. Many times the division lines between these are blurred when, for example, a DLS issue comes up that is both farm loan programs and IT (automation). Other NASE Committees are more attuned to the internal workings of the organization, Ways and Means Committee, Personnel, Resources, Resolutions, By-Laws, and Nominating.

Each committee is made up of at least (hopefully) four members, one from each zone. If a zone is unable to fill a slot on a particular committee, another zone may propose a member from their zone to fill the slot.

In future weekly newsletters each of these committees and their members will be highlighted.

WAYS AND MEANS The NASE membership has agreed to raffle another iPad. This was a fairly good money maker for us the past two years. Raffle tickets will be available shortly and it is hoped that each NASE member will sell a few to help support our association.

COMPUTER HINTS **LINCPASS – OLD CREDENTIALS**
If you get an error while trying to login to your computer and/or to an application with your LincPass card it is most often because of old “certificates” on your computer from your old LincPass card or someone else’s if they logged into your computer. These certificates are stored in the “cache” (a type of memory) on your computer and can often cause issues. While you may not get an error, you may have multiple Certificates come up that are not needed. To delete the old certificates do the following:

Delete Old Certificates

1. Go to the start menu and type “**certmgr.msc**” into the search field and press enter.
2. Open the personal folder, then the certificates sub folder.
3. On the right you will see a list of certificates, select all of them and click delete.

LIFE INSURANCE COSTS **Are you paying too much for life insurance through FEGLI?**
Check out this calculator - <http://www.opm.gov/retirement-services/calculators/fegli-calculator> to determine how much you are paying for your insurance and use it to figure how you can manage these costs based on the amount of coverage you have or want as you age.

The cost of FEGLI goes up substantially at ages 55, 60, 65, etc. The calculator will also provide a summary of the different options (BASIC, Options A, B, and C) breaking down the costs of each.

NATIONAL FARMERS MARKET WEEK

August 3-9, 2014

WASHINGTON, July 22, 2014 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has declared August 3 through 9, 2014, "National Farmers Market Week". Throughout the week, USDA will celebrate our nation's thousands of farmers markets, farmers who make them possible and the communities that host them.

The declaration was made via an official proclamation signed by Secretary Vilsack. This year marks the 15th Annual National Farmers Market Week recognizing the important role that farmers markets play in the agricultural and food economy. The U.S. Department of Agriculture began declaring National Farmers Market Week in 2000.

"National Farmers Market Week is a great opportunity for farmers markets across the country to host special events to showcase all the tremendous services they provide," said Secretary Vilsack. "Farmers markets play a key role in developing local and regional food systems that support family farms, and help grow rural economies. They bring communities together, connecting cities with the farms that support them and provide Americans across the country with fresh, healthy food."

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

You can sign up to receive email notification on a variety of topics – [Subscription Topics](#) –

To check your subscriptions or to Delete them, go to [Subscriber Preferences](#).

Subscription Topics

- About FSA
- Aerial Photography
- Commodity Operations
- Conservation Programs
- Dairy Advisory Committee
- Data and Reports
- Disaster Assistance Programs
- Environmental and Cultural Resource Compliance
- Farm Loan Programs
- FSA Fence Post
- FSA Notices
- MIDAS
- News & Events
- FSA News Releases
- Facts Sheets
- Fact Sheets – Spanish
- Price Support

USDAConnect

This and future editions of the NASE Weekly newsletter will be available on USDA Connect. About once a month the newsletter will be available to all employees, other times, the newsletter will only be available to NASE members. While we encourage the distribution of the information found in the newsletters, being a NASE member must mean something.

STEP UP!

The only way to predict the future is to help create it.