



OCTOBER 2014

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FSA SUPPORT EMPLOYEES

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MESSAGE FROM NASE 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-corp, and efficiency*
- *Promote self-motivation, self-education, and career enhancement*
- *Promote the social, economic, civic and personal welfare of support employees*



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

Did you think you had been missing some mail? No weekly updates for the past few weeks? Well, I am done with training and back from vacation and generally trying to regroup and reorganize before a new grandbaby decides to disrupt my schedule. (It happened anyway even before I got organized.)

My thoughts were not to just forget about the newsletter but I just did not seem able to fit one in and Angie, bless her heart, filled in some of the dead space. She did a great job and we are lucky she volunteered to STEP UP!

We are still trying to fill some slots on committees, move our resolutions from this past year on, and get organized for the new fiscal year. The executive board for NASE (President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer) had a teleconference last week and this newsletter is mostly a result of our discussions.

I will be addressing the vacancies on our committees and the resolutions for sure in this issue as well as passing on some ideas regarding our mission and the direction NASE would like to head.

Angie Biester is working on a new NASE brochure and is doing an incredible job of bringing all of our thoughts together in the process. A new motto is emerging – “Step Up, Make a Difference!” All who have seen the brochure (in its creation) believe that it will help recruit and also let people know who we are.

We will be working on more website updates and hopefully we can get something created that will be both informative and user friendly. I know first-hand how hard it is to keep something like this up so thanks to Erin for volunteering to do this. Now if only we can get stuff to her as needed to make the website work. Don't hesitate to log in occasionally to see the progress.

<http://nasefsa.org/>

This newsletter is intended for members and non-members alike to let you know what is going on within NASE and perhaps if you like what you see you will be more inclined to get involved. To STEP UP and take charge of your destiny, at least as far as work goes. While I only have a few years left in a very long and rewarding career within USDA, many of you are just starting out and have long careers in front of you. If you want to be pro-active, with some say in that journey, I sincerely encourage you to get more involved with an employee association. NASE, the association of all support employees, has been a good fit for me and many others I have worked with through the years. We are well respected and often recruited to help find solutions to the agencies concerns.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as President for 2014-2015.

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Cathy Rakes

Nebraska
Farm Loan Committee

Jill Uffelman

Montana
Farm Program Committee

Tanya McClravy

South Dakota
Information Technology
Committee

Resolutions are a key component to our process for suggesting new ideas and recommendation for program improvements. Following are the resolutions passed at the 2014 National NASE Convention in Rosemont, Illinois. These resolutions will be submitted to the National Office for consideration. Stay tuned for their responses to our recommendations.

NASE 2014-02 FLP-IT (EFT): (tied together with 2014-03)

When you order money on a new loan (check request in DLS) there is no way to tell if the loan has been tied (to a financial institution) in EFT. Therefore it is recommended that a warning pop-up be added stating that "The loan has not been tied to an EFT account, do you want to continue?"

NASE 2014-03 FLP-IT (EFT):

Ordering loan funds through DLS results in either a paper check or direct deposit through EFT depending on whether the EFT has been linked to the loan and whether the EFT is coded as valid or assumed. Funds are ordered for direct deposit and the link may not have been completed resulting in a paper check and delay in getting the funds to the Borrower. Therefore it is recommended that a warning flag that is activated when you order funds and the loan has not been tied or the account validated. It should ask if you want the funds to come by paper check, giving the technician the opportunity to tie the loan avoiding a delay in getting the funds to the borrower's account.

NASE 2014-04 FP-IT (NAP exemption): Passed as Amended

The 3/5 year requirement for forage crops that are grazed before end of coverage unfairly penalizes new producers, producers with crops that change insurability (GMA to WIN), and producers that acquire new land. Therefore, it is recommended the policy be revised to allow an exemption from the 3/5 year requirement. It is felt that this would benefit new veteran and beginning farmers. (We understand this may require a regulation change but would recommend that the change be considered in light of our outreach responsibilities and the detriment this has to our targeted groups.)

NASE 2014-05 FP (NPS):

NPS does not show items certified to the person who certified them, which can lead to payments languishing without being made because one cannot check on their own items. It is therefore recommended that NPS software be modified to show the items certified and waiting for signature to all persons, including the certifying employee, yet restrict the certifier from also signing payments. This would be similar to the functionality in NRRS for unverified deposits.

NASE 2014-06 FP-IT (Financial Services Search):

Financial Services search parameter is by ID number only, which creates additional workload because of the need to determine ID number when we do everything else by name with the producer. Therefore it is recommended that the financial services search be modified to use full SCIMS search capabilities to include partial names, partial ID, etc. (We understand that this may already be in the works as a result of a face-2-face meeting held in Kansas City earlier this year.)

MORE RESOLUTIONS

(Cont)

NASE 2014-07 FP (NAP APH entry):

NAP software restricts entry of APH data until after purchase of subsequent year's coverage, yet data is available before purchase, and some do not purchase coverage every year but APH's must be maintained by FSA regardless. Therefore it is recommended that NAP APH data be able to be input for anyone that has ever had NAP coverage, regardless of subsequent coverage.

NASE 2014-08 FP (CARS intended acres):

Multiple acreage reporting deadlines have been established, making it difficult to know if a farm is fully reported or not at any given point in time. Therefore it is recommended that:

- 1) CARS software be modified to allow loading intended acres without a plant date;
- 2) CARS reports be made available, with ability to export to Excel, to show farms with intended acres, or at the very least those with fallow or unreported acres.

This would help manage workload and reduce errors when fields are loaded as fallow to balance the farm acres, even though producer intends to plant at a later date.

NASE 2014-12 FLP-FP-IT (Name and Address Labels):

There does not seem to be any way for county office employees to extract a list of producers from SCIMS in a format that would allow for mail merge or other inclusion for envelope/newsletter mailings or file folder label. In the development of MIDAS Business Partner, a method for extracting producer name, address, and farm numbers be developed so that county office employees do not need to maintain separate lists of this information and can easily have up to date information available at their fingertips without maintaining SCIMS and an alternative system.

2014-15 FLP-IT (GLS termination pop-ups):

Lenders are entering Guarantee Loan Status Reports electronically and marking "Terminate Guarantee" when their loans have been paid in full but are forgetting to return the original Loan Guarantee back to the FSA Servicing Office. Therefore it is recommended the LINC software be revised to prevent a guaranteed lender from having the ability to terminate a guarantee. The status report input screen should also have a notation:

NOTE: If the guaranteed loan has been paid in full, the Loan Note Guarantee needs to be marked paid in full and returned to your local servicing office. If the loan received interest assistance, the Interest Assistance Agreement also needs to be returned marked paid in full, along with a final interest assistance claim, if not previously submitted.

NASE 2014-13 FP-IT (Acreage by Tenth): Passed by NASE, possibly already addressed by the National Office as a result of earlier conversations.

There is a discrepancy between programs and tenths/hundredths rounding issues between the FSA CLU in MIDAS GIS, CRP CCMS and CARS or MIDAS Acreage reporting. FSA is trying to reconcile rounding issues between tenths and hundredths while dealing with trying to reconcile CRP contracts by rounding to the tenths at the CRP contract level AFTER summing each field on the CONTRACT with the hundredths, then reconciling at the tract level by rounding to the tenths the field level data (not contract level data) AFTER summing each field on the TRACT with the hundredths and then reconciling at the farm level using tract level data as computed for the tract. FSA has CRP contracts, some with a single field, some with multiple fields and then tracts, some with a single CRP contract, some with multiple CRP contracts, then farms some with only one tract or multiple tracts. In some cases this reconciliation will be impossible!

It is therefore recommended that FSA go back to the simple rule in CFR 718.5b. If procedure and software would be written and followed to agree with this rule I believe all the problems pertaining to reconciling between tenths and hundredths would be eliminated and lots of money not already spent on this issue would be saved.

2014 DEFEATED OR WITHDRAWN RESOLUTIONS

2014 RESOLUTIONS THAT WERE DEFEATED OR WITHDRAWN

2014-01 FSA (603 resolution): **Defeated**

Recommendation was to revise the FSA-603 Collection Register to add more columns for loan information. Those members present did not feel the form needed to be revised as it is used differently by every state/office and for most offices the form is adequate to address the information required.

2014-09 FP (NAP reports): **Withdrawn by sponsor**

Recommendation was to add NAP reports

2014-10 FP (Farm Operator Report): **Withdrawn by sponsor**

Recommendation was to add information to reports

2014-11 FLP (Annual Statement of Loan Accounts): **Defeated, refer to e-file group**

Recommendation was to eliminate the Annual Statement of Loan Accounts. This may be more effective in the future when information on payments is actually available in DLS rather than just the total. [ALSO NOTE: 2013 NACS IT Resolution #1: National Office comments include, FSA-2065 is generated from FCAO as an official record of the customer's account and, therefore, a copy should be maintained in the customer case file; and, from a "cost saving" perspective the mailing of these statements continues to be more cost effective than the reprogramming costs required to make them electronically available.] NASE will have a member on the eFILE taskforce and will take this recommendation to that taskforce for consideration.

2014-14 FLP-IT (GLS termination pop-ups): **Defeated, see 2014-15 FLP-IT**

Same resolution with some expansion.

2015 RESOLUTIONS

While we would like to think that things are going so smoothly out in the field that there are no improvements or adjustments needed to any of our handbooks, forms, automation or processes, we are fairly certain you are all just too busy right now to think about writing things up and sending stuff in. Unfortunately, the time to address these issues is more when they come up and not "wait for the rainy day", when things slow down. Existing NASE members can assist you with the resolution if you would just be willing to let us know the issues and, if you have one, your recommendation as to how it would work better. You can do this in any format you chose including emailing information to me.

The good news is that NASE was contacted by the National Office and instructed to not wait with our resolutions until after our annual convention. If the recommendations are not statutory or regulatory then they have asked that we send our ideas to them immediately so that they can address the issues we have on a timely basis.

Having worked in the National Office and the state office for so long I typically just pick up the phone and talk to the national office when I see something that isn't working for me. I know however that not everyone does this and most states have a policy of working through their/your chain of command – county offices, CED, FLM, DD, State Office specialists, etc. I do not want to in any way usurp the authority of those each of you must report to but sometimes, and we have found this often, the problems or concerns are not unique to 1 or 2 county offices and with the ability to talk outside of your specific area or state, solutions to those problems or concerns are more easily brought forward through the network built by the associations, including NASE.

PROGRAM COMMITTEES

NASE has established program committees that assist with recommendations and issues in their specific field of expertise. Each committee generally has four members, one from each zone. If no members STEP UP and volunteer for the committee from a zone, we are willing to look to other zones for volunteers. A well rounded committee will have members from all over the nation and have one zone representative

Being a part of a committee requires that you contribute your expertise to answer questions, research issues, take an active role in looking for resolutions to improve or “fix” issues in that area.

Zone representatives on these committees will be responsible for reporting at the Zone conventions what the committee has accomplished, what issues they have been watching, reporting on, or making recommendation on. Committee chairpersons should be in touch with their committee members periodically to determine if there are issues that need to learn more about, report on, or get involved with.

Farm Loan Committee

Farm Loan Program Committee - Cathy Rakes, Chair

This committee will be alert to all farm loan program concerns expressed by individual members and or states. They will assist in writing appropriate resolutions. Members will research for validity and clarity and edit as necessary all resolutions submitted.

Cathy Rakes (Nebraska-Zone B) is the chairperson of this committee and is a long time (29+) year farm loan program technician, coming to FSA from Farmers Home Administration. Her primary job functions are farm loans. She can be contacted at 988 11th Street, Suite A, Syracuse, NE 58446 or 402-269-2361.

Members of the committee with their email addresses are:

- A- Jill Monson - jill.monson@ca.usda.gov
- B-Cathy Rakes, Chairperson – cathy.rakes@ne.usda.gov
- C-Jarita Spaulding – jarita.spaulding@in.usda.gov
- D-Rachelle Broussard – rachelle.broussard@la.usda.gov

Farm Program Committee

Farm Program Committee - Jill Uffelman, Chair

The farm program committee will be alert to all farm program concerns expressed by individual members and or states and assist in writing appropriate resolutions. Members will research for validity and clarity and edit as necessary all resolutions submitted.

Chairperson Jill Uffelman (Montana – Zone A) is relatively new to FSA and to NASE. Her primary responsibilities are ELAP, LFP, LIP, NAP and SURE. She can be reached at 724 West Third, Hardin, MT 59034 or 406-665-3442 ext 103.

Members of the committee with their email addresses are:

- A-Jill Uffelman, Chairperson – jill.uffelman@mt.usda.gov
- B-Susan Long – susan.long2@ks.usda.gov
- C- vacant
- D-Mora O’Banion – mora.obanion@al.usda.gov

We are currently in need of a representative from Zone C and if no volunteers STEP UP from Zone C, we will look to other zones to fill the vacancy. If interested, please let Angie Biester, NASE Vice President, know of your interest.

Information Technology Committee

IT Committee - Tanya McIlravy, Chair

This committee will stay abreast of automation issues with the agency and be prepared to solicit input from all members as to changes that would improve the automation activities in the FSA field offices. Members, as requested, will work with the National Office and or Finance Office as liaisons to review items for various automation projects. Committee Members will research for validity, clarity and edit as necessary all resolutions submitted.

Chairperson Tanya McIlravy (South Dakota – Zone B), is a 12 year FSA employee with farm loan and farm program responsibilities. She is active on several national task force including the Leasing Center of Excellence and USDA Connect. She can be reached at PO Box 339, Philip, SD 57567 or 605-859-2186.

Information Technology Committee (cont)

Members of the committee with their email addresses are:

- A-Nancy Fulton – nancy.fulton@mt.usda.gov
- B-Tanya McIlravy, Chairperson – tanya.mcilravy@sd.usda.gov
- B-Erin Aten – erin.aten@ne.usda.gov
- D-Gayle Mann – gayle.mann@la.usda.gov

Erin Aten (Nebraska – Zone B) is also the NASE WebMaster and (when we get things to her) is updating our website – nasefsa.org. If there are additions, corrections or changes you would like to see in the website, do not hesitate to let her know. (She is representing Zone C on this committee because no Zone C members have STEPPED UP for this committee.)

Personnel Committee

Personnel Committee – Carol Truman, Chairperson

This committee will review personnel procedures and practices for performance appraisals, desk audits, and job descriptions/classifications. This committee will be alert to all personnel concerns expressed by individual members and or states and assist in writing appropriate resolutions. Members will research for validity and clarity and edit as necessary all resolutions submitted. It is not the intent of this committee to try to intervene in individual personnel problems, but rather to address areas that concern all members. The NASE Board of Directors will act as the committee advisors.

Carol Truman (Pennsylvania – Zone C) is a farm loan program technician with more years than most. Carol can be reached at 50 Plaza Lane, Wellsboro, PA 16901 or 570-724-4812, Ext. 100

Members of the committee and their email addresses are:

- A-Nicky Swenson – nicky.swenson@mt.usda.gov
- B-Lauren Webb – lauren.webb@ks.usda.gov
- C-Carol Truman, Chairperson – carol.truman@pa.usda.gov
- D-Beth Perkins – beth.perkins@la.usda.gov

WHAT ZONE ARE YOU IN?

<u>ZONE A</u>	<u>ZONE B</u>	<u>ZONE C</u>	<u>ZONE D</u>
Alaska	Iowa	Delaware/Md	Alabama
Arizona	Kansas	Illinois	Arkansas
California	Minnesota	Indiana	Florida
Colorado	Missouri	Kentucky	Georgia
Hawaii	Nebraska	Maine	Louisiana
Idaho	North Dakota	Massachusetts/	Mississippi
Montana	South Dakota	CT/RI	North Carolina
Nevada	Oklahoma	Michigan	Puerto Rico
New Mexico	Texas	New Jersey	South Carolina
Oregon		New York	Tennessee
Utah		Ohio	
Washington		Pennsylvania	
Wyoming		Vermont/NH	
		Virginia	
		West Virginia	
		Wisconsin	