

2015 - SD Distinguished Service Award- Service to FSA-Agriculture

Damon Stormo, Hamlin County

Damon Stormo began his career with South Dakota FSA in May of 2003 as a temporary County Office employee. That led to him becoming a COT in January of 2004 and then a CED in Clark County in March of 2005. Since October of 2008, Damon has been the CED in Hamlin County, South Dakota.

It is my understanding that all throughout his career, Damon has used Microsoft Excel and Access to create numerous spreadsheets and tools to make FSA employees jobs easier and make them more efficient. In the 5 short years that I have worked as Program Technician under Damon, his tools and knowledge of computers has saved hours of time, not only for me but for PTs, CEDs, and State Office employees throughout South Dakota.

Some specific Microsoft Excel and Access projects Damon has been an integral part of:

- CRP cropping history in Access where you can search for a tract and view the history for a range of years. This saves a lot of time because employees do not have to search through farm files on every CRP offer.
- ACRE production spreadsheets to assist county offices in collecting production to establish ACRE farm benchmarks. These spreadsheets listed acres of each crop planted each year with simple boxes for producers to enter their production off of those acres in. The queries used in developing the spreadsheet saved county Office employees the hassle of researching the crops and acres planted on every ACRE farm. Due to the simplicity of the spreadsheet, producers were able to complete their production on their own saving county office time.
- With the passing of the Agricultural Act of 2014, the daunting task of reallocating base acres, updating yields, and explaining the new farm programs to producers was put before us. Many comments echoed through the halls of offices like, "How will we go about doing this". Thankfully there were a couple of people in South Dakota putting together a plan. The first step was researching planting history on reconstituted farms and tracts. Damon and another South Dakota CED, Joe Knippling, created a Microsoft Access or Excel documents where when the current farm and tract numbers was entered, the recon history of the farm/tract was displayed. This information combined with a cropping history Access file allowed county offices to perform research on some farms and tracts without leaving their desk. This also enabled county offices to remotely help other county offices with the research.
- To help producers provide FSA production for updating yields, Damon helped create an Access file where producers could list their production by tract. The forms gave producers the farm and tract numbers, legal description for each tract, and acres of each crop planted each year. It included boxes for producers to enter the total production for the farm as well as the yield for each farm. This spreadsheet has made it much easier for producers and crop insurance agent to provide FSA production to update their yields. The form is self-explanatory and simple enough that very few producers have had trouble filling the information out. The producers then provided these sheets to FSA and FSA transferred the information to the CCC-859 form and into the ARC-PLC software.
- Damon has also helped design an Excel Spreadsheet to compare the three farm program options. FSA employees can enter individual producer's base, yield and planting information, along with projected yields and prices to help producers compare their three options. This is a very easy way to show producers what effect an increase or decrease in price or yield has on each program option. This spreadsheet is only for FSA employees to use and is not given out to producers.

Above is just a sample of the tools that Damon, with the help of others, has created to make FSA employees more efficient, saving the government time and money. I know Damon has also worked with many other projects of this nature but they are too numerous to mention. Seldom does a day go by when Damon does not receive phone calls from the State Office or other county offices requesting assistance.

Damon is currently CED in Hamlin County, South Dakota. Hamlin County is located in northeastern South Dakota where the typical farmer raises corn and soybeans. Beef and dairy operations are also common. Hamlin County is 538 square miles with a population of about 6,000. Hamlin FSA assisted over 400 producers and administers about 1000 farm. As we like to say, "We work with the best producers in the Nation".

As stated earlier, Damon's outstanding contributions involve Microsoft Access and Excel. He has save Hamlin county and other county offices in South Dakota hours of time. With his expertise in querying information from System 36 or the internet, he makes county office employees more efficient. For example, he has an Access query showing all of a County's CRP contracts, practices, expiration dates, payment amounts, etc. When the CRP notice concerning the option of early out was issued, rather than manually searching through each CRP file to see what was eligible for early out, Damon hit a few buttons and within minutes had a list of the eligible contracts. These are the types of queries, spreadsheets, and documents Damon creates.

Damon does not wait for someone to ask him to create something in Microsoft Assess or Excel to help FSA. As new, daunting tasks come about, Damon does not think they are impossible to complete in the given amount of time. Instead his mind is already at work thinking what he can develop to save time. Damon works very closely with Moody County, South Dakota, CED Joe Knippling. Damon would be quick to give Joe much of the credit for these tools and spreadsheets. However, we know that they both spent many hours of their time developing these tools. Neither of them would have to do this for FSA, but they do. They do this without being asked. Both of them would go above and beyond to help make other employee's lives easier. Any FSA employee realizes we are being asked to do more with fewer people. It will take tools like these that Damon develops for us to get our jobs done.

To my knowledge, Damon has not received any special awards or promotions. However he is very deserving of this award. He is not the type that wants special recognition or credit for what he does in FSA. Damon would be the first to admit that others help him with Excel and Access projects and if other employee would take the time to learn Access, they could do the same thing that he's done. That's just Damon being humble, but as PTs in Damon's office, we feel he has the talent that we are benefitting from.

Damon has been a member of NASCOE throughout his whole career, and he also encourages his coworkers to continue their membership because NASCOE helps FSA employees overcome hurdles, they are the voice of FSA.

Respectfully submitted by Brenda Johnson for the Hamlin County FSA Office Staff