

All West Area Rally Delegate Report

May 12-14, 2016

San Diego, CA

Thursday evening, May 12, marked the beginning of the 2016 joint NWA and SWA "All West" Area Rally. The evening social provided a chance for attendees to connect with old and new acquaintances, as well as showcasing California wines and cheeses. Administrator Dolcini was in attendance and the South Dakota Delegation, comprised of Joel Foster, Doug Hofer, Larry Olsen and myself, enjoyed a candid visit with him.

Friday morning, attendees heard opening remarks from California State Committee Chairperson, Ron Kelley. Mr. Kelley pointed out that the average farm size in California is 334 acres, compared the National average farm size of 438 acres. One third of the nation's vegetables come from California, as do two thirds of the nation's fruits and nuts. Milk is the state's top commodity, followed by almonds and grapes. California SED Oscar Gonzales also addressed the group discussing Bridges to Opportunity as well as other facets of FSA.

We then heard from Mark Rucker of DAM. He discussed the leasing problems within USDA, and acknowledged the complications caused by GSA taking leasing authority from the county offices. Record retention and updating handbooks were also identified as pain points in his department. He indicated things will continue to happen even after this administration is gone, as he is a career employee and will stay with changes in administration.

Val Dolcini, FSA Administrator, spoke to the delegation about Bridges to Opportunity and also indicated he would be visiting South Dakota and North Dakota the first weekend in June. He has been to 42 states thus far.

NASCOE President Wes Daniels expressed concerns with all temps leaving on September 30th. We will need to find about \$17.5 million to keep temps on. He touched on the IT steering committee that has been formed, ACRSI, and the Aspiring Leader Program that has been developed to look at advancement of Program Technicians. He asked that everyone fill out the viewpoint survey to tell your story and how you feel about your job. There are talks of a joint convention with NACs and NASE in the future. An extra day would probably have to be added to the convention schedule for tours etc. This is something that probably won't happen in the near future since we plan our conventions 2 years out, but they are working on it. He discussed the notice that was issued on Lead PTs and that there weren't more because CEDs weren't requesting them. PT re-classification is still being pursued, and Key PTs are being implemented in several states, but would like to see more. Wes also addressed Bridges to Opportunity and Receipts for Service.

At this time a question and answer session was held with FSA Management Team. Mr. Dolcini told the group that in his mind, a lot of issues are simple fixes, but management just needs to be aware. It's always a good idea to bring a proposed solution with the problem. A good session was held. A question was asked of Receipt for Service and how employees were to keep up with day to day work in smaller offices and still record the receipt for service. Basically we were told it's here to stay and they are working through what generates the need for a RFS. Timing out in MIDAS while doing GIS edits was also addressed. This was generally do with slow bandwidths. Administration is working to get fiber optics to

these slower bandwidth offices, and they encouraged everyone to continue to submit remedy tickets, and to do so right away. If you go for days without a response on a remedy ticket, please contact Jenae Prescott via email. It was noted that the last general CRP sign-up was the most competitive sign-up ever. Only 18% of all offers nationwide were accepted.

Representatives from NAFEC, RASCOE and NACS/NASE addressed the group.

According to Jackson Jones, NASCOE Legislative Chair, there is 80% NASCOE membership nationwide. PAC brings out who is spending what legislatively. NASCOEs PAC is going strong but could be stronger. There will be a legislative/leadership conference held in WDC in September. The necessity of a fly-in isn't there right now, so the conference is being held to help generate boosts in membership of NASCOE. He also reminded everyone to be very careful with political information and Hatch Act guidelines.

Jenae Prescott and Janie Husdon talked about ACRSI. RMA can't make FCIC agencies participate. There are 17 different companies, each with their own software. Information will not go into CARS from RMA if there is already a line item there. They also touched on FSA farm+. The measuring and draw tool will be added in June. There have been some issues brought forward about Level 2 eauth passwords expiring. Inactive accounts should be wiped out after 400 days. Maps can be printed through here, but entities don't have access yet unless done through the individual members. Any input on the program is graciously accepted by Jenae, Janie and Gwen Uecker.

Cathy Dennison of JM Marketing reminded everyone to submit claims for the wellness benefit. Claims can be accepted back five years, you just need to submit the bills to Cathy. We also were presented a slide show by Dillard Financial on retirement planning. Following that, we adjourned until the banquet.

Presentations were given for all area DSA winners. South Dakota was proud to bring home the winners in all three categories for the NWA. Silent auction items were also distributed to the highest bidders at this time.

The business meeting reconvened at 8 am Saturday morning with joint committee meetings and reports. The highlights are as follows:

Legislative – 30 competitive seats in the House. NWA PAC has 75 contributors.

NAFEC – Make sure COCs are having monthly meetings. IA is having a COC training in conjunction with NASCOE convention in Cedar Rapids.

Programs – AGIs are being tracked by submission, obviously IRS is having software issues. Make sure the flag is flipped in subsidiary before sending the 941. Send in program suggestions – some issues take longer to address than others. Can submit via online or to state/area chairs.

Publicity – Build up home email database, this will be the contact source of the future. States should consider setting up a facebook page.

Negotiations – 30-35 items were submitted and condensed into 16. If you don't like the response you get, send it in again. These items are anything you think may make your job better.

Scholarships/DSAs – 27 scholarship applications. SD had NWA winner. 75% of auction money will stay with the state. Applications will be submitted online starting in 2017.

Emblems – New provider for NASCOE. Called nascoe superior.

Benefits – Dillards will travel to states to do retirement planning sessions with employees.

Following the joint committee meetings, an Outreach/Leadership/Membership Training session presentation was given by Jessi Colgrove, Jay Goff, Robert Payne and Jackson Jones. A membership training guide was handed out and it was announced that \$1000 would be given to the state association that increases dues by the highest percentage – associate dues are included. Jay, Robert and Jackson discussed a Legislative Outreach session they had in Oklahoma with different Ag Groups. From these sessions, Robert and Jay were invited to travel to DC with these groups to participate in their negotiations. Their point was to get the word out about what we do, and other groups will help us fight for our cause as well.

Old Business brought up a discussion on dues. NWA is current on all due submissions. In New Business, announcements of the SWA and NWA Rallies for 2017 were made. SWA Rally will be held in San Antonio, TX, and the NWA Rally will be in Lincoln, NE. Dates will probably be the first part of June, and be watching for more information.

At this time, candidacy announcements were made. Dennis Ray announced his intentions to run for another term as NASCOE Vice President, Wes Daniels announced his intentions to run for NASCOE President for a second term, and it was noted Curt Hauck from Iowa intends to run for NASCOE Treasurer. Jessi Colgrove asked for support in her bid for NWA Alternate Executive, and Jenae Prescott announced her candidacy for NWA Executive.

It was noted that as soon as state associations have their delegates selected for National Convention, they need to let Deb Esselman know. Larry Olsen gave a brief rundown on 2016 National Convention plans for Cedar Rapids, IA. He encouraged everyone to attend and support the Iowa delegation. At this time, Doug Hofer presented the group with South Dakota's intention to hold the 2018 National Convention in Sioux Falls, and asked for support from all in attendance at the National Convention. It was also noted the 2017 National Convention will be held in St. Charles, MO August 2-6 at the Embassy Suites. More information to come following the 2016 National Convention.

This concluded the joint SWA/NWA Rally for 2016. There was a lot of information to be taken away from this meeting, and I would like to thank SDSACOE for giving me the opportunity to attend and represent our state. I also want to encourage any and all members to take advantage of these opportunities. They are a great learning experience and give insight to what SDASCOE/NASCOE is all about. You don't have to be a member of the executive board to be a delegate. Don't be afraid to throw your name in the hat. You won't regret the decision.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Chavez
NWA Rally Delegate, 2016

Disclaimer – This is my interpretation of the notes I took during the rally, and are my thoughts only. Doug Hofer, NWA Rally Delegate, will have a report that indicates his thoughts and may be different than mine.