



Zone D Newsletter

2016 Zone D Meeting Recap

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By Cheryl Brooks, Arkansas; Zone Rep

The 2016 Zone D meeting of the National Association of Credit Specialists was held in beautiful Athens, Georgia. All nine of the states in the Zone had representation—Arkansas, Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida and Alabama. We were pleased to welcome NACS President, Lisa Liska, and National Office Speakers Jim Radintz, DAFLP; Thomas Mulhern, HRD; and, via video teleconference Doug Jones, Chief of Farm Credit Applications; Cindy Haas and Sharon Sachs, NFAOC.



South Carolina First-Time Attendees Ashley Acuff, Bridget Powell, and Brittney Waller with Lisa Liska, NE, NACS President; Bob Parris, SC.

First-time attendees

“As a first-time attendee, it was very nice to meet people from other states. It was interesting to see that even across different areas, the concerns and issues are the same. I really enjoyed attending the meeting!”
Ashley Acuff, Spartanburg, SC

“I really enjoyed the meeting. I thought it was nice to listen to the higher-ups from Washington discuss issues and items that they were looking into, as well as meet other people from other states and listen to their issues and concerns as well. I also was encouraged by the Resolution process.”
Bridget Powell, Spartanburg/Anderson, SC

“My first time attending the Zone D meeting was very informative and an insightful opportunity to collaborate with Farm Loan Officers and Program Technicians across the Southeastern Region, on initiatives directly impacting Farm Loans. NACS members seem to have a keen connection to improving Farm Loan Programs as employees, building connections to better serve the farmers and ranchers, and fostering a positive environment to benefit all who are touched by the USDA Farm Service Agency.”
Brittney Waller, Anderson, SC

We should never underestimate the importance of Zone meetings within NACS. Zone meetings are held on a smaller scale than Convention, allowing people to attend them that might not have the resources to travel to the larger meetings. Zone D has decided to continue holding our Zone meetings jointly with NACS Rural Development.

Mississippi has stepped up to host the 2017 meeting, and plans are already underway to make it a great one!

Mark your calendars for February 16-18, 2017.

Jim Radintz, DAFLP

FY15 was a great year! FSA FLP is USDA’s single largest investment in Beginning Farmers at \$2-3 billion per year – no other agency comes close. There has been a huge shift in direct borrowers who are beginning farmers from 21% in 2005 to 54% in 2015. Nationwide FSA’s loan portfolio is \$21.7 Billion; this represents a 30% increase in loan portfolio from 2012 to 2015 while resources declined during that time. In 2012 we had 1247 positions in the 1165 series while in 2015 the number has declined to 1068. In FY16 we will have the same amount of OL, FO and Guaranteed Loan Funding as last year and we can ask for increase up to 25%.



“Key Thoughts from our Vintage Leaders”

Be customer-centric:

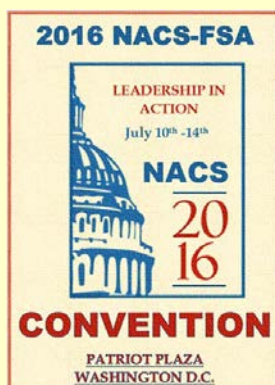
Never forget that applicants and borrowers are not number and files, they are people with feelings, hopes, emotions and dreams.

The plan should be the borrower’s plan, not FSA’s

National Office’s Goals for FSA- FLP:

Provide timely access to capital with emphasis on Beginning Farmers, Traditionally Underserved Applicants and Veteran Farmers.

- Monitor performance in timeframes and assist underperforming states.
 - Identify, remove and mitigate bottlenecks in our delivery system
- Support engaged, motivated and expert workforce for effective program delivery
- Provide training resources to the field – FLOT Training, CFAT, FBP, FLC and PT Training programs.
 - CFAT Contract has been signed; it is computer based and includes interactive group exercises through a Chat Room. It will consist of 15 lessons and run over 4 weeks.
 - The Update to the PT guide has a March 31st projected release date
 - Maintain Fiscal soundness to assure program sustainability
 - Increase analytical capacity in support of proactive management
 - Innovate to enhance Program Delivery and increase participation in FLP Programs
 - Online loan application system
 - Collaborate with FP on NAP, FSFL, TIP and look for additional opportunities
 - Support producers experiencing financial challenges
 - Loan servicing refresher training for the field
 - Issue plain language borrower guide (being updated)



PLAN TO ATTEND NATIONAL!

JULY 10 – 14TH, WASHINGTON DC

Thomas Mulhern, Director HR

Tom Mulhern attended the meeting not only in the capacity of HR Director but as the representative of DAFO. Greg Deiphouse was unable to attend the meeting. Tom spoke about the president’s budget for FY 2017 which is at least as good as 2016. IT issues continue to be a major issue for FSA. A new Chief Information Officer will be coming on board who will continue to work on the issues. The main thing that Tom as the HR director has been shepherding is improving the hiring process. Hiring over the last several months has reduced from 140 days to 70 days. An express lane hiring process to hire candidates within 60 days has been established for certain positions requiring limited advertisement.



With 45% of FSA workforce eligible to retire in the next two years HR is continuing to create better ways to hire. Additional aspects of the future of hiring which have been completed or are in the works include

- Redesign of service center hiring
- Looking at all aspects for upcoming vacancies
- 6 pods based on geographic location
- Pathways program-ability to hire on spot
- Veterans hiring- important goal of administration.

Other topics that were discussed

- Print services- copy Pin feature
- Handbooks- prioritize handbook revisions
- Leasing plan – to expand RPLOs
- Counter skills training
- Key PT expansion
- Aspiring leader program
- Workforce studies



FIRST TIME ATTENDEES RECOGNIZED AT ZONE D MEETING



Members attending 1st Zone Meeting

Potential members attending Zone



Committee Updates

Farm Program Committee Report

The FP Committee received responses from the National Office and the committee had a teleconference on February 9, 2016 with Raellen Erickson, Director of Price Support Division and her staff to discuss these resolutions. The National Office and committee responses will be placed on the NACS website for members to review. We encourage every NACS member to visit with their local Farm Program staff to find areas of concerns that could be presented to the National Office FP staff as a resolution.

Tiffany N Grody, Chairperson

Farm Loan Program Committee Report

The Farm Loan Program Committee has been intermittently reviewing Federal Register postings and proposed regulations since the 2015 National Convention. The National Office responses to our FLP resolutions was received and follow up was completed with the final report posted the NACS website. Please continue to submit FLP resolutions through the NACS-FSA website – your suggestions are the heart and soul of this organization. Contact me or any member of the FLP Committee with comments, suggestions, or discussion points. We look forward to seeing all of you at zone meetings and the national convention.

Denise Lickteig, Chairperson

Management/Personnel Committee Report

The committee received responses from the National Office and completed a committee call on February 4, 2016, the report will be posted to the website to finalize the 2015 resolutions. Each member is challenged to develop resolutions for this year's convention.

Jason McMillin, Chairperson

Membership Committee Report

The committee has created new promotional documents for NACS, including a summarized informational sheet, and a flyer promoting National Convention in Washington, D.C. These items should now be available on the website. The committee has held monthly conference calls with Jill Colgan of McAllister and Quinn, who has helped create these materials, provided insight on promotional giveaways, and designed supplemental NACS logos and taglines. We are currently working on the campaign to “rebrand” the association as a leadership training, geared toward the new-hires and answering the question “What does NACS do for me?” It continues to be the committee's goal to provide the tools necessary for states recruit new members, especially as the agency is heavily hiring more FLOTs.

Kaiti Steckman, Chairperson

Information Committee Report

The NACS IT Committee met with National and Finance Office via teleconference on January 19, 2016. We had 15 resolutions that were discussed. A few of the concerns had already been addressed or are currently being addressed with planned updates and releases. Others were met with positive input from NO and FO. Those representing NO and FO on the call seemed very eager to hear our concerns and excited for the opportunity to hear our concerns directly. IT Resolutions with NO and Committee responses are posted on the NACS website.

Becky Minter, Chairperson

Visit www.nacs-fsa.org to review resolutions previously submitted and submit new ones.

NACS News and additional items

2016-2017 CANDIDATE ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Ryan Lukassen has announced for Treasurer
Interested in holding a position on the NACS Board?
Announce your intentions to run for a position from Zone
Representative to President at this year's National
Convention.

UPCOMING:

2016 NACS National Convention will be July 10-14th in Washington, DC. If planning to run for NACS board, plan to stay until 12pm on Friday, a day on the hill is being planned for those interested on the 14th and the banquet and awards ceremony will be moved back to Wednesday. When planning your trip – plan to arrive and attend the meeting beginning on Monday at 8am and not to leave before 5pm on Wednesday. A night tour of the monuments will be planned for Monday.



All State Associations
 Represented at Zone D meeting

Alabama represented with 6
 members present.
 Georgia with 9;
 South Carolina with 5;
 Arkansas and North Carolina
 with 2 each;
 and, Florida, Louisiana,
 Tennessee and Mississippi
 with 1 member each.

*All pictures provided by
 James Patrick Jackson, AL*

Legislative Update

On Saturday morning, Andy Quinn of McAllister and Quinn presented to the membership updates via Skype. Andy provided positive feedback of the meetings that were held in Washington during 2015 and updates on key areas of focus for NACS mostly involving looking ahead, 2016 and beyond.

Lisa Liska, NACS President Update

Changes to the NACS board include Ryan Lukassen, NM becoming Treasurer and Joseph Grier becoming Zone B Representative and Kay McCoy as Alternate. NACS board will be going Washington, D.C in late March, early April to discuss topics one on one.

Presentations provided by NFAOC
 and Farm Credit Applications
 Office will be posted online
 NACS-FSA.org