



# Zone C Newsletter

March, 2019

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 2019 Zone Meeting Highlights
- 2 National Office Speakers
- 3 Committee Updates
- 4 Legislative Update and  
National Convention Information

## 2019 Zone C/D Meeting Highlights

*By Nathan Adams, Indiana FLM, Zone C Rep.*

For the 2019 Zone Meeting, Zone C and Zone D decided to join forces and hold a combined meeting in Chattanooga, TN from March 7th - 9th. Due to the government shutdown, this turned out to be the only Zone Meeting held this year, and by all accounts it was a success. Despite the chaos of the shutdown leading up to the event, attendance was good with nearly 60 attendees. Included in that number were members of NACS, NASE, NADD, and the FLCA, as well as National Office representatives, and sponsors.

The evening before the official meeting began, the NACS State Presidents in attendance met to discuss current issues, and "hot topics". Bill Cobb, Acting DAFLP, and Peggy Browne, DAFO also joined in this discussion. Some topics covered included: hiring of new FLOTs, environmental procedures, potential online applications, and farm bill updates.

On Friday, the meeting began with a welcome from Matthew Christian, TN State Association President and NACS Zone D Rep. Also welcoming us on behalf of the host state was Dennis Beavers, TN SED. Throughout the day we heard presentations from Bill Cobb and Peggy Browne, representing the National Office, and via Skype, we were joined by Sharon Sachs and several other employees of NFAOC. In addition, we heard short presentations from the following event sponsors: Farmer Mac, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and Dillard Financial Solutions. In the afternoon, Zone C and Zone D had separate breakout sessions for Committee Reports and resolution discussion.

Saturday, the meeting reconvened and was started off with the NACS Presidents Report given by Denise Lickteig. Andy Quinn of McAllister & Quinn joined us via Skype and gave an update on the consulting firm's activities with Congress on NACS's behalf. Following that were reports from the Legislative and the Membership committees. We also had National Office Candidate announcements - Leann Gibbs, current Vice President from New Mexico has announced her intention to run for President, and Ray Bartholomew, current Treasurer from Kansas announced his intention to run for another term as Treasurer. The day wrapped up with an open discussion on how this *joint* meeting went and whether or not to continue with this format or go back to individual Zone meetings. It was the general consensus that things went well and that we should hold a joint meeting again next year. In an effort to keep the next meeting close to the border of both Zones, Kentucky graciously volunteered to host in 2020 - Thank you for stepping up Kentucky!



First-time attendees with Bill Cobb, Acting DAFLP

## Peggy Browne, DAFO

Peggy Brown was sworn in as USDA Farm Service Agency Deputy Administrator for Field Operations (DAFO) on Aug. 20, 2018. Previous to that she served as the State Executive Director for Oregon. She was born and raised in Baker County, Oregon where her family raised beef cattle and later transitioned into dairy. As Deputy Administrator, she is responsible for the supervision and oversight of FSA's network of over 2,100 state and county offices as well as over 18,000 FSA field team members.



DAFO Browne talked with the group about some of the challenges and concerns she's faced since coming on the job. Her biggest concern is staffing, especially considering pending retirements. However, she said we have to work within the constraints of the budget. One way to deal with that is to become more "quick and nimble" at our jobs and look for efficiencies wherever they can be found. She also recognizes that the hiring process is "painful" but says that, in her opinion, hiring has to continue as quickly as possible. She also said that she understands that leasing is a concern in the field and she told the group that a new director has been hired in the part of FPAC that handles leases, so hopefully that will improve. Another topic she discussed was the recent furlough and the "callback" of certain staff. She said that the Secretary really pushed for acknowledgment that Ag was important, and that, in general, this administration was focused on trying to reduce the adverse affects of the shutdown on our farmer customers.



## Bill Cobb, Acting DAFLP

Bill Cobb has been Acting Deputy Administrator for Farm Loan Programs since the retirement of Jim Radintz. He has been with the agency for 34 years, starting with FHA, and has been at National Office since 1992.

He started his presentation with a FY 2018 Overview and the following highlights: Obligations of direct and guaranteed OL and FO funds were

the fourth highest in Agency history. Total FY '18 obligations for Direct FO funds totaled \$1.1 billion and were the highest in Agency history, and the obligations for Guaranteed FO funds were over \$2.1 billion which was the third highest in Agency history. He also noted that while the DL volume is increasing, percent delinquent loans are holding steady. In his presentation, he spent considerable time going over the changes with the new farm bill, much of which was to be covered in a Notice to come out the following day. Other highlights of his presentation were:

- They are still reviewing how loan approval authorities will increase related to the increased loan limits, saying that he'd like to get more input from the states, particularly the Chiefs, before a final decision is made.
- The "My Financial Information" tab for borrowers on Farmers.gov will be going live soon. He showed an example of what the screen will look like and said that his office is working very closely with the White House Center for Excellence on the development of FLP's online presence on Farmers.gov.
- There are several Workgroups in place in which NACS and NASE have representation, including: "Work Not Completed", "Continuing Education", "Internal Controls", "FPAC Portal"
- The "Work Not Completed" workgroup will be looking at ways to quantify the work not getting done that is not captured in the WebTA data that is being used for staffing decisions.
- With the large number of FLOTs coming on board, they are looking at possibilities for some sort of group training for them.
- Lending Cloud is ready, but they don't want to release it in the middle of the busy spring loan season, they're looking at maybe June...

## Committee Updates

### Loan Making Committee Report

The Loan Making Committee received responses from the National Office and the committee had a joint teleconference on February 28, 2019 to discuss all NACS resolutions submitted from the National Convention in June 2018. Discussion took place on the ten Loan Making resolutions submitted. Progress was made on quite a few resolutions, as National Office is willing to make changes as requested. During the Zone C & D Joint Meeting, two new resolutions for the Farm Loan Making committee were discussed. Please continue to submit your resolutions through the NACS-FSA website or reach out to any committee member to assist you in preparing your resolution.

*Tiffany N. Grody, OH*

### Loan Servicing Committee Report

A joint phone call between all committees with National Office was held on Feb 28th with Kara Napier and others. The Loan Servicing Committee had recommended 4 resolutions for adoption from 2018 and 3 of the 4 received favorable responses. It is important to monitor the topics going forward so that the agreed changes are implemented into the forms and instructions as appropriate. Only a few resolutions had been received in time for the joint Zone C & D meeting in Chattanooga however I'm confident that several will be reviewed at the National Convention in June. Be sure to continue to submit resolutions through the website!

*Nathan Denney, KY*

### Management/Personnel Committee Report

A conference call was held with the National Office on February 28, 2019 to discuss their responses to the resolutions NACS submitted. The first resolution concerned training. We expressed to the NO that face to face training was more beneficial than webinars. They agree, however with limited funding, face to face training will still be on a limited basis. They did mention upgrading the webinars to be more informative in the future. The second resolution addresses the amount of time we spend on environmental issues. The NO will be looking at workload in the future concerning this issue. They are looking at advertising 3 regional environmental positions.

*Juanita Ballman, KY*

### Membership Committee Report

The Membership Committee is working on updating the membership packet on the NACS website. We intend to add more current information and revise that section of the website to make it more "user friendly". We want to provide the necessary tools to help recruit new members, especially since we have so many new FLOTs coming on board. We are also brainstorming ideas for training opportunities to be held at National Convention. Please contact me, or any member of the Membership Committee, with your ideas or suggestions regarding membership.

*Crystal Zwilling, IL*

### Information Technology Committee Report

The NACS IT Committee met with the National Office via teleconference on February 28, 2019. We had seven resolutions that were presented to the National Office and their responses were discussed. Several of the resolutions are already in the pipeline to occur. Often our resolutions are tied to a change within a "system" that requires an update which is budgetary driven. The National Office does have our ideas and resolutions listed as priorities when available funds allow for system updates.

*Vicky Swift, KY*

### Legislative Committee Report

On the 18th and 19th of March the Legislative group was in D.C. doing our annual "Hill Day" with Andy Quinn of McCallister and Quinn (our NACS lobbyist). We met with numerous House and Senate offices that make up the respective ag committees. We worked on educating the members about FSA Farm Loans and NACS as well as concerns that NACS has that would require legislative action.

*Brandon Waldron, VA*

Visit [www.nacs-fsa.org](http://www.nacs-fsa.org) to review resolutions previously submitted and submit new ones.

## Legislative Update & National Convention Information



Andy Quinn

For the last several years, NACS has worked with Andy Quinn, of McAlliser and Quinn, a Washington DC consulting firm (lobbyist). This relationship has been very beneficial and has resulted in several "wins" for NACS, it's members, and our customers. Since NACS is a relatively small organization, and FLP is very small part of the overall USDA budget, having a professional working on our behalf is extremely important to make sure our voice is heard on Capitol Hill.

Andy works closely with our Legislative Committee and he joined us via Skype for the Zone Meeting. Here are some of his comments and some issues they're currently on:

- Don't be too concerned with the President's budget that contains drastic cuts to most federal agencies - Congress sets the budget, not the President.
- There are 15 new members on the Congressional Ag Committee, he will be working to establish a relationship with them and educate them on issues affecting NACS
- They continue to work with "like minded" Ag groups (Rural Lenders Association, American Bankers Association, etc.) Some of these groups have considerable clout in DC and it's great to have them advocating for us.
- They continue to work on abolishing term limits, increased loan limits, protecting program integrity with regards to the ongoing USDA reorganization, and getting support from other Ag Companies that benefit from FLP programs.

## 2019 NATIONAL CONVENTION JUNE 22-27, 2019 ASTOR CROWNE PLAZA NEW ORLEANS, LA



***Mark your calendars and join us in the Big Easy!***

***Watch the NACS website for registration details.***

### ***Get Involved!***

Interested in getting more involved with NACS but not sure how? Talk to your State Officers, Zone Rep, or other National Board members, they'd be glad to talk to you and answer your questions!

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