Thursday, March 21

State Council Meeting Welcome

Pelon opened the meeting at 4:20pm.

In attendance: Art Pelon, President, Jerry Miller Vice President, Elaine Brown Secretary Treasurer, Nancy Szikszay (Region 9), Betsy Koehnlein (Region 7), Carol Hart (Region 3), Susan Schwager (Region 4), Paul Schroeder Region 7 VC), Clark Humrich (Region 10), Jane Bishop (Region 2). Guests: Melissa Eldridge (CDEM), John Switzer (MDARD), Joel Johnson (FSA), and Christy Roman (MDARD).

Approvals

State Council Agenda – additions/corrections Art Pelon

Motion by Bishop, support by Humrich to approve the agenda as written. AYES-Carried.

Consent Calendar:

Art Pelon

- October Council Minutes
- Staff Reports
  
  Motion by Schroeder, second by Hart to accept the corrections as noted. AYES-CARRIED.
  
  Motion by Szikszay, second by Schroeder to accept the minutes as corrected. AYES-CARRIED.

Partner Updates, Programs and Discussion

FSA Joel Johnson

- CRP- SAFE 16,000 acres offered, with an expected 10,000+ to be enrolled.
- CREP suspension is up this year, we will have to address this agreement.
- 142,000+ acres enrolled in various CRP programs (CREP, etc.)
- Farm Bill 2018
  
  o 24-27 million acre cap nationally for CRP.
  
  o A pilot program, Clean Lakes, Estuaries and Rivers (CLEAR) initiative has been authorized, with up to 30-year agreements.

Questions:

- Lenawee County – Federal level leadership including the administrator and under-secretary are producer oriented – both are farmers. They came to Michigan last year and with NRCS to host a listening session with producers. This meeting has helped FSA address lingering issues. The Lenawee FSA office also has a new office manager.
Switzer thanked all who attended the MAEAP 5000 Celebration.

2018 ESD Annual Report:
- Key CD Operations FY18 accomplishments
  - Training
  - Survey
  - Grant goal setting meetings
  - Certified 44 elections
- Pelon noted that the report does not include Districts in the following program overviews. Requested that this be addressed before the report is made public.
  - FAP
  - Clean Sweep
  - MAEAP Water Monitoring

MDARD Survey:
- Results were provided to managers and directors. Will work with staff to reframe how they work with CDs based on survey results.

2019 ESD –Conservation Program Goals:
- Improved communications and cooperation with core conservation partners.
- Support ongoing efforts to restore operational funding.
- Update the operations manual.
- Continue to grow core training opportunities.
- Improve the effectiveness of services provided by MDARD to CDs.

RC FY19 Projects:
- Developing formal director onboarding program – certification program to encourage directors to develop a baseline level of knowledge through the work of the Director Training Team.
- Manager uniform job description and recommended training plans – a path forward for managers.
- Overhaul of quarterly review process. These reviews are provided to board chairs via email, district manager and Switzer.

District Updates:
- Ontonagon – received letters of resignation for the three board members. MDARD is now working to appoint new board members. Director McDowell will appoint the final five, with MDARD then assisting the CD to move forward.
- Bay – meeting with NRCS and current board members.
- Wayne – Awarded $25,000 in the DNR budget to host urban soil survey, matched with local government funds. Savona is working with Wayne; Switzer to attend a board meeting in the near future.

MDARD Staff Updates:
- Switzer welcomed new staff member Staci Kientiz. (Pronounced Peanuts with a K).
CDEM

Melissa Eldridge

Elections held at the CDEM Annual Meeting:

- Region 1 - Matt Watkeys, Marquette
- Region 2 - Vacant
- Region 3 - Renee Penny, Kalkaska
- Region 4 - Renee Mallison, Manistee
- Region 5 - Janet Reins, Alcona
- Region 6 - Melissa Townsend, Clare
- Region 7 - Melissa Eldridge, Ionia (President)
- Region 8 - Carolyn Grace, St. Joseph
- Region 8 - Kathy Worst, Branch, alternate
- Region 9 - Angela Warren, Genessee
- Region 10 - Michelle Beloskur, Ingham

Activities:

- Board meeting regularly; encouraging region reps to talk with employees.
- Two scholarships have been awarded, both for outside trainings.
- Promotion of CDEM – Developing an electronic newsletter.
- Assisting in the planning of summer and fall MACD events.
- Partnering with MACD on manager retreat.
- Conservation Partnership activities – boot camp and NACD TA grants.

Membership:

- Anyone can be a member, including directors, employees and others that support district employees.
- A lifetime membership is available.

Staff Reports

Phalen Review of Staff Report  Lori Phalen

Overviewed QuickBooks Assistance Program.

Discussion – board members need information on specific steps to protect them from fraud. Suggestion: Add to director training the roles and responsibilities of the treasurer.

Convention and Summer Conference Locations. Locations must be secured for annual events, with multi-year contracts needed to lock in preferred dates. The question on the timing of the convention has come up time and again. Phalen requested that the Council make the decision on timing of the event in order for staff to lock down contracts.

Discussion – what is the optional timing to allow more directors to attend?
- Provide a separate annual meeting to allow for more board participation?
- Move the annual meeting to the summer conference? This would take a change in bylaws.

Pelon suggested that the discussion continue over dinner, with a decision made on Friday.

Meeting Adjournment

Pelon called for recess at 6:30pm.
Friday, March 22

Meeting Open
Pelon reconvened the meeting at 8:05am.

Friday additional attendees: Kevin Craig (Region 6) and Guests Staci Kientiz (MDARD), Garry Lee (NRCS) and Bob Kosowski (MAC).

Partner Updates, continued

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<tr>
<th>NRCS</th>
<th>Lee</th>
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<td>EQIP – currently working on signups and obligation of funds, with about $17M obligated, and $15M in backlog.</td>
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<td>NRCS Chief, Matt Lohr attended the MAEAP 5000 Celebration and visited with state level staff on Thursday, March 21. Chief Lohr Chief is open to coming to MI to one of our events. Lee will provide the state level event dates to see what fits into his schedule.</td>
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<td>Staffing – current Michigan NRCS employee cap is 153, with a current level of 140/141 employees.</td>
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<td>Centralized Business center – all HR Services are handled by this entity; with limited capacity of this unit, there is a backlog of in the process.</td>
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Strategic Discussion

Review of Annual Plan of Work

Phalen provided the Annual Plan of Work via email for Council review, along with the question, are we on the right track?

Discussion:
Legislative activities - would there be a benefit to having District staff attend legislative hearing? Yes, and in the past staff and board members have participated in the presentations as well as being present in the audience. Phalen noted why this was not the case for the March 21st presentation.

Brown suggested that the Council discuss the topics as noted in the agenda and come back to this to see if there is any update needed.

New Business

Conservation Partnership

Lee, Switzer, Phalen and Eldridge

TA Grants:
- Twelve proposals were received, reviewed, ranked and submitted to NACD. Currently awaiting word from NACD on approved proposals.
- Next step – Lori to reach out to NACD to see if they would be willing to accept additional applications for available CTA funding.
- Szikszay asked if CDs have been informed of status and ranking. Miller noted that ranking is not to be provided.

NACD Boot Camp:
- Phalen explained outreach process, with the first applicants approved for attendance:
  - Evan Dunbar, Marquette
  - Brittany S. Monroe

Indiana Partnership Model:
The FY17 Annual Report was shared with an explanation of the Indiana partnership model.

Switzer added that they entered into an agreement with USDA to access data to create a story map – showcasing by county or watershed level local data that rolls up into statewide data. This data includes NRCS, 319 and other programs to showcase the great work that the partnership.

Miller noted that this effort came from an EPA decree for nutrient management strategy for the Mississippi River Basin. The MI domestic action plan for WLEB is MI response for EPA’s nutrient management strategy for the WLEB requirement.

Discussion:

- Michigan’s challenge, we work in silos, with various cost share programs that have differing parameters.
- EQIP is the mega cost share program and we need to be careful that smaller opportunities do not negate the producer's ability to participate in EQIP.
- Entities need to talk and work together to offer the best cost share opportunity to the producer.
- We all need to working from the same sheet of paper – starting at the top with the set up the programs so that the programs are compatible.
- Need to form the partnership and agreement; and outline the cost share program parameters that all will use going forward.
- The Conservation Partnership in Michigan – mission has never been defined, nor has the role of each partner been defined. The core partnership of NRCS, MDARD and MACD, is not formal.

Next Steps:

1) Current partners are to have a discussion with Indiana to learn history, who took the lead and drove their effort to help define who leads and drives this effort in Michigan.
2) Have group bring back a report in June.
3) Develop a MOU and have the entities sign to formalize.

Agenda Adjustment
Pelon called for an adjustment in agenda to address legislative update earlier than the printed agenda.

Legislative Update
Kosowski

- Meet and Greet meetings have been held with 110 house and 38 senators. Districts were included as an agenda item in all meetings. Additionally, have been meeting with key committee members to discuss Conservation District details.
- Challenges – the General Fund is fully utilized and the Governor’s road funding ask of $2.5B is a big ask that will impact the General Fund.
- Senate Ag Approps members (three) are all very supportive of CDs. The presentation to the Senate Ag Approps committee on March 21 came up very quickly and was not even listed on the meeting announcements.
- A presentation will be arranged for the House Ag Approps after Easter break.
- Bill tracking – MAC does a great job of this and the MACD Legislative Committee will be ramping up to review and take a stand on issues.
- Importance of local outreach:
  - Very important to have your CDs activity at the local level. Go to the coffee hours, have conversation about what you do and what you need; these are very important and impactful conversations.
  - Feel free to contact Bob directly with your questions.
Humrich asked if the Indiana report would be valuable to him as a legislator. Bob noted that face to face meetings are the most important and this document would be handed off to a staff member to read, providing the cliff notes and bottom line to the legislator to review.

New Business, continued

Summer Region Meetings 

Miller outlined current meeting model, time frame and template agenda.

The following items were discussed.

Timing:
- Szikszay suggested moving region meetings into the winter months. Bishop and Hart noted that winter meetings are challenging for upper MI. Determined that the timing would be left up to individual regions.

Content:
- Miller noted that the bylaws state that regional elections are held at the convention.
- Determined to not include partner updates, as this information is shared during state level events.
- Regions should decide when they hold and what they would like to accomplish at their meeting.
- Educational component: Members would like to have training as part of the region meetings.
  - The MDARD survey noted the need for more regional training, with specific sessions for techs. Going forward the MACD Region meetings could provide training, dividing attendees by role for separate training. Switzer willing to play a role in making these meetings more valuable.
  - Survey members to identify professional training topics; have state level narrow down the list for selection by Region Chair for that year to be delivered by state Level staff. CDEM volunteered to reach out to members to ask for educational topics and will get back to the Executive Council with results.

By Consensus the Council agreed to have the Executive Council lead on the development of guidance documents to Council members, to include the above suggestions.

MACD Member Benefits – Growing Value

Phalen

Dues benefits, structure and timeline for FY2020 dues process were overviewed.
- Are there benefits that can be offered that we currently do not? Members noted the need for Human Resources and Phalen informed the Council that this benefit is scheduled for investigation as per the Annual Plan of Work.
- Council members stressed the need for all to be advocates within their region, encouraging board members to participation in MACD and support their organization at a higher financial level.

Tiered System and Benefits
- Districts in Region 3 – do not like tiered structure for voting.
- Include in the special assessment letter include that if all supported at top level, no special assessment would be needed.
- Miller reminded the Council that this was discussed in S.S.Marie, with the agreement that changes in levels will not be done until funding can be secured.
- Phalen asked all to consider benefits and what should be included at which levels, with a decision made at the June meeting for FY2020.
- Humrich proposed that each member contact each CD in their region, attending a local meeting to discuss the importance of dues and the activities currently underway.

**Convention Awards**

Phalen overviewed current awards and asked for input on ways to update what is offered.

**Discussion:**
- Add a CD of the Year to showcase a high performing CD.
  - MACD membership status would be a ranking question.
  - Provide a plaque and something for each CD board and staff member of the winning CD.
  - Provide criteria - programs, projects, outstanding achievement of the year. Allow for self-nomination or neighbor nomination.
  - Rank them at the region level?
  - Roman suggested that each region nominate their top CD for final ranking. MDARD RCs may also be a viable way to nominate.

*By consensus the State Council agreed to the establishment of a subcommittee to create the Conservation District Award. Members: Jane Bishop, Susan Schwager, Christy Roman and Lori Phalen. Charge: identify award criteria and process for approval at June Meeting.*

**Event Facilities Contracts**

Phalen Pelon opened the floor for discussion of ways to make the annual meeting more accessible to the farmers who are board members.

**Discussion:**
- Condense to one meeting per year?
- Maintain current venues
- Any date change for the annual meeting will interrupt farming activities. This is a big state with very diverse agriculture and no matter when the event is scheduled, it will impact farming schedules.
- Suggestion to move the annual meeting to the Summer Conference.

*Motion by Bishop, Second by Schroeder to maintain the projected October dates for the Convention and content the same. AYES-CARRIED, No vote by Szikszay, with a voice of support for the decision of the Council.*

Executive Council will provide a letter to membership notifying them of this decision, along with dates once they have been finalized in contract.

**MACD Committees/Projects/Programs**

**MACD Legislative Committee**

Phalen/Committee Members

Legislative activities discussed in Kosowski report.

**MACD Policy Book:**

Discussed current process for updates and the list of policies that are to be reviewed in FY19.

**Next Steps:**
- Brown to provide a categorized list of policies by broad topics to the State Council in April, along with a deadline for comments.
- State Council members are to review and recommend category changes and content.
- Ex. Council to determine who else needs to be tapped to help update policies.
• Brown to bring results to the June meeting for discussion and determination of process to move forward to completion.

Finance Committee
Brown/Members
Phalen/Brown reviewed the financials.

Motion by Schroeder, second by Bishop to approve as read upon approval of the audit.

Discussion - budget updates will be approved in June.

Pelon called for a vote: AYES-CARRIED.

Phalen noted that the FY2018 audit process will continue with the close of tax season on April 15th.

Michigan Envirothon
Mitchell/Phalen
Program update provided by Sandusky in Mitchell’s absence due to illness.
• Currently planning for the state event, with solicitation for resource professionals and teams ongoing.
• Lost several teams due to snow days, with ten teams dropping out due to schools cutting all off campus activities.
• Regional events wrapped up last Friday; final numbers of participation will be available in the coming weeks.
• Twenty two teams will be invited to the State Competition.
• Focus is now on the State Competition, with finalization of state tests and organization of the event at Fort Custer.
• Expect budget numbers to drop due to reduced costs of regionals and Fort Custer expenses.

Funding Development Committee
• Funding goal for FY19 is $28,000. FDC was established and began work in December.
• At present we have $7,000 in hand, $13,000 pending.
• The team has a multiple other efforts in process for funding and discounts.

NACD Activities
Miller/Brown
January NC Region
• Miller and Switzer attended the January NC Region
• The 2020 meeting will be held in St. Louis

February Annual Meeting
• Miller participated on behalf of MACD
• Also attending Switzer, Szikszay, Donna Fritz, Jeanette Renn from Huron CD, Melissa Higbee and Donna Kanan from Shiawassee CD.

NACD Leadership Team:
• President Tim Palmer, Iowa
• First Vice President Michael Crowder, Indiana
• Second Vice President Kim LaFleur, Massachusetts
• Secretary-Treasurer Ian Cunningham, Minnesota
• Immediate Past President Brent Van Dyke, New Mexico

NACD Leadership Institute
• 36 college applicants, twelve were selected to participate in NACD Annual Meeting, with special training sessions and a field trip provided.
• Holly Pummel from Clare MI participated. Part of their work is to come back to their home state to complete a project. Pummel is leading a conservation panel at MSU on March 27th. Allison Kerr, MAEAP Tech, Michelle Beloskur, Brian Buehler and Jerry Miller are panel participants.

NACD Fly In
• Brown attended this event held on March 13.
• Michigan attendees: Brown, Lee and Higbee. Meetings held with Stabenow, Moolenaar (House Ag appropriations committee) and staff, Barbara Lawrence (House Ag and Environment Committee). All pleased that the MI contingent came to DC. Very positive meetings.

MACD Training Program Phalen
Director Workshops
• Four locations: Marquette, Ann Arbor, Grayling/Gaylord, Big Rapids
• Speakers: Patrice Martin, John Switzer, Steve Law
• Agenda has been updated given input from FY18 workshops

Manager Retreat
• CDEM and MACD partnering
• Date August 19 in Clare
• Speaker: Nonprofit Network

Other Business

MACD Officer Election
Szikszay informed the Council that officer elections will be held at the FY19 annual meeting. To prepare, the Council needs to nominate individuals to participate on the nominating committee.
• Roman to inquire with RCs for ideas on directors to participate.
• Pelon noted that he will not be running for President.

June State Council Meeting
Discussed plans for the June State Council meeting.

By consensus agreed to an afternoon meeting: 2-6pm. No Monday meeting or after the event meeting will be held.

Regional Councils
Discussed regional councils and vacancies.
• Region 5 - Pelon and Roman to discuss the opportunity with potential board members within the region. If interested, they will be invited to participate in June.
• Region 1 – Did not hold an election, with no follow-up in 90 days as noted in the bylaws. Therefore the region officer positions are considered vacant. Phalen to work with Miller to move forward.

Pelon closed the meeting at 2:26 PM.