

Advisory Council for Office Professionals

Annual Meeting held in Little Rock, AR

by S. Daughtry

The Southern Plains Area Advisory Council for Office Professionals met at the Lower Mississippi Delta Nutrition Intervention Research Initiative (Delta NIRI) in Little Rock, AR August 14-15, 2007 for our annual meeting.

The new Council for 2007-2008 is as follows:

Chair—Justine Flowers, Little Rock, AR

Co-Chair—Susan Daughtry, El Reno, OK

Recorder—Beverly Keller, Stuttgart, AR

Training Coordinator—Beth Holt, Bushland, TX

Information Coordinator—Susan Daughtry, El Reno, OK

Area Office liaison—Anne Steele, College Station, TX

Webmaster—Karen Wilcox, College Station, TX

NACOP Rep/Technical Advisory—Barbara Hodges, Lubbock, TX

Ex-Officio—Davee Crowell, Beaumont, TX

Each year the Council reports accomplishments and goals from the previous year to the Area Director. The following report was sent to Dr. Dan Upchurch, Area Director: "The SPA Advisory Council for Office Professionals (ACOP) met in Little Rock, AR August 14-15, 2007, for a planning session for the upcoming year. I will be serving as the Co-Chairperson for the Council for the next year and wanted to share some of the goals we hope to accomplish:

- ★ Maintain the SPA ACOP handbook,
- ★ Maintain quarterly conference calls,
- ★ Maintain the scrapbook for the SPA ACOP,

Each year we set goals which will benefit not only Office

Professionals but ARS as a whole.

Some of the goals we accomplished last year were:

- ★ Continued sending the newsletter to RLs, CDs, etc., with a new feature that highlighted an Office Professional and his/her impact and Ask Smurfy by Ruth Treat to answer questions concerning all things ARIS,
- ★ SPA ACOP New Employee Packets were sent to several new Office Professionals,
- ★ Quarterly teleconferences were held,
- ★ Sent out a CD with our ACOP Handbook on it for Office Professionals Day,
- ★ Revised the SPA ACOP Charter

Special points of interest:

- NACOP Annual Meeting
- Are you Adding Value to the Research?
- SPA New Employee Spotlight
- Ask Smurfy
- Friends & Neighbors Day
- Summer Field Tour



SPA ACOP Council (2007-2008)

Front Row, L to R: B. Holt, D. Crowell, J. Flowers, B. Hodges

Back Row, L to R: S. Daughtry, K. Wilcox, A. Steele, B. Keller

and obtained signatures from each member and the Area Director.

In keeping with the mission of the SPA ACOP, which is to serve the SPA OPs, location research and administration management teams, and the Area Director in an advisory capacity, the Council will continue to pursue goals that will better inform all Office Professionals so they can better serve and understand the mission of ARS. The members of the Council would once again like to say "thank you for your continued support of our efforts."

As you can see, we have a full agenda for the upcoming year. If anyone has any ideas, suggestions - or even criticisms - please feel free to contact any member of the Council. Also, if anyone is interested in serving on the Council please contact any of the Council members. We meet once a year (2 days of travel), have a teleconference each quarter which lasts for an hour, and every 3 years the National Advisory Council for Office Professionals has a meeting. The next meeting, slated for 2009, is already in the planning process.



NACOP Annual Meeting held in Peoria, IL by B. Hodges

The 2007 NACOP annual meeting was held July 24-26 at the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research (NCAUR) in Peoria, Illinois, and was hosted by the Midwest Area with Heather Lewandowski handling arrangements. The meeting was opened on Tuesday, July 24, with a welcome by the Midwest Area Office Staff. Dr. Harry Danforth (Associate Director), Mr. Terry Nelsen (Assistant Director), and Ms. Diane Strub, (Deputy Area Director), welcomed the Council

members to Peoria by giving a brief background of the Peoria area.

Numerous topics were discussed:

- A. Mission and Goals
- B. Objectives
- C. Scope of Coverage
- D. Council Membership
- E. Roles and Responsibilities
- F. Operating Procedures
- G. Financial Responsibilities

Goals for 2007/08 are as follows:

- 1) Work toward 2009 Conference
- 2) Update and maintain the NACOP website
- 3) Continue Newsletter/ Publicity
- 4) Update Training and Planning Guide on website
- 5) Review and update

Resources Assistance List
6) Create historical record of NACOP

The group discussed details about the 2009 Conference. The request to have the Conference will be finalized and presented in FY 2008 so work can proceed if the meeting is approved for March of 2009 as planned. It was agreed that the 15th anniversary of the Council should be highlighted, hopefully with a panel of former Council members.

The meeting was very productive and the Council is looking forward to another successful year.



New Employee Spotlight



Crystal Kallie

Crystal Kallie works at the Area Office as the executive assistant to Dr. James Coppedge, Associate Area Director. Crystal is a Texas native, born and raised in Cameron, Texas. She joined the military at 17 years old and served in the U.S. Army for 3 years. Prior to coming to work with USDA-ARS, Crystal worked at the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration in Waco, Texas. Between military and civil duty, she has 11 years of federal service. Crystal's professional interests have included positions on Advisory committees and has served as Vice-President for the last employer's Employee Association. She believe in the strong pursuit of morale, a sense of unity, responsibilities, and shared common interests as developed among people in the workplace.

Crystal is married and they jointly have 6 children, 3 grandchildren. Her personal interests include reading and spending time with my family.

Are You Adding Value to the Research?

Before you quickly say that you aren't a scientist or technician and thus don't have anything to do with the research, think about it. What are you doing that enables the quality of the research at your location to be enhanced? I'll bet that you find that it's actually quite a lot. At least it should be. Every person at the location is there to support the research effort in various ways, but not always directly.

How do you add value? I can easily think of two broad categories.

Do you find ways to relieve the scientists from having to deal with some of the administrative and program details? When you requested info for the Meeting Attendance Plan, did you request all types of travel plans as well, so that you could start drafting the AD-202s for the year? Did you note plans for papers and presentations at the meetings on the MAP and start your ARS-115 file? Do you keep each scientist's publication list and update it when a new publication comes out? Were you able to locate the FY07 milestones for the scientists in preparation for the annual reports and include them in draft reports? How about the publications that could be reported? Did you review the ARMP and note plans for adding funds to the SCAs during the coming year, and then make

tickler notes to remind the ADODRs so that they aren't rushing to add funds in the last weeks of the FY? Do you maintain the

RPES case write-ups, and have you made notes about presentations and meetings and other things that should be included the next time it's due? Do you know when the projects will be peer reviewed again and do you have current COI lists for the scientists? Do you assure that you get the necessary information to provide accurate ARIS work the first time? Obviously every detail that you can manage for the scientists frees up time for them to focus on their research.

The other way that you add value is by providing grammatical expertise. Do you review manuscripts and reports? Do you read the interpretive summaries and abstracts that you input into ARS-115s? If your scientists are not bringing documents to you to look over, why not? Not every program assistant/secretary is capable of editing for content, but every one of you should be able to proof for typos, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and grammar. Do you participate in pulling together the project plans? There you should be able to check for completeness and format. You should be able to see if the letters of collaboration really say what the collaborator is going to do. You should be able to verify that references in text are accurate and included in the Literature Cited section, and that a consistent format is used for all citations through the document. Again, the more that you can be responsible for in these documents, the more quickly the research gets planned, or published, or reported on.

Do you add value to the research at your location? You most certainly should be. And if you aren't, why aren't you?

Ask Smurfy

by R. Treat

Dear Smurfy:

A couple of us Program Assistants were chatting and the topic of ARIS errors came up. I said that probably the most common error you find on our actions is not including remarks. She thought it was not changing the request type on outgoing actions. Who is right? Flipping Coins in SPA



Dear Coins:

You're both right....and you're both wrong. Yes, not having remarks, or not having adequate remarks, is pretty common. And it's a sure way to get your action put to the bottom of the pile until I have time to figure out what you are doing, usually by asking you. And yes, not having the correct request type happens more often than I would like. (If the action has anything to do with funds but not time, then it's funds only, even if other things are revised at the same time; if it's adjusting time but not funds, then it's time only; if both time and funds are adjusted, it's both; and if neither funds or time are adjusted, it's Other.) But probably the most common error I find occurs when we replace a parent project and have to renumber the subordinates. For every subordinate, even those incoming records not over \$25,000, there is a tab that has a block for the in-house (parent) project. The majority of people don't remember to go to that tab and change the in-house project. They will change the actual project number for those projects with 416/417, but if they don't remember the block for in-house, that means that they totally forget about all the incoming records not over \$25,000. Any time we replace a project I take a look in ARIS and make a list of all the affected subordinates, just so I can be sure you get them all done.

Dear Smurfy:

I know that when I do a fund transfer pulling money from another location I'm supposed to send you the e-mail/memo from that location that authorizes us to take their money. But recently you asked me for an AD-700 when I used someone else's funds to put into an SCA. What's the deal? Money-Grabber

Dear Money-Grabber:

Yes, I was surprised also when they asked me for it up at NPS. I always thought that the AD-700 in Martha's hands was sufficient. But technically

Area shouldn't approve this type of action unless we see for ourselves that it's authorized by seeing the AD-700. In this particular case it was good that we did, because the AD-700 failed to include a separate amount for the SBG fee, and we had to reduce the amount provided to the cooperater in order to cover the SBG fee. So make it a habit now that if you are using any funds from another location, provide me with some sort of authorizing documentation.

Dear Smurfy:

What is with this new block on both the incoming and outgoing records, "Relevance to Parent Project"? What kind of information is supposed to go in there?

Irrelevant Thinking

Dear Irrelevant:

This block is intended to provide the Area Office with more detail on how the proposed project fits into the scope of the parent project so we have a better basis for approving or disapproving your participation in a particular proposal for outside funds or new outgoing agreement. What we want to see is identification of which objective/subobjective from the project plan that the proposed project relates to, and how. Simply saying that the proposal has a direct correlation to the parent project because both are researching soybean proteins does not tell us how this work is going to enhance what the parent project has planned to accomplish. Better would be saying that it relates to subobjective 2.B, develop soybean with cancer-fighting proteins, in that it will test a new protein squeezer to see if more proteins can be squeezed out for testing. For projects already in place, I don't see a real need to go back and complete this block. Be sure that you do have it for all new records, though.

Summer Field Tour By B. Holt

On August 8, 2007, the ARS Conservation and Production Research Laboratory, Bushland, Texas, hosted its



2007 Summer Field Tour for the media, residents, growers, and educators in and around the Texas Panhandle. This year's emphasis was "Alternative Energy Sources from Agriculture", which addressed the growing concern of using agricultural crops and products for making new fuels. Approximately 160 individuals attended the field day and were presented information on such topics as Wind Power for Farms and Businesses, Feedlot Manure as BioFuel, Feeding Distillers Grains, Sorghum for Ethanol, Perennial Wheat for Ethanol, Grassland Cropping Systems for Cellulosic Ethanol Production, and other bioenergy initiatives. The field day was a cooperative effort between ARS, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Texas Cooperative Extension, and West Texas A&M University.

Friends & Neighbors Day at El Reno, OK by S. Daughtry



On April 28, 2007, the Grazinglands Research Laboratory

in El Reno, Oklahoma hosted their Friends and Neighbors Day 2007 for area residents, educators and cooperators. Friends and Neighbors Day included presentations and exhibits highlighting our research and our cooperator's research and equipment; a



petting zoo for the little ones; a drawing for an Oklahoma Beef Council basket; a free lunch; and historical reenactments. Approximately 142 individuals attended the field day and were presented with information on



such topics as pre-weaning performance of new breeds, forage nitrate, developing a system to produce grass-fed beef in the Southern Great Plains, biomass/bioenergy, annual legumes, real-time determination of forage quality, DNA fingerprinting, grazing management impacts on soil compaction, and the

national focus on assessment of conservation practices. The Friends and Neighbors Day was a cooperative effort between ARS, Oklahoma Farm Bureau, Oklahoma Grazing Lands Conservation Association, Oklahoma Water Resources Research Institute, Fort Reno Visitors Center, and Oklahoma RC&D. If you would like more information on these topics or others please contact Susan Daughtry at 405-262-5291 or e-mail at susan.daughtry@ars.usda.gov



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WEB PAGE

The SPA ACOP homepage is updated periodically and has information about the Council members, our charter, SPA directory, information about the shadowing program, information about the orientation packet, and many useful website links. Our website is: <http://www.arsnet.usda.gov/acop/index.htm>

MEMBERSHIP TO COUNCIL

Would you like to serve on the SPA Advisory Council? Each year as some members rotate off the Council, new members come onboard to continue the mission of the Council which is to serve the SPA Secretaries/Program Support employees, Location Research and Administrative Team and Area Director in an advisory capacity. The Council also strives to strengthen and improve the professional image of all SPA program support employees through orientation, training, and networking. Membership to the Council is for three-year period. In order for our Council to continue its mission, new members are needed each July. Anyone interested in joining the Advisory Council, please contact a current Council member. Your name will be submitted to the Area Director for consideration and appointment.

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Please contact Susan Daughtry at: susan.daughtry@ars.usda.gov if you would like to contribute an article that supports the SPA ACOP Mission.