



**Nevada Interagency
Civil Rights Advisory
Committee**

**USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service
and
USDA Farm Service Agency**

Civil Rights are for Everyone!

Minutes of April 18, 2012 Meeting

NICRAC Website: http://www.nv.nrcs.usda.gov/about/NV_CR.html

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I. Call to Order and Introduction

The meeting began at 10:00 a.m. Chair Jarrod Edmunds took roll call.

Present in Reno:

Dan Rybicki, FSA Advisor
Carmella Apodaca Irwin, HEPM
Levi Steptoe, BEPM
Cassie Storms, NRCS Advisor
Eric Eldredge, Secretary

Present by teleconference:

Jarrod Edmunds, Chair
Brien Park, Vice-Chair
Tracey Jean Wolfe, FWPM
Liz Warner, AAPIEPM
Ed Sturges, VEPM
Bill Conlin

Could not attend:

Bruce Petersen, DEEOO, State Conservationist
Clint Koble, DEEOO, Director, Farm Service Agency
Bill Elder, NRCS Advisor/DEPM
Mike Odegard, AIANEPM

II. Review of Minutes

The Minutes of January 18, 2012 were reviewed and approved, and posted the NICRAC web page.

III. Program Reports

1. **Special Emphasis Program reports:**

Asian American /Pacific Islander Program: Liz reported May is Asian American/Pacific Islander month. She is working on the Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO) to send out next month.

Black Program: Levi continued to send out many job announcements for engineering positions nationwide.

American Indian/Alaskan Native Program: Mike, no report.

Disability: Bill's report was read by the Secretary: The prospect of aggregation of certain Administrative functions within NRCS and quite possibly within the Department has created employment uncertainty among those who perform those functions. Bruce recognizes the need for additional assistance in the 'front office', and as with Mr. Hawkins, some administrative support duties currently provided by the SAO staff would likely revert to the 'new' position. The need to remain flexible during this period is important due to the uncertainty. As such, a contract employee will be brought in to serve for a short time. This arrangement offers the most staffing flexibility for the short term. Bill continues to forward vacancy announcements for NRCS to the UNR Disability Coordinator for consideration, most recently a few engineering positions out-of-state.

Federal Women's Program: Tracey Jean reported March was Women's History Month, and there was abundant information sent out from the National Program Coordinator, which she passed along to the people in Nevada.

Hispanic: Carmella has also been sending out vacancy announcements, including a position in Winnemucca. She requested that we put the meeting on the Outlook calendar.

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender: vacant.

Veterans: Ed reported he is looking into getting a Certificate of Appreciation for all NRCS employees in Nevada who are military veterans. He had hoped to get it done by the end of April but is still waiting on Washington D.C. Once it is approved he will take it to Bruce for a decision on whether it will be a plaque or certificate and the exact wording. Ed sent out an email to try to identify all veterans in Nevada NRCS; some who he thought might be have not responded. A poster contest is planned for the near future. Ed has been working with VRMF, a veteran's conservation corps with the VA.

Cassie mentioned that for student summer hires if we receive more than one application for a position, all applications need to go to HR in Davis for them to determine if any of the applicants are eligible for veterans' preference.

2. **Chair:** Jarrod reminded us that NICRAC members need to keep track of their hours and use the allocated 64T. Cassie said she would check with Jill to see if they are available in WebTCAS.
3. **Vice-Chair:** Brien, reported he sent out a form for review and asked that any suggestions on revising the form be returned to him soon. The purpose of the form is to collect data on Outreach efforts for Civil Rights reporting. Jarrod said Bill suggested it should be on the shared drive in each field office, with a paper copy in the 230 file, and also copy Liz W. so the State Office has current records whenever a report is requested.
4. **Secretary:** Eric will send the minutes of this meeting for review.
5. **NRCS Advisor:** The Secretary read Bill's report:
Student hires for summer positions are well underway. This is an opportunity to expose our agency at the local level to the emerging, diverse workforce of the future. I suspect that the hiring managers are considering diversity in their selections and STEP placements.

USDA's Office of Advocacy and Outreach (OAO) has launched a department-wide outreach pilot program, which is referred as 'Strike Force'. In the initial round of the program, Georgia, Mississippi, and Arkansas were identified to increase outreach to the historically underserved community. Nevada, Colorado, and New Mexico were identified in the second round. What is unique about this recent effort is the coordination at the departmental level, rather than the more traditional 'shotgun' approach used by individual agencies. The Service Center Agencies FSA, NRCS, and RD are the cornerstone, and are communicating with RMA, FNS, APHIS, etc. While this is not a Title VII function, the Committee needs to be aware of this shift in Title VI program delivery.... I speculate that with the convergence of certain administrative functions at the Departmental level, the Secretary's Cultural Transformation agenda will also be coordinated and implemented across agencies.

I have been selected to join the teaching cadre for the NEDC "Civil Rights Compliance in Program Delivery" course, and will be attending sessions in Indianapolis in May and St. Louis in June. While this is a component of Title VI, I hope to be able to coordinate delivery of the course materials to a largely-Nevada NRCS audience sometime within the next year to meet this training need at a reduced cost.

5. **FSA Advisor:** Dan had nothing to report except that Clint was in another meeting and could not attend this one. There was some discussion of budget uncertainty, administrative consolidation, and potential impact on program outreach effectiveness given the driving distances in Nevada.

IV. Old Business

1. **Business Plan:** Jarrod said Bill and Teri have updated their sections, and reminded us to update our activities in the Business Plan on SharePoint.

2. **Upcoming Nevada Bulletins:** Jarrod reported there will be a Civil Rights award bulletin in July, previous bulletins were sent out on diversity for RC&D and RD Boards, and Jarrod has a flyer available on how to do that. Liz asked if there has been any information on a National Civil Rights award. Jarrod and Liz will check into it.
3. **Revised NICRAC Flyer:** The NICRAC flyer, the SEPM flyer, and the NICRAC website will each need to be updated with name changes when the members change.
4. **Web Update:** Jarrod is working with Jonnie to go through every page and update the acronym, get the names current, and remove RD where it is still listed.

V. **New Business**

1. **NICRAC 2012 budget:** Jarrod reported Jill has put the budget into the system for us. There is no funding for travel so we will continue to convene by teleconference.
2. **FY12 business plan:** Was covered in previous discussion.
3. **NICRAC Web site update:** Was covered in previous discussion.
4. **Civil Rights Award:** As mentioned previously, a bulletin will be issued.
5. **LGBT SEPM Appointment:** The Chair will recommend to the DEEOO that Bill Conlin be appointed to serve in the LGBT SEPM position. Bill has volunteered, and said he would be honored, has a lot to learn, and would like to help with this group and this need.
6. **SEPM Brochure update:** Was covered in previous discussion.
7. **Upcoming Career Fairs/Recruitment events:** The Secretary read the following report from Bill Elder: I attended a national webinar regarding the use of the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP), hosted by Department of Defense and the Office of Personnel Management. This is a searchable database of college students who have attended recruitment meetings on campus, organized by either DoD or OPM. During the recruitment meetings, resumes are collected, and the candidates are interviewed, and then ranked on a scale of 1 to 5 for several elements, including communication skills and self-presentation. Only those in the top 40% get placed in the database, which includes both veteran and disability status, although it is not based only on those traits. Thus, if one were looking for an administrative assistant, and desired an accounting background or major, one could use this database to find a motivated student or recent graduate. One could also use this to locate a veteran and/or a person with a disability – targeted or not. The recruitment meetings take place on over 400 campuses around the world, though most are in the U.S. The University of Nevada-Reno and the University of Nevada-Las Vegas are two of the locations. Let me know if there are any questions.
8. **Outreach Efforts/Recommendations:** There was some discussion of the USDA Strike Force Initiative, targeting counties with high numbers of free school lunches. She sent a message to all NRCS NV employees about the USDA Strike Force Initiative.

Basically, StrikeForce is an effort by USDA to increase programs and services in low income areas. As a result, NRCS is joining with Rural Development, Farm Service Agency, and other

USDA agencies to conduct public meetings around the state. Our target audiences are Native Americans, historically underserved producers, rural communities (including schools, utility companies, senior centers, etc.), and anyone who is interested in USDA programs and services.

Public meetings are scheduled for May 3 in Round Mountain, May 14 In Fallon with the Farm Bureau's Women's Leadership Committee and guests; and June 5 in Ely. District Conservationists have been tasked with distributing Ely and Round Mountain meeting information in their service areas. Farm Bureau will publicize the Fallon meeting.

Liz has also been working with Jaime Chavez with the National Latino Farmer/Rancher Trade Assoc. to conduct a workshop on NRCS easement programs and CSP.

There was some discussion on northern Nye County being serviced by 5 field offices, and the importance of outreach to people in Ione Valley, Big Smokey Valley, Monitor Valley, Reese River Valley, Little Smokey Valley, and Railroad Valley. These areas represent many potential customers. The Tonopah office is no longer staffed, and some of those areas are now served from the Fallon office.

VI. Set Meeting Date and Location

Next Meeting: Wednesday, July 18, 2012, at 10:00 a.m.

An Agenda will be sent out a week in advance of the meeting.

Meeting Minutes and conference call number and pass code are on the Nevada NRCS SharePoint. Liz said she will put the meeting on the NICRAC member's calendars in Outlook.

Meeting Adjourned at 11:01 a.m.