

NASCOE 2026 National Convention

Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

Wisconsin Attendees:

Chris Gordon-Delegate

Stephanie Knudson-MWA Membership

Ashley Pomplum-MWA Publicity

Tammy Eibey-RASCOE/NAFEC

Erinn Meier

Jake Bourget

Heather Kirkpatrick-Delegate

Stephanie McCarthy-Wondercheck

Ben Bosshart-RASCOE

Keisha Verbeten

Sharon Baecker

Tom Oasen was mentioned at the Convention as a long time NASCOE supporter dealing with yet another round of cancer and treatments. Get well wishes were gathered for him.

Day 1- Wednesday, July 29

Some of us used Wednesday as a travel day. Others used it as a tour day. You could kayak thru the Soo Locks, visit Mackinac Island, or Tahquamenon Falls State Park in nearby Paradise, Michigan.

After a busy day, there was a delegate meeting and Dillard Financial Solutions opened a hospitality room for a meet and greet.



Day 2-Thursday, July 30

Thursday was a busy day, both mentally stimulating and exhausting at the same time. We were opened with a Traditional Drum ceremony by the Mission Hill singers of the Tribe of Chippewa Indians.



The drum is treated as a living entity and the beat representing the pulse of the Mother earth.

We were welcomed by NASCOE leadership, the convention hosts, and the SED from Michigan, Joel Johnson. **Did you know that Michigan is the Number 1 producer of potatoes for chips??** SED's from the Midwest were also present, INCLUDING Sandy Chalmers of Wisconsin.

We had several National staffers both in person and virtually discuss current issues with FSA and the Farm Bill. Bill Beam, FSA Administrator, Steve Peterson FSA Associate Administrator, and Trina Brake, DAFO, were all present in person.

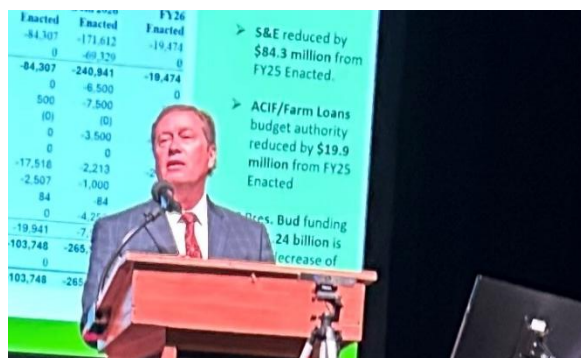
Bill Beam was humbled by our dedication to NASCOE. "Very few people take vacation time to sit in meetings". He went on to discuss modernization efforts within the agency and the USDA, referring to 'One Farmer, One File' and how that will allow sister agencies to share the same files. He also discussed GEAR, reporting that he believes all of FSA will be using it very soon. He made sure to tell us that these new modernization tools are NOT intended to replace people – it's simply a way to try to allow staff more time to do other things.

He went on to talk about the Working Family Tax Cut Act (this is a rebranded name for OBBBA). He said that a lot of what we would normally see in a farm bill was handled in that,

but he believes there's about a 50/50 chance of a farm bill being approved this year. Even if it gets approved, it will likely only handle the programs that didn't get handled in WFTCA.



Steve Peterson, Associate Administrator also spoke. He started in FSA as a CED, moved to STO, then to NO. He recommended taking advantage of every detail or opportunity you can because you never know what it may lead to. Peterson spoke that our job is to close the gap in income/expenses for farmer to keep farmers in business. We are not here to give out money; we are here to help farmers be successful.



Peterson spoke of the FY 2026 budget and the FY 27 budget process. Did you know?? Fiscal years are labeled by the date at the end of the yearly cycle, not the beginning.

Congress sets the budget, but the leadership team allocates it.

Salaries and Expenses for FY 2025-1.2 Billion, FY 26-1.1 Billion, and FY 2027 953 Million. Why the big cut?? OPM asked how many employees took advantage of DRP and VERA and cut that employee salary cost right off the top for those employees no longer on the payroll. That amount was 84.3 million. Another 19.9 million was due to program cuts. FY 2025

staffing=7188 CO, 2850 GS, FY 26 Staffing=6168 CO, 2384 GS. We need more people than we have.

The President's budget for FY 2027 shows a 206 million cut for the department. The house version was a bit more giving.

FY 2026 appropriations set aside an additional 15 million for staffing, but where are those people??? Attrition is outpacing hiring. Pay period 13 is the first time that hiring was higher than attrition. The FY 2027 budget proposed a reduction of 1721 FTE positions within the department. DC understands the need for people. Peterson said that we lost almost 23% of our headcount with DRP and DRP2. People we could not afford to lose either time.

But some good news - AFIDA is being moved to the Dept of Homeland Security from FSA, so no more annual mailings and tracking.

Brooke Appleton, Deputy Undersecretary under Richard Fordyce, appeared virtually. She thanked CO staff for rolling out **8 Ad Hoc programs in 17 months**, on top of the regular Farm Bill duties. She stressed modernization activities that will make our jobs easier, such as 1 Farmer, 1 File. The major reorganization plan is within the deputy areas. She again stressed that no CO jobs will be lost.

Trina Brake- DAFO, spoke in person. She welcomed the SEDs from Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana. Some key points:

- April 3, staffing ceilings were released. The Dept needs to come up with a hiring plan using both internal and external candidates.
- Temp. hours are guaranteed through 12/31/2026. All GS positions will be moved to FPAC HR instead of state HR teams.
- A new performance rating system using a 5 tier review system and a self-reporting tool for job assessment is being implemented. The negative is that there is a limit to the number of employees that can "Exceed Expectations".
- Time off awards, length of service certificates and coins are available on request.
- Priority will be needs in the field, as opposed to internal needs.
- A new software called "Thousand Eyes" will be deployed to eliminate the need for daily head count, and to track employee log ins. (Will not track what is being done on computers, just that they are being used when they are supposed to)
- Other tools are being implemented like bookings, in-service hours, COC changes.

We also heard from Jared Hegart-DAFP, Houston Bruck-DAFLP, and Ted VanSteyn-BAMSD (OPO).

Some FPAC initiatives that are being worked on are:

- One Farmer, One File
 - This is meant to modernize both our forms and our record keeping for producers. Instead of needing the same form for different agencies, they can sign once and everything is in a single streamlined record available to any agency.
- Electronic Acreage Reporting Interface
 - Phase 1-Develop and test electronic interface
 - Phase 2-Crop reporting online
 - Phase 3-link with Precision Ag tools
 - Emphasis that these tools are not meant to take away jobs, rather let the tools do the busy work.
- Login.Gov
 - Promote enrollment and authentication using a single source log in for all Federal government services
- Modernization
 - Develop a single customer file (1 farmer, 1 file) and do a step by step intake
 - **Did you know?? The platform for the FLP software is the same as Oregon Trail.**
 - Modernization is far more than IT. It included optimization, deregulation and specialization.
- Working Family Tax Cuts (OBBA)
 - Proud that the implementation of the programs developed in OBBA were rolled out within 1 year.
 - Most programs implemented in the Farm Bill were taken care of in this bit of legislation.
- Reorganization
 - This will have a minimal effect on CO-FSA. No jobs or service centers are being eliminated. Reorganization is being done in the Department Administrative areas to move people from DC to regional service centers.
 - OPO's goal is to be a tool to help mngt make decisions on keeping offices staffed. Workload analytics nudges that goal more toward the average needs, not minimum.
 - Adhoc programs are removed before adjusting OPO and looking at a 10 years average of disaster programs.
 - Relative Metric Value compares the hours needed per task that contributes to a program, and how much each hour or task is worth.

- Workload data is not the actual time spent processing applications. Time spent on AdHoc programs takes away from Farm Bill duties. Offices also do not get credit for workload from other counties (IE acreage reporting)

A Q&A session was offered with the National office panel and some ideas will be taken back to discuss. This session gives us employees that deal with the programs and producers, to share questions and concerns about their jobs and programs.

This was quite the busy day already.

Committee breakouts (two sessions):

Awards and Scholarship: Heidi Clinkingbeard talked about the drop in the number of scholarship applicants. Please get the word out to your states about this opportunity. You don't have to be a traditional student heading to College right out of High School. There are different scholarship opportunities for different type of higher education. Judges are needed every year to rate the applicants and decide on the winners. States need to make sure that they are honoring those members with Sick Leave awards and nominating them for Distinguished Service awards. Jake Bourget was a past winner. Local area Scholarship auctions provide funds for the Area and National scholarships with 75% of proceeds going to the host state and 25% to the NASCOE scholarship fund. The auction at the National Convention benefits the NASCOE scholarship fund (75%) and the host state fund (25%).

COAC: no WI attendees

Membership: several WI attendees – they've got some new ideas on how to increase/improve membership in WI. It was also announced that Dillards will be sponsoring a membership sign-up bonus program where the new member and the person that signed them up each get a \$20 gift card. They will then be put into a drawing for \$500 to be drawn at the next national convention!

Programs and Negotiations: several WI attendees - 3 National Office program managers were in attendance and held a Q&A. Jamie Garriott mentioned that a notice would be coming soon that will announce a short window to do some farm records changes. We'll be doing a 2026 ARCPLC signup, then have another window for getting recons done for the 2027 signup. The deadline for the 2027 signup will be the normal March 15 date. **She indicated that any counties that had weather conditions affected yields in 2026 may want to brush up on ARC-IC, since producers will be able to know if their yields were lower than normal before they sign up.** We also addressed some questions about pass-through entities.

Benefits and Emblems: Stephanie McCarthy-Wondercheck attended as the WI Chairperson, plus other WI attendees

Legislative: several WI attendees - The PAC is strong. Members of “the Herd” were recognized and others invited to “Join the Herd” . The PAC is what pays for Hunter to support the politicians that support NASCOE. It was noted that staffing is the main topic in DC, and the majority of what Hunter talks about when he meets with representatives and their staffers.



Publicity: no WI attendees, but Jon will be the new National Chairperson

To finish out the day, attendees and their guests were taken on a boat tour within the Soo Locks, after a food truck dinner.

Cruise ships on the Great Lakes



Ocean Freighters (known as Saltys)



Welcome to Canada



Chris trying to sneak in without a Passport



Day 3-Friday, July 31st

Friday started with presentations from **other organization leaders:**

- Mike- Emblems
- Keith Hiser-NADD
 - NADD also held their National Convention along with NASCOE.
- Jeremy Burner-NACS
- Nancy Reiff-NASE
- David Goodson-RASCOE
- Jim Zumbrink-NAFEC
- Brian Hayden-Dillard Financial Solutions

After our break, **Hunter Moorhead, NASCOE Legislative Consultant** spoke on what is happening on Capitol Hill and how his role supports NASCOE.

- Looks like there will not be a shutdown
- Funding bill approved until December
- OBBBA took care of most of Farm bill items except for CRP
- CRP will stay with FSA and not given to NRCS
- Money for training, and implementation of programs
- Whatever Rice and Cotton want is what happens- they have the lawyers to fight DC
- We have senators and congressman fighting for staff in offices
- SNAP is holding up the farm bill – has been recommended to delay *that* part of the farm bill for one year
- The House is likely to flip to Democrat
- The Senate is likely to stay Republican

Hunter added that if you ever want to meet with your local representatives, contact your NASCOE leaders for guidance and support (Katie Frandrup, MN and Amanda Ahrens, KS).



National Convention Hosts

- **2027 Convention will be July 24-29, 2027**, at the Francis Marion Hotel in Charleston, South Carolina
- 2028 Convention will be in Pennsylvania. They are working with 3 sites: Lancaster, Gettysburg, and Hershey.

Chris thinks Wisconsin needs to host a National Convention in the LaCrosse area with access to Minneapolis Airport. The current WASCOE officers plan to discuss the idea of hosting a National Convention in the future, but we will need to do quite a bit of fundraising

to be able to afford that. The last time Wisconsin hosted was in 2015 in Milwaukee. Our membership percentage was considerably higher back then.

Friday night gave us the Scholarship Auction, Game Show night and Karaoke. A number of attendees from WI came ready to play The Price Is Right. Our raffle basket "Something Special from Wisconsin" sold for \$225. The best item was not the Spotted Cow beer, it was the Bemis toilet seat. Thank you to Jake Bourget, WASCOE retiree, for your excellent auctioneer duties. Idea for future auctions - each office can provide one thing that is special to Wisconsin from their areas.



Final Day Saturday August 1, 2026

Memorial Presentation- This is a presentation to remember all of the NASCOE members that we lost this year. In the future, Wisconsin needs to submit items for this. We did not have any included.

Officer, Area and Committee reports were presented and accepted. Resolution of appreciation were presented to NAFEC, RASCOE, COC, and MIASCOE.

NASCOE officers were elected for FY 27

- President-Kayla Mattson
- Vice President-Rick Cstoris
- Secretary-Taylor Stucky
- Treasurer-Jessi Colgrove

Policy Revisions for Exec Committee were voted on and approved.

Saturday night was the awards banquet, and everyone got to dress up as fancy as they wanted.

The Heartland Hustle award was presented to Kaylee Hill of Ohio for stepping up and hosting a 3 area convention in Cincinnati.

Wisconsin was well represented:

- Ashley Pomplun won 2nd place and \$100 in the First Time Attendee Challenge
- Stephanie Knutson won a \$50 gift card for being the most engaged person in the MWA on the NASCOE App

All attendees were given a Yooperlite as a remembrance of their time in the UP. Some decided to hunt for their own. (Ifykyk, if you don't know, look it up!)



Midwest Area Updates

Wisconsin shares the same concerns as the rest of the states - Staffing and Shared Management. Janice emphasized that our voices are being heard. Kudos to Wisconsin for showing Janice the world's largest potato masher at our state convention. Janice is stepping down as MWA Exec and our new Exec is Stacia Slover, and our own Stephanie Knutson is the MWA Alt Exec.

- Awards and Scholarship :
 - 35 scholarship applications were received. 22 DSA nominations and 5 Sick Leave awards. Discussion about the 5 year membership requirement for application linkage.
 - ****WI needs to look at members for continuous membership awards eligibility**
- COAC:
 - Survey out to SED's regarding who does COC trainings
- Membership:
 - Illinois -80%, Iowa-75%, Indiana-68%, Michigan-64%, Minnesota-72%, Missouri-65%, Ohio-65%, Wisconsin -54%. Kudos to Wisconsin for the increase.
 - 14% decrease in staff, but NASCOE grew by 1%
 - App usage is up 12%
- Programs and Negotiations:
 - 215 Submissions; 11 referred on, 98 closed, 55 sent with response, 20 waiting for review= 75 from MWA
 - Please make submissions on the NASCOE website 'submit it' button
- Benefits and Emblems:
 - Remember Mike at Emblems when ordering state convention gear.
- Legislative:
 - Over 30 updates sent from NASCOE during shutdown
 - Staffing is #1 priority right now
 - 2027 appropriations also a focus
 - PAC is most important tool for NASCOE to support legislative concerns
- Publicity:
 - Get the word out. Newsletter, social media, local news releases

Future MWA Rallies:

April 22-24, 2027, in Springfield, Illinois

2028-Columbus, Missouri