

USDA-NRCS Minnesota Civil Rights Advisory Committee Minutes

January 16, 2008; 9:30am – 3:00pm

2nd Quarter, FY2008

Waite Park Field Office, Room 307

Attendees: Cory Drummond, CRAC Chair, Area 5 Rep
John Anderson, Area 1 Rep
Steve Lutes, Area 2 Rep
Debra Hermel, Area 3 Rep
Brenda Tonn, Area 6 Rep
Mary Weis for Christiane Roy, Area 7 Rep
Mike Walker, MLRA Office REP
Debe Walchuck, MN State Outreach Coordinator
Cutrina Moreland, State Office Rep
Gloria Larson, HR Manager
Via Teleconference:
Dave Wise

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Cory Drummond, Committee Chair at 9:45am.

Approval of November 7, 2007 meeting minutes:

Motion: Steve Lutes, Second: Mike Walker

Approval of area civil rights reports

Motion: Brenda Tonn, Second: Steve Lutes

Civil Rights Advisory Committee Business Plan

Approval of 2008 CRAC Business Plan

Motion: Cutrina Moreland, Second: Steve Lutes

Civil Rights Committee Training Report from INCA Conference

Cory gave a review of the Indian Nations Conservation Alliance conference he attended in December. At the conference, a summary of civil rights efforts by the other states was discussed. Ideas suggested based on successes from other states included:

- Using a standard template for civil rights and outreach reports (SD)
- Establishing a voluntary veterans network to post events throughout the state pertaining to veterans (MT)
- Setting up a book and movie review pertaining to civil rights (IA)

Roles and Responsibilities of the CRAC

Committee chair discussed the role of the committee as advisory. We are to advise NRCS employees on proper civil rights procedures and follow recommendations of state conservationist.

Gloria Larson, HR Manager, updated the committee on civil rights progress in HR. HR staff presented USDA opportunities to high school students, some of whom didn't have a

clear understanding of agriculture. Final guidelines are still being established to develop clearer 457 series criteria.

Debe Walchuck, State Outreach Coordinator, updated the committee on work being done with outreach in the state. She commented on the national immigrant farming initiative conference. It's a way for immigrant farmers to gain more knowledge on soil selection, marketing, and managing their land Deb told the CRAC about the "Third Minority and Immigrant Farming Conference". The date of the conference is March 7&8. It is hosted this year by the Minnesota Food Association AND the National Immigrant Farming Initiative (the first year NIFI is a sponsor). MN is one of the sponsors and will be presenting soil productivity information; how soil productivity characteristics should be considered for specific crops when selecting land to operate, and how soil productivity characteristics can be considered in determining the value of land being considered for lease or purchase.

She also asked for input from southern MN counties on contacts and ways to reach the Hispanic communities in that area. She also asked to be made aware of Hispanics, or groups, and organizations that can serve as avenues for conducting outreach in S. MN that employees know of and which need to be contacted by me.

Management concerns for CRAC recommendations

Field offices should make sure their areas are ready for state civil rights review. All buildings should be handicap accessible with the sticker displayed when up to code.

Civil Rights Issues and Recommendations for Management

Recruitment ideas and recommendations are encouraged. Suggest a template for a guide to keep track of civil rights and outreach activities.

Suggestion was made to recommend a procedure for FO to determine an accounting of the clientele they work with based on employee knowledge and FSA ledgers. This info can then be compared to parity reports to prove or disprove that the parity reports are accurate.

Civil Rights Recommendations for National CR committee

Recommendations for national committee:

- Parity report explanation and clarification
- Clarification on how to collect and report handicap data
- Cory asked for additional suggestions and recommendations to present to national committee. Set a date of January 25, 2008 to send in additional recommendations via call or email so that the Minnesota recommendations can be considered by the National Civil Rights Committee.

Review Action Register and assignments

Committee reviewed performance element handout.

Motion to adjourn: Cutrina Moreland, Second: John Anderson