

Paul Johnson to Leave National FAC Chair/NRCS in November

Editor's Note: The following are remarks by Secretary Glickman on the resignation of Paul Johnson.

It was with regret that today I accepted the resignation of Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief Paul

Johnson, effective November 8, 1997. Paul's desire to return to private life on his Iowa farm is understandable and yet a tremendous loss of leadership here at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"Since his appointment almost

continued on page 4

National FAC Goes Back to School

Kathy Huey
Change Management Team Leader

Members of the National Food and Agriculture Council (FAC) recently participated in the *USDA Service Center Skills: Working Together for Customers* training briefing.

Led by National FAC chair, Paul Johnson, members of the FAC discussed issues facing service center employees and customers. The participants asked for an update on barriers facing employees and customers that have been revealed by the training as well as on the progress of training delivery. Other briefing highlights included key program models, concepts, and

continued on page 2

Final Phase of Service Center Facilitators/ Coordinators Training Completed

Kathy Huey
Change Management Team Leader

The final phase of training to prepare facilitators and coordinators for rolling out the *USDA Service Center Skills: Working Together for Customers* training is complete. Participants attended 6 1/2 days of intensive facilitator/coordinator instruction in Louisville, KY, and Tampa, FL, to master the facilitation skills necessary to present

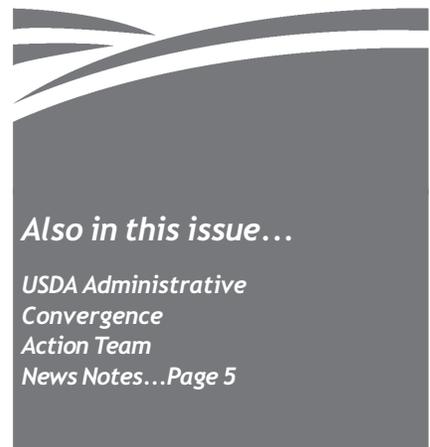
continued on page 2

We Asked Service Center Customers "How Are We Serving You?"...Here's What They Said

Len Covello
Quality Customer Service Team Leader

Editor's Note: In the August Service Center News, we started covering highlights of the 1997 National Customer Service Survey preliminary results. In this, the last in the series of 1997 National Customer Service Survey preliminary results, we will cover customer complaints and suggestions for doing business differently.

continued on page 5



Back To School...

continued from page 1

skills, as well as the evaluations from the facilitator and coordinator conferences.

The National FAC will offer the training to State, regional, and headquarters administrative/information technology personnel and program staff with Rural Development, NRCS, and FSA. This ambitious training agenda is based on the National FAC's desire to have as many employees as possible possess the tools to help them deal with change and a consistent set of skills to deal with customers.

Additional benefits of the training are the opportunity to share the vision of the service centers, the issues its employees face in serving customers, and the partnership that exists between headquarters and the field in delivering programs.

Members of the Administrative Convergence Action Team and the

three service center agency deputies for management also recently participated in a workshop on the *USDA Service Center Skills: Working Together for Customers* training. Discussion focused on how employees are affected by change, the role management plays during a major change, and the importance of communication. All practiced, as well as discussed, the key skills of providing extraordinary customer service. The Change Management/Training team will work closely with this group to ensure that during the administrative convergence process, issues will be captured and addressed in future training.



National FAC Chair, (from left) Paul Johnson, and partner agency leadership, Keith Kelly, FSA, and Jan Shadburn, Rural Housing Service, listen during the USDA Service Center Skills: Working Together for Customers training briefing.

Service Center Training...

continued from page 1

this training to their colleagues in the service centers. As with previous facilitator and coordinator sessions, student evaluations described the training as not only successful, but challenging as well. Below is a list of the coordinators and facilitators who participated in these conferences. They will be training service center staffs throughout the Nation in the coming months.

Alaska

Coordinator: Lois Jackson, NRCS, Anchorage

Facilitator: Nicole Suomi, FSA, Fairbanks

Arizona

Coordinator: Michael Forrest, NRCS, Parker

Facilitators: Gwen Halls, Rural Development, Phoenix; Clare Strom, FSA, Yuma

California

Facilitators: Donn Bryant, Rural Development, Woodland; Marilyn Wells, FSA, Lancaster

Colorado

Coordinator: Jeff Burwell, NRCS, Grand Junction

Facilitators: Kim Brannen, NRCS, Greeley; Jim Currier, NRCS, Grand Junction; Yvonne Martinez, Rural Development, Alamosa; Ray Thieman, FSA, Hugo; Tom Wingfield, FSA, Lakewood

Florida

Facilitator: Jeffrey Barber, FSA, Crestview

Georgia

Facilitators: Jane Ferguson, Rural Development, Athens; Martha Kent, FSA, Swainsboro

continued on page 3

Service Center Training...

continued from page 2

Indiana

Facilitators: Jay Gould, FSA, Decatur; Jerry Hay, Rural Development, Versailles; Richard Noble, NRCS, Indianapolis

Iowa

Coordinator: Patricia Spencer, FSA, Des Moines

Facilitators: Barbara Brewster, Rural Development, Boone; C.

Cherie Byrum, Rural Development, Fairfield; Jerry Collins, NRCS, Mt. Ayr; Jeff Davis, FSA, LeMars; Alan Donaldson, FSA, Orange City; Cathie Graves, Iowa Dept. of Ag and Land Stewardship, Des Moines; Larry Jones, NRCS, Newton; Nick Morrell, NRCS, Leon;

Devalyn Ohrt, FSA, Fairfield; Kimberly Rochau, Rural Development, Tipton; Bobbi Schaaf, FSA, Sidney; Sue Snyder, NRCS, Marshalltown; Julie Vulk, FSA, Decorah; Jennifer Welch, NRCS, Iowa Falls; Kris Yeske, Kossuth County Extension Services, Algona

Michigan

Facilitators: Carol Hart, FSA, Cadillac; Jennifer Mitchell, NRCS, Hillsdale; Susan Tangora, Ingham Conservation District, Mason

Minnesota

Facilitator: Larry Gustafson, Rural Development, South Buffalo

Mississippi

Coordinator: Maurice Manning,

NRCS, Pearl

Facilitators: Kathy Boone, FSA, Ashland; James Clark, Rural Development, Collins; David Groner, FSA, Charleston; Pamela Moore-Wilcher, Rural Development, Carthage; Charlotte Philips, NRCS, Tupelo; William Russell, NRCS, Brandon

Missouri

Facilitator: James Pickar, NRCS, Van Buren

Montana

Coordinator: Janelle Gustafson, NRCS, Bozeman

Facilitators: Nancy Heins, FSA, Terry; Kevin Taylor, FSA, Stanford; Lori Valadez, NRCS, Bozeman; Steve Vanfossen, NRCS, Miles City; John Walkup, Rural Development, Bozeman

Nevada

Coordinator: Frances Fleming, Rural Development, Carson City
Facilitator: Richard Orr, NRCS, Caliente

New Hampshire

Coordinator: Carolyn Chute-Festervan, Rural Development, Epping

Facilitator: Arlene Anderson, FSA, Epping

New York

Coordinator: Richard Lewis, NRCS, Albany
Facilitators: David Holck, FSA, Greenwich; Jay Matteson, Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District, Watertown, Phillip Metzger,

NRCS, Norwich; Dean Pendergast, FSA, Leicester; Paul Remillard, Rural Development, Watertown; Paul Webb, NRCS, Lafayette

North Carolina

Facilitator: David Hodges, NRCS, Kill Devil Hills

Ohio

Facilitators: Carol Dunlap, FSA, Chillicothe; Barb Fogel, NRCS, Medina; Valarie Grahl, FSA, Sandusky; Monte Stratton, Rural Development, Springfield

Oklahoma

Coordinator: Keith Vaughan, NRCS, Stillwater

Facilitators: Marty Alberts, FSA, Stillwater; Wanelda Corbin, NRCS, Clinton; Bill James, FSA, Guthrie; Joyce Maehs, Rural Development, Stillwater; Raylene Quisenberry, FSA, Watonga; LeRoy Tull, NRCS, Stillwater; Jose Vielma, NRCS, Stillwater

Pennsylvania

Coordinator: Judy Noyalas, FSA, Allentown

Facilitators: Mike Angerson, Rural Development, Towanda; Nancy Brewer, Rural Development, Montoursville; Angela Callie, Rural Development, Allentown; Nancy DiFiore, NRCS, Montoursville; Robert Hotchkiss, NRCS, Montrose; Michael Kerr, FSA, Clearfield; Michael McFadden, FSA, Waterford; Thomas Sierzega, NRCS, Meadow Lands; Theresa Tracey, FSA, Colledgeville

South Carolina

Facilitators: Steve Edwards, NRCS, Walterboro; Robert Eppinette, NRCS, Walterboro

South Dakota

Coordinator: Al Dangel, FSA, Huron

Facilitators: Thomas Clemens,

Is there something that you feel *your* service center does particularly well?

Drop us a line and let us know about it. Send your story to: Fred Jacobs, USDA, National FAC, *Service Center News*, Stop 0199, Room 4422-S, Washington, DC 20250-0199, or e-mail: fjacobs@wdc.fsa.usda.gov. Or, give Fred a call with your story idea at 202-690-0177.

continued on next page

Service Center Training...

continued from page 3

NRCS, Plankinton; Lana Cyre, FSA, Watertown; John Deppe, NRCS, Mitchell; Judith Harder, Rural Development, Rapid City; Mary Held, FSA, Brookings; Nancy Schroeder, FSA, Mitchell; Brad Wilkens, FSA, Madison

Tennessee

Coordinator: Amy Gullett, NRCS, Murfreesboro

Facilitators: Larry Blick, NRCS, Nashville; Karen Hammitt, FSA, Jonesboro; Virginia Johnson, FSA, Paris; Carolyn King, FSA, Nashville; Gene Lynch, Rural Development, Nashville; Chris Moyers, NRCS, Jackson; Charles Roberts, NRCS, Johnson City; Ann Turner, Rural Development, Nashville

Texas

Coordinator: Charles Conklin, NRCS, Temple

Facilitators: Vaden Aldridge, NRCS, Odessa; Linda Baxter, Rural Development, New Boston; Kelley Boone, FSA, Vernon; Doris Campbell, FSA, Angleton; John Crowell, NRCS, Pampa; Mark Donet, NRCS, Alpine; Fernando Garza, NRCS, San Antonio; Ross James, FSA, Tulia; Danny Lamberth, NRCS, Haskell; Patsy Logan, FSA, Sherman; Kimberly McCarty, NRCS, Huntsville; Fritz Nelius, FSA, Bellville; Chris Perez, FSA, San Benito; Shelton Rhodes, Rural Development, Temple; Kirthell Roberts, NRCS, Linden; Rusty Rose, FSA, Stephenville; Arla Strasser, NRCS, Taylor; Eddie Womack,

FSA, Tulia

Vermont

Coordinator: Phyllis Torrey,

FSA, Rutland

Facilitator: Robert Thompson, NRCS, Winooski

Virginia

Coordinator: Melvin Womack, NRCS, Richmond

Facilitators: Martin Bomar, FSA, Charlotte Court House; Anne Herring, Rural Development, Lexington; Travis Jackson, Rural Development, Wytheville; Virginia Kopp, NRCS, Richmond; Peggy Lee, FSA, Lawrenceville

Washington, DC

Facilitator: Kathy Huey, NRCS

Wisconsin

Coordinator: Neil Sheldon, NRCS, Middleton

Facilitators: Susan Blachowiak, FSA, Green Lake; Greg Blum, FSA, Waupaca; Gregory Hines, NRCS, Green Bay; Kathy Knapp, Vernon County Land Conservation Dept., Vinoqua; Thomas Oasen, FSA, Elkhorn; Patricia Renzelmann, Rural Development, Ashland

Wyoming

Facilitator: Debra Reed, FSA, Casper

Spread The Word: <http://www.usda.gov/servicecenter/>

Now that you can read *Service Center News* -- hot off the press -- via the new Service Center web site, why not share the information with your customers? Just click on the "Information" button and you can choose to download the *Service Center News* and other information as a .PDF file or as text. Then, just choose the articles you want to share with customers and "paste" them into your newsletter.



Paul Johnson...

continued from page 1

four years ago, Paul has overseen the operations of the Nation's preeminent agency concerned with conservation on private lands. He guided NRCS through a major reorganization and focused the agency on activities that met traditional conservation and stewardship goals built on partnerships, local and regional priorities, and environmental needs.

"Paul is a passionate spokesperson and visionary for conservation on private lands. He has encouraged NRCS to strengthen its science-based, voluntary, and cooperative technical assistance programs on private lands. He has strengthened the role of conservation partnerships across the Nation and around the world.



"History will judge Paul as a great innovator and an outstanding conservationist. His legacy will remain at USDA for many, many years. I wish Paul all the best."

Customer Survey...

continued from page 1

The results of the 1997 Service Center customer survey are in and they show an overall positive view of service delivery and several indicators of what matters to customers. In early February of this year, we sent out surveys to Service Center customers from randomly selected samples of producers and Single Family Housing (SFH) borrowers. This included separate, randomly selected samples of minority program recipients.

Customer Complaints

Most of Our Customers Have Not Complained -- The vast majority of our customers (more than 80 percent) choose not to complain.

If Complaints Are Raised They Tend To Stay Local -- When customers complain, most keep it local. When they had a complaint, about 65 percent of producers and non-minority housing borrowers tell friends about it and about 50 percent raise their complaints to Service Center employees. But minority housing borrowers are less likely to do either. About 45 percent tell friends and neighbors and 37 percent tell Service Center employees.

Suggestions for Doing Business Differently

Many Customers Like It As Is When asked to identify alternative ways of doing business with the service center, nearly 60 percent of producers and about 40 percent of borrowers say it is "Okay as is, no change wanted."

Some Suggestions -- Customer suggestions for alternative ways of doing business include: a toll-free

number for the offices, evening and weekend office hours, and doing more business by mail.

"High Tech" and Impersonal Changes Aren't Popular -- Our customers tend not to like changes viewed as "high tech" and/or impersonal; e.g., accessing the Service Center by home computer, Internet, or FAX. Generally six percent or less of our customers favor these as alternatives to the current way of doing business.

USDA Administrative Convergence Action Team (ACAT) News Notes

Here's a reminder from the ACAT -- You can fax your questions and comments about administrative convergence to 202-690-1221. There is also a weekly message available, toll free, on 800-384-8090. For hearing impaired employees, this weekly message is available on TDD on 202-720-7882.

ACAT Q&A

Q. What is administrative convergence?

A. It is a plan authorized by Secretary Dan Glickman to continue the process of modernizing and streamlining the delivery of Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs and services. Under this plan, the administrative and information technology support functions of the Department's county-based agencies the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service

Agency, and Rural Development will be consolidated. Risk Management and the Foreign Agricultural Service will also be served by this new organization. The Secretary has stated that there will be no consolidation of the agencies' program delivery services.

Q. What are the goals of the convergence?

A. The goals are to:

Improve customer service;

Maintain the number and quality of services and programs offered by the agencies;

Produce a modern information technology infrastructure that the agencies can share;

Reduce the cost of administrative overhead; and

Free up more funds for program delivery.

Q. How will implementing this plan affect the job security of USDA employees?

A. The Secretary has emphasized that this convergence is to be "employee friendly." If possible, reductions-in-force will be avoided. Since this process is scheduled to take place over the next five years, much of the downsizing could take place through normal attrition. Buyouts and earlyouts will also be used.

Q. How will employees be kept up to date about the progress of the convergence?

A. The convergence will be open and inclusive. Every week, there will be updates on the consolidation on a toll-free hotline and on E-mail. In employee newsletters, messages from the Secretary will be published. When an important date or event in the convergence is coming up, the agencies will make sure that their staffs know about it.

continued on page 6

ACAT News Notes...

continued from page 5

Information about the progress of convergence will be posted on the agencies' Internet homepages. As the process continues, more questions and concerns are certain to arise. The agencies will do their best to anticipate them and answer them as they come along.

Q: What changes in information technology will be seen at the field office level?

A: Field office personnel will see changes in information technology that will improve their ability to serve their customers. There will be a new telecommunications infrastructure that will include an integrated E-mail system and access to the Internet. Satellite downlinking will be available. There also will be support for distance learning and visual communications.

Eventually, computer systems will share information from the three agencies. Databases will be shared and customers will be able to access information about the agencies through the Internet.

Q: How will customers benefit from the convergence?

A: Through this modernization and streamlining, USDA will be able to deliver its programs and services more efficiently and economically. Even during the convergence, USDA's customers will experience no reductions in service.

Through the new information technology, the agencies will be able to gather information directly from their customers. With this information, they will learn more about what types of services their customers need and prefer. The technology will enable USDA to provide more integrated program delivery and better products in less time.

The agencies' partners, those people and groups apart from government who share the agencies' interests and concerns, will also benefit from the convergence. It will strengthen USDA's bonds with them and create more opportunities for them and the Department to achieve common goals.

Q: What are the five options, or sketches, of the administrative structure for the convergence of administrative management of the agencies?

A: Three of the options consist of administrative management structures now used by Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, and Rural Development. If one of these structures is chosen, it does not imply that there would be a lead

agency; the Secretary has stated that there will be no lead agency and one agency would not be favored. The remaining two options are newly designed organizational structures.

The ACAT will recommend a specific option or options to the Secretary on November 15, 1997. The five options are only models for discussion by the ACAT's Teams 2 through 7 as they prepare their recommendations for the Secretary.



Service Center News is a publication of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Food and Agriculture Council (FAC). Its purpose is to report the progress of USDA Service Centers implementation to employees.

National FAC Executive Officer: Gregory L. Carnill

Editor: Fred Jacobs

Mail or fax questions or comments to:

Fred Jacobs

USDA, National FAC

Service Center News

Stop 0199, Room 4422-S

Washington, DC 20250-0199

phone: (202) 690-0177

fax: (202) 720-6101

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250, or call (800) 245-6340 (voice) or (202) 720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.