

NCERA-3 Minutes DRAFT 6-25-12

June 3 and 4, 2012

Hardin Hall - School of Natural Resources University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska

Meeting called to order – Chair – Lee Buras at 1 pm. Mark Kuzila introduced Dr. Dave Lewis, Emeritus Agronomy Professor, University of Nebraska- Lincoln. Dave was a member of the NCR – 3 Committee for many years. He was in Lincoln visiting and joined the meeting for a few hours.

Because Brian Slater was unable to attend the role of secretary and secretary elect this year were switched. Mark Kuzila will serve as secretary and Brian Slater will serve as secretary elect.

The minutes from the 2011 meeting state that the 2012 meeting will be held in Omaha. Due to concerns about funding for travel, the 2012 meeting is being held in Lincoln to avoid the risk of losing money due to contractual arrangements for hotels and meeting rooms.

Those attending – Mickey Ransom (KS), Lee Burras (IA), Larry West (USDA-NRCS representative), Maxine Levin (USDA-NRCS NCSS liaison), Ken Olson (IL and Administrative Advisor), Phillip Owens (IN), and Doug Malo (SD), Mark Kuzila (NE)

Minutes of the 2011 meeting were reviewed. It was moved by Mickey ransom and seconded second by Phillip Owens that the minutes be approved. The motion passed. State reports will be attached to the minutes of this meeting.

The committee meeting minutes are due within 60 days of this meeting (August 3, 2012). NCERA-3 is an integrated committee with research, extension/outreach/ and teaching activities. NCERA-3 can add people to our committee from ARS and USDA. Universities can be added to our committee when proper forms are completed (e.g., Appendix E is completed for the faculty member desiring to be on our committee).

Agency Reports

Administrative Advisor's Report (Ken Olson) –

Our officers for 2012-2113 are:

Chair – Lee Buras

Vice-Chair – Doug Malo

Secretary – Mark Kuzila

Secretary-elect – Brian Slater

Review of past federal budgets relating to Hatch and AFRI funds was discussed. There will be no new money for FY 2013. It is anticipated that there will be a cut of 5 – 10 % in the FY 2014 budget. Ken

attended a national water conference where Dr. James Dobrowolski (jdobrowolski@nifa.usda.gov) spoke about the potential of a grant activity pertaining to soil, water, and air. The grant would either be a foundation or challenge grant. It is anticipated that the RFP for grant would be released for FY 2014. It is noteworthy that a consulting firm developed the NIFA plans for 2014. Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy was recently named the new Director of NIFA.

National Soils Lab/Research (Larry West) – The National Soil Survey Laboratory will be renamed the Charles E. Kellogg Soil Survey Laboratory. A ceremony will be held on June 4, 2012. USDA Deputy Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, Ann Mills will attend the dedication ceremony.

The Soil Survey Division (SSD) has been restructured. There will be a 15% cut in budget for SSD for 2012. The budget for the 2103 FY is not yet known. The number of MO offices has been reduced from 18 to 12 and the number of soil survey offices has been reduced from 140 to 124. With the restructuring there will be line-of-sight, funding and supervision, from the SSD director to the MLRA Soil Scientists. The State Soil Scientists will no longer be MO leaders. They will be responsible for state programs and activities, deliver soil information and cooperators communication.

The SSD has the following global objectives:

- ▶ Develop models of genesis and landscape distribution of soils, diagnostic horizons, and soil features as related to parent material, climate, and geomorphology
- ▶ Describe properties of soils including spatial variability of static and dynamic properties
- ▶ Develop relationships among static properties, dynamic properties, and ecosystem characteristics
- ▶ Evaluate simulation models and pedotransfer functions for prediction of soil properties and behavior
- ▶ Establish sites with extensive data for hands-on training

A major lab project currently underway is the Rapid Soil Carbon Assessment of the US for Conservation Planning (RACA). Data has been collected for 150,000 samples. Three hundred soil scientists and 22 universities have been involved in the RACA project. The challenges that remain are in data analysis, spatial extrapolation of the point data and the application to the national cooperative soil survey databases and conservation planning.

National Liaison to NCSS (Maxine Levin) – The reorganization has raised some issues with cooperators. Mickey ransom mentioned that there will be no MO office within the Great Plains. Maxine hopes that the new positions will be rethought. Many things are in flux because the SSD Director position is open. NSSC and NSSL remains to be very supportive. State Soil Scientists remain liaisons with cooperators

Town Hall meeting about soil survey is necessary to redefine a mission because people think the soil survey is at a low point. The focus has been getting areas mapped and into the web soil survey. There was no plan to continue. Our goal has not been reached. The map is the first step. Our maps do not match the intensity of current agricultural practices. The scale of our maps is not detailed enough 21st century agriculture.

Maxine asked the question. Where will the students get jobs in the NRCS soil science area?

The national soil survey conference will be held in the third week of June 2013 in Annapolis MD.

NCERA-3 Committee Reports

1. Soil Taxonomy (Miles, Malo, and Crum) Ed Nater will replace Doug Malo on the Soil taxonomy committee. Phillip Owens reported on the effort on establishing a Universal Soil Classification System for the world. The consensus of the group is to try and develop a system based on a hierarchical system. A sixteen member group is working on joining the various soil taxonomic systems into one. A meeting of the International Union of Soil Science will be held in Lincoln, NE next week. The subject of the meeting is a universal soil classification system.

2. High intensity Soil Surveys – (Owens and Olson) – Local projects but no regional activity. The committee will continue to incorporate more digital soil map information.

3. Education, Extension, and Recruitment Committee – (Slater, Crum, Kuzila, Crouch, and Malo) – Undergraduate enrollments in departments of Agronomy and Soils at KSU, ISU, and SDSU are increasing. The key will be to get graduates to consider soil scientist positions in the NRCS. Salaries for graduates are competitive. Many NCR universities are moving to reduce the number of credit hours needed to graduate from 128 to 120. The NCERA-3 group has requested that the NRCS provide information on how our students are doing as NRCS employees and comments on the coursework that the students have taken. The NCERA-3 group has also suggested that the NRCS increase the number of hours of soil science courses necessary to qualify as a soil conservationist. A national soils field camp, a six week course, is being planned by the SSSA. The camp will likely be held at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point.

4. Advisory Panel to Director of Soil Survey – (Ransom) – This committee was not highly involved in the reorganization of the Soil Survey Division. Mickey stated that when given the opportunity to provide input the Advisory Panel to Director of Soil Survey failed in the response. At the recent meeting of the south region soil survey conference the soil survey cooperators group proposed that a national level soil survey cooperators committee be established. The NCERA-3 agrees with that proposal and will discuss it further under new business. provided by the committee.

5. National Data Base – (Olson) – The project continues and more states are providing their lab data to the data base. From the NCR, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri and Kansas have entered their data to the data base.

Old Business – Doug Malo led a discussion about the proposed Benchmark soils bulletins. Doug showed the group a draft copy of the bulletin for the Houdek Soil from South Dakota. Doug has done some extensive work on the project and he will provide his work as a template for others in the region.

New Business – The group discussed the national level soil survey cooperators committee proposed by the south region cooperators group. Since the soil survey is at a crucial time in its history, the NCERA3 group thinks it is important for such a committee to be formed. Phillip Owens moved and Doug Malo seconded a motion to support the proposal for a national level soil survey cooperators committee with the addition that the NCERA3 will be the group that determines the representatives from the north central region. The motion passed. The group also agreed that if the committee is formed, Mickey Ransom and Phillip Owens will serve as the first representatives of the north central region.

The NCERA3 group supports the NRCS plan to send a letter communicating the importance of university cooperation in soil survey to our college-leaders. Any approach that makes it easier for university leaders to support pedology research is highly valuable as universities continue to downsize and re-prioritize research. We ask NRCS to recognize that the appropriate college leader is sometimes the Dean, sometimes the Director of the Experiment Station and sometimes has a different title. We will make sure the National Soil Survey Center has the appropriate contacts.

The NCERA3 group would like to emphasize the importance of discretionary funding from NSSC – even if it is a small amount – being available to university cooperators. In many cases that funding is critical to insure we can be active participants in cooperative soil survey activities – both in state and meetings such as these. It also shows our administrators that there is value in our being a cooperator

The NCERA3 group will submit a renewal for NCERA-3 in 2014. One of our priorities will be productivity indices tied to soil survey since this is a topic of growing importance throughout north central states

Next meeting of the committee will be held the third week in June 2013 during the national conference in Annapolis MD

Lee Buras will send out a reminder to those who have not filed a state report.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Kuzila

Secretary