

ADVOCACY AND MARKETING COMMITTEE ESCOP

Conference Call Notes January 8, 2002

Participants: J. Fischer (Chair), C. Kaltenbach (Past Chair), J. Nye, D. Foster, T. Nipp, B. Ravlin, J. Arkin, K. Martin, and D. MacKenzie.

The conference call was called to order at 1:04 pm (EST). No agenda was used. Instead the 5 topics previously outlined in an electronic message from D. MacKenzie were to be discussed and consensus developed for the next steps.

D. MacKenzie gave a brief background on the 5 options, their origins, and related considerations.

BACKGROUND.... Last Summer A & M was requested by ESCOP's Chair to prepare recommendation(s) for using what may be funds left over after the transition to the Ag Assembly. The money was intended originally for supporting our collective lobbying effort (e.g., AESOP Enterprises, Ltd.).

Somehow it turns out that NASULGC will have \$400,000 next year, and ECOP wants to split it down the middle; \$200,000 for ESCOP and \$200,000 for ECOP.

Attention turned to item 1. *Pay for professional opinion surveys of topics important to agricultural science in districts/state of important members of Congress.* (proposed 11/01 by T. Nipp). T. Nipp elaborated on the idea, its origins with NIH and others and the opportunity to leverage survey work across congressional districts and regions. The process was distinguished as political polling, not the type of opinion sampling we are familiar with. Costs are lower, and familiarity with the elected officials is important. We might use the process to see where we stand in the eyes of voters, and where scientific research might be applied to solve the concerns of an elected leader's constituents. We might be able to focus on a half dozen key states, with the available resources.

On Committee member noted the process could be used to show how we are willing to respond to critical issues. Another asked how we would actually do the process. T. Nipp responded with a proposal that a no cost proposal could be requested from knowledgeable pollsters. The timing might be such that a proposal could be available in time for the March ESCOP meeting.

Another point made was the opportunity to use the results to enhance CARET documentation with survey results, speaking in a language that policy makers understand.

Should key members be targeted? Might we consider regions that extend beyond state boundaries?

It was decided that T. Nipp working with D. MacKenzie should request that a proposal be prepared by professional pollsters in time to share with ESCOP in March. This activity would not commit anyone to any further action, but would advance an idea that had considerable interest by many of the Committee members.

Discussion turned to item 2. *Hire a communications specialist to work on one or more of the following* (first proposed by Gale Buchanan) a. Glossy publications on SAES accomplishments, maybe extracted from LGU publications; b. Quality publications for CARET reps (re budget advocacy; science roadmap summaries); c. Support for marketing activities, such as Impact Statement developments for the popular press; and, d. Assist CSREES in performance reporting under GPRA (from out Plans of Work).

This item was acknowledged as a good idea, but very difficult to accomplish. We have recognized this need for a long time, but have not been able to sort out responsibilities. It was stated that maybe this should be left to the NASULGC/BAA reorganization process. More information will become available at a Policy Board meeting to be held soon. After that meeting we will be in a better position to evaluate the need for this activity being addressed by ESCOP.

Attention turned to item 5. *Create an interlinked national ag research accomplishments information system, building on existing systems such as Oregon Invests!* (no identified individual at this time). The consensus was that this should rightfully be done under the authority of REEIS. However, concerns were expressed that this does not seem be the emerging direction of REEIS' development. Others noted that REEIS was a creature of LGU proposals for the "1995" (1996) Farm Bill. But subsequent indicators have pointed to other than the original intentions. Perhaps a conversation with CSREES Administrator Hefferan with representatives from ECOP and ESCOP might better address this need, rather than attempting to fill the void with these limited resources.

Background for Dave Foster:

The 1993 GPRA and the 1998 Farm Bill were heavy on accountability. Responses by the LGU community have been substantial, including plans of work and annual reporting of results. Nevertheless, concerns are mounting that the competition for science dollars is increasing. And, agencies such as NSF and NIH are becoming much more sophisticated in their accountability efforts. In fact NSF has contracted with PriceWaterhouseCoopers to prepare their report to the OMB/White House (Chronicle of Higher Education).

Some states have organized state and congressional district databases to facilitate the description of accomplishments and impacts for their elected representatives. Oregon Invests! is but one example.

The notion here is to standardize these efforts sufficiently to permit the combining of information across political boundaries, to look at regional and national accomplishments in areas such as soil fertility enhancement, water quality improvements, and farm profitability gains; and exercise not now possible. Some Committee members stated the expectation that REEIS would be doing this, as a service to our community. But it was noted that without the proper structural organization across the states it would prove virtually impossible to meet the needs for national impact reporting.

It was suggested that a joint ECOP-ESCOP delegation meet with Administrator C. Hefferan to table the issue and offer to work with her to resolve these concerns.

D. Foster will be communicating these points to the ECOP Executive Committee in a few weeks, to solicit a response.

Attention turned to item 4. *Conduct a meta analyses for the next Farm Bill, on what works in Ag Policy* (first proposed by T. Nipp). T. Nipp elaborated on the need for Congress to be making informed choices on policy. Basing those choices on sound science is preferred, and the LGUs are in a good position to help. Previous activities however, pointed out the immensity of the task, with sometimes thousands of research articles on a topic area. The use of graduate students might help to hold down costs. D. MacKenzie shared the experience of the Criminology Department at the University of Maryland who did such a meta analysis of policing, courts, and corrections for Congress a few years ago. The cost was \$600,000 (provided by DOJ) but the acceptance by Congress was enormous. Might these funds be leveraged by CSREES to conduct a thorough meta analysis of U.S. farm policy?

The Chair asked if a meta analysis might benefit from having a conceptual framework or organizational structure based on the 7 challenges of the Science Roadmap. This notion seemed to have general agreement with the participants. The example of bio-fuels being counter affected by government policy was discussed.

Attention then turned to item 3. *Do some targeted lobbying (e.g., NASA, EPA, FDA) much as ECOP plans to do with their extra funds.* (first proposed by ECOP). Attention would be at Cabinet-level agencies, and working through the legislative appropriations committees. The need for staff support to facilitate the activities of designated national leader(s) was discussed. The “leader” is necessary to move the issues, but the staff support is needed to move the activities, it was stated.

Request to “flesh out”

The experience of the SUNEI activity has clearly shown the need to have sufficient project support to maintain presence in the other agency and on the Hill, when the leader is back home attending to his/her full time employment chores. Mary Ellen Devit of SUNEI was notable for attending to meeting organization, record keeping, and follow up

to contacts at “other” federal agencies. A similar degree of support for a renewed effort independent of the constraints that entangled SUNEI should lead to earlier successes.

What we should be seeking are long-term relationships at the agency and congressional committee levels, it was noted. The activities should be targeted to a few opportunities. Congruence with ECOP’s objectives should be studied, as a joint effort would have many positive attributes not the least of which would be offering the integration of research with extension; a long sought-after capacity of many federal agencies.

The thought would be to target a 2-year effort with the intention of demonstrating success sufficient to ask for continuation of funding. Absent the agency’s concerns for lobbying (that limited SUNEI’s efforts on the Hill), several predicted that rapid progress could be expected for a few targeted areas. Admittedly, good communication with CSREES on advocacy efforts should be embedded in any such activity, but the agency finds it difficult to be seen as a partner in such efforts. Ever-faster progress might be expected by working with ECOP on mutual areas of interest that are apart from the mandate of CSREES.

Current Status: The emerging consensus at this time is to retain 4 of the items as still viable (#1, 2, 3 and 4), and explore Item 5 with CSREES, but not with the intention of direct implementation, as noted above.

It was decided that:

1. T. Nipp and D. MacKenzie will contact one or more political specialists to arrange the development of a proposal, in time for review by ESCOP at the March 2002 meeting.
2. D. MacKenzie will arrange a conference call for A & M in mid-February, with the intention of finalizing a set of recommendations to present to ESCOP at the March '02 meeting.

Respectfully,

Dave MacKenzie
1/8/02