Minutes
WIR Board of Directors
NACo Legislative Conference
Washington, DC
Saturday, March 5, 2011

Commissioner Mike Murray, WIR President, called the meeting to order and welcomed members to the NACo Legislative Conference. [1:05]

Roll Call (Matt Fellows) [1:07]
- Mike Murray, Lewis and Clark County Commissioner, MT
- Ron Walter, Chelan County Commissioner, WA
- Tim Josi, Tillamook County Commissioner, OR
- Walter Armijo, Sierra County Commissioner (for Ron Brown, Sierra County Sheriff), NM
- Dickie Chang, Kauai County Council Member (he also introduced a couple new WIR members, Hawaii County Council Member Angel Pilago and Kauai County Council Member Melvin Rapozo), HI
- Robert E. Cope, Lemhi County Commissioner, ID
- Gordon Cruickshank, Valley County Commissioner, ID
- Brian D. Dahle, Lassen County Supervisor, CA
- Clinton Farlee, Ziebach County Commissioner, SD
- David Finigan, Del Norte County Commissioner, CA
- Tom Fransway, Humboldt County Commissioner, NV
- Alan Gardner, San Miguel County Commissioner, CO
- James P. Ithurralde, Eureka County Commissioner, NV
- John Martin, Garfield County Commissioner, CO
- Dennis Onishi, Hawaii County Council Member, HI
- Lesley Robinson, Phillips County Commissioner, MN
- Dan Shoun, Lake County Commissioner, OR
- Lynn H. Stevens, San Juan County Commissioner, UT
- Douglas Thompson, Fremont County Commissioner, WY

Ex-officios present:
- Dan Chadwick, Executive Director, IAC
- Cindy Delancey, Executive Director, WCCA
- Wes Henderson, Dep. Exec. Dir, NAC (sitting for Jeffrey Fontaine)
- L. Brent Gardner, Executive Director, UAC
- Eric Johnson, Executive Director, WSAC
- Mark Johnson, Executive Director, NDAC
- Mike McArthur, Executive Director, AOC
- Craig A. Sullivan, Executive Director, County Supervisors Association of AZ
- John Taylor, Executive Director, CCI
- Kathie Wasserman, Executive Director, AML
- Bob Wilcox, Executive Director, SDACC
MOTION: Approval of minutes from Lewis & Clark County, MT [1:15]
- Moved Tim Josi, Second Brian Dahle
  - **Motion carried**

Ron Walter made a pitch (tourism, etc) for the upcoming WIR Conference in Chelan County, WA [1:16]

**Harris Sherman, Undersecretary, Natural Resources and Environment, USDA [1:20]**

Started off by examining challenges facing nation’s counties.
- **National Forests**
  - USFS oversees 9% of US landmass, 193m acres
  - Natural Resources Conservation has a strong program to preserve forests, an enormous benefit to the nation—but there is a disconnect with the public.
  - Forests are a huge source of recreation and critical to the economy—how effective we are depends on the success of forest species.
  - 110m acres in “significant need” of restoration, climate change has resulted in new pest control problems (e.g. Bark Beetle, 5-10m acres of wildfire p/year)
  - Stressed issues of Rights-of-Way and increased Wild Lands fire challenges, indicated there is a great deal of work to do at all levels of government
- **Strategy**
  - Collaboration: the ability of the Federal Government to work with states, counties, tribes, all stakeholders to reach solutions—there is a clear interest in making our forests resilient
  - Anxious to seek out new partnerships—e.g. electrical utilities, recreational interests
  - In the face of budget realities, we will have to flourish if we want to meet challenges, and not just on Federal Lands, ALL lands—there can no longer be “random acts of conservation,” needs to be a more integrated, global approach that takes into account the priorities of safety and restoration, and this must be done by a collective effort in conjunction with counties.
  - Read the Great Outdoor Report, [http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/report/](http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/report/), young people are spending 50% less time outdoors than they have in the past—there is a need to connect youth to the importance of forest stewardship with things like summer programs and work study
- **Federal Role for County Government**
  - National Planning Rule—critically important to USFS in reaching out to counties, we need county input: May 16 deadline.
  - Obama released his budget, authorizes $328m for SRS…no aspect of the budget is safe. Land/Water Conservation dropped by the House…Senate?
  - NRCS, [www.nrcs.usda.gov/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/), is hugely important, volunteers working with landowners on issues of water/air quality, energy, management, “landscape scale” efforts—many programs are offered

**Q&A [1:40]**
- Paul Pearce: RATs unpopulated. Why?
  - We are in the process of selecting RATs, next couple of weeks, sorry.
• Douglas Thompson: One of the biggest problems we face is in planning—it doesn’t happen fast enough, and it doesn’t happen in a timely manner.
  o We’re analyzing how we respond, and it’s really amazing how much time is spent just analyzing projects, we have to jump through all kinds of hoops…how can we improve? We’re looking at it. There needs to be a programmatic process.

Closing remarks: Discretionary funding looks to be out the door—go make an appointment with your member and make your views heard on Capitol Hill. Make the most of your time here.

John Anderson, Agricultural Economist, AFBF [1:50]

Food prices are a huge issue and lately everyone is paying attention to the Ag economy, which outperformed the general economy in 2010, showing strong employment growth in non-metro counties, high commodity prices but also increasing costs of production. Livestock prices have done phenomenally well in the past fiscal.
• Big Picture: the United States does not have excess capacity like we used to, demand has grown so much that capacity is nearly gone. Emerging markets are producing an increased global demand, and production is having keeping up with use; mirroring this are the rising production costs. Increased prices beget higher costs of production—cost of land is also a factor on these prices, and currently we have the most active land market since the 1980s. Is there another bubble? It’s a frothy market and a fragile scenario, higher interest rates might seriously damage the land market.
• Key Challenges
  o Dealing with increasing regulatory burden, onerous use & restriction
  o Escalating costs and related budget issues
  o Still-shaky consumer demand
• Outlook
  o Major commodity prices will remain favorable
  o Ag has been and will be a bright spot in the economy

Net farm income in 2010 was $94.7bn and while there will be regional disparity in income from farm businesses, higher average net incomes are projected in 2011 for non-livestock farm production. We have a strong market, but costs will be phenomenal. People raise the question of corn prices going up, why isn’t beef going down? Our country’s meat supply is extremely tight.

NACo 2nd VP Candidate Linda Langston, Linn County, IA [2:20]

Kathleen Sgamma, Director of Government & Public Affairs, Western Energy Alliance [2:22]

WEI represents more than 400 companies in the West that drill for natural gas and realizes the issues facing counties with regard to public/wild lands issues and natural gas. Everyone wants an energy balance, but what is it? A strong case is made against drilling on public lands, but a mere .07% of US natural gas reserves are on public lands.
• Abilities to solve problems are hampered by “paralysis by analysis,” cumbersome requirements and policies
• Policies of the previous administration were more beneficial to acting on Wildlands Policy issues, current course is the wrong direction
• There is a definite need to put decisions in the hands of counties and not the Federal government
  o Average permitting time (BLM) is 206 days, leasing efforts are severely curtailed
  The Federal government needs help at the county level in discussing oil and gas production issues, make use of your time here and make the case to your Congressman.

Jim Healy, DuPage County, IL, 2011 Rail Conference [2:58]
  Sponsored by NACo, NLC, AASHTO, NARC and APTA, this conference will focus on the impact of freight and passenger rail on county, city and state governments and their citizens and businesses. It will look at the movement of freight in the urban, suburban and rural communities of the United States and discuss who will pay to modernize and expand passenger and freight rail systems. [www.naco.org/railconference]

Dustin Van Lieu, Executive Director, National Cattleman’s Beef Association [3:00]
  DOI Secretarial Order 3310 is regulatory overreach and onerous, makes outrageous demands from localities. Pressure from radical environmentalists results in this.
  • Legislative Update
    o Senate CR this past Friday excludes DOI 3310 language
    o A two week extension was signed]
  • EAJA Reform: in two weeks there will be new legislation to amend EAJA to limit the $/hr lawyers can charge for cases, and it ratchets down the ability of the wealthy to take advantage of system
  • Antiquities Act: Main problem from this 1906 act is it restricts multiple uses and impedes grazing, Sen. Crapo and Rep. Nunes have bills that would amend natural monument accountability
  • The current administration is not making full use of the applicable, available tools to deal with Wild Horse/Burro issues
  • HR509, S249 [not sure of bill number] might amend the ESA to D-list gray wolves, which puts the management back into the hands of states.
    o Robert Cope raised the point that this would be a huge issue for counties losing revenue when wolves are taken back off the D-list.

Marc Kelley, Partnership for Rural America Campaign [3:17]
  Current advocacy efforts for SRS are a Dear Colleague making a budget request that funding be moved to mandatory rather than discretionary, and that the current $328m is not enough. There is a good signal at least that the current administration is willing to play ball.
  • Interaction with your MoCs
    o We have framed letters of thanks for members who have supported SRS and urge you to deliver them
    o Lately no one is thanking Congress, and it’s important now more than ever to make your voice heard to your member.
  To echo the Undersecretary’s remarks earlier, make the most of your time here—go and speak with your member on Capitol Hill.
Legislative Update/Strategy Discussion [3:31]

Tim Josi: It has been brought to the committee’s attention that a WIR/PL member has been circulating a letter in opposition to the NACo letter sent to Ken Salazar, signed as a NACo committee member. If there is a disagreement over policy what can we do? Subverting NACo’s policy message isn’t the answer.

Ron Walter: The issue isn’t so much the disagreement with policy, if a person disagrees with a policy that a NACo committee passes that’s fine but you shouldn’t associate yourself to the organization in the opposition letter—send it on your own.

Mike Murray: We’ve had a great lineup of speakers today and some good discussion. Are there any other issues or questions? If not, I’d like to ask Alan to offer a prayer and we can adjourn.

Prayer, Adjourn [3:35]