



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF INDEPENDENT CROP CONSULTANTS

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



By
Orvin Bontrager
NAICC
2010 President

Why Am I a Crop Consultant?

As you read the title of this article, you probably wonder why write about this when the members of NAICC are already professional consultants, researchers and quality assurance personnel. I believe periodically we need to step back and contemplate on why we are in our vocations.

I can distinctly remember spring 1977, walking back from the Texas A&M agronomy/range science office carrying the graduate student mail for the building that my graduate office was located. I happened to leaf through the Agri-Fieldman magazine at that time. I recognized several Kansas State University acquaintances who were working as crop consultants for the company I am currently employed. Being in range science curriculum, I wasn't aware of this type of employment even being available.

After several phone inquiries, I interviewed and was hired to start as soon as I could after completing coursework and the research for my graduate degree. With the help of numerous fellow colleagues, I was able to stumble through the first few years and get my feet under me and start feeling comfortable as a consultant in Kansas.

Malcolm Gladwell in the recent book, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, says it takes

10,000 hours of concentrated effort to become good at what one is doing. I believe it takes at least that much. After 32 years of consulting, there are still many questions and concerns that tax my abilities. Many of you, and me included, have been tempted to leave consulting and take on possibly more lucrative and "easier" employment with shorter work hours.

After joining NAICC in 1995, I was able to interact with many very capable crop consultants from throughout the US and even internationally. I visited with older consultants who were continuing to pursue the profession that was supposedly a "young man's" vocation. The interaction with others was very encouraging to me. As "crop scouts" we weren't supposed to keep up in the harsh growing environments where we worked long hours during the summer. Many of us thought that we surely couldn't do this for another 20-30 years. Not so. We adapt.

Mega Trends of Agriculture:

A Few Notes from Dr. David M. Kohl

We were honored to have Dr. David M. Kohl, Professor Emeritus, Agricultural and Applied Economics, Virginia Tech, as our keynote speaker at the recent 2010 Annual Meeting. Some of the insights he shared follow; we wish everyone reading this could have benefited firsthand from his speech, titled *What's Around the Corner & Down the Road*.

Dr. Kohl first touched on the "craziness" of the economic environment planning forecast, citing an extended period of economic moderation worldwide and predicting:

- volatility at extremes - cost & revenue
- reprioritization of business decisions
- reprioritization of personal and family decisions
- cash & liquidity will be King
- the need to be innovative, resourceful, & selective.

Some fast facts about American Agriculture that he shared included:

- 70 percent of North American farm ground will change hands by 2025
- local, natural organics could be 20 percent of the consumer marketplace
- special interest groups and consumers will drive business models
- 80 percent of Americans are two generations away from the farm and/or ranch
- control of asset rather than ownership with new land lords
- water could replace oil as the limited resource
- women and minorities will become major decision makers
- strategically think globally but act and execute locally.

Some fast facts on ag as shared by Dr. Kohl:

- The United States' percentage of the world's GDP for the last 500 years has been 22
- And GDP growth for the U.S. in 2009 was a negative 2.5, while India's was nearly 8 percent and China's nearly 9
- With gasoline at \$3.50 to \$4 per gallon, consumers have been shut down, noted Dr. Kohl, adding that 80 percent of farm expenses are linked to oil!
- America's ag land values declined 3.4 percent in 2009 alone

Economic issues Dr. Kohl anticipates for 2010 in the short run include:

- world stimulus programs - G20 nations
- equity markets rebound
- earnings report / cost cutting

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- low interest rates
 - savings and consumption growth -- inflection point
 - commercial real estate -- small and midsized banks
 - housing / real estate -- foreclosure crisis
 - increased taxation -- cap and trade
- And in the long run he anticipates as issues:

- unemployment -- consumer and business confidence
- government debt
- inflation
- healthcare
- social security

For clients in agriculture, Dr. Kohl said he anticipates consultants will continue to factor in the sphere of influence closest to partner/spouse/peer. He expects that partners, such as consultants, will be advantageous as relationship managers will be looked upon to provide more than products and services. They'll be necessary to understand industries, business models and businesses' unique positions within industries.

Specific examples he cited included the ability to:

- grasp interconnectedness of agricultural value chains
- understand people and ask questions
 - Where have producers been?
 - Where are producers today?
 - Where are producers headed?
- provide context to information, adding meaning and relevance to 'numbers and noise'
- focus on what makes long-term sense.

Further, Dr. Kohl said that in the next five years consultants will need to focus on:

- planning, strategy & execution
 - organizational & time management
 - mixture of technology & face to face
 - problem / solutions / workout
 - business opportunities & management
- And last, our keynote speaker's top 10 quotes...

- "three prong risk management program"
- "paradigms shift -- principals don't"
- "Be careful of people in silk suits"
- "40-20-40 people rule"
- "widening gap of loan pricing based upon management"
- "edu-marketing - the 15% rule"
- "Don't allow your employees to put you on probation"
- "You build your best business in tough times"
- "You build your career during tough times"
- "Don't forget your good customers"

Many thanks for your insights, Dr. Kohl -- we appreciate the time and knowledge you shared with us in Florida!

NAICC 2010 Annual Meeting: A New Member's Perspective

*Laura Donkervoort,
Ecologistics Research Services*

January 19th started like any other winter day in Canada. I awoke to pull on my boots and brush the snow from my car before venturing out for the morning commute. However, today I wasn't headed to the office; I was headed to my first NAICC annual meeting. A few hours and a large temperature change later, I was about to embark on comprehensive GLP training and I was a little stressed. However, I was quickly welcomed by a bunch of really friendly folks. Little did I know everyone at this meeting was going to be as welcoming as those first people I met!

As I continued to attend various events I was amazed by the variety and quality of training sessions. Attending the new members' luncheon was really the turning point for me and is what inspired me to write this article. I realized that this organization is not like many others; the executives are completely accessible and want to help you get involved right away, no matter what your background or experience level.

A couple of insightful ideas really stuck with me from this luncheon. The first is the realization that attending this conference can be equated to very effective marketing. It can be very difficult to advertise in this industry and this conference offers a great deal of quality exposure. The second was the strange feeling of excitement and anticipation about returning to work. After a long field season everyone is ready to relax. This conference acts as a great springboard back into the work season with a more educated outlook and positive attitude. This is the first holiday wherein I am actually excited

to return to work, especially after spending a week in Florida!

The keynote address by Dr. David Kohl was another inspiring and encouraging event. Dr. Kohl emphasized the importance of innovation and preparation for future trends. The NAICC mirrors these views and is an organization constantly focused on adapting to best serve its members with constant consideration for future trends and challenges. One challenge the NAICC has identified is critical: how do we get young people involved in agriculture? As Dr. Kohl correctly points out that the average person is two generations removed from agriculture. Currently, the NAICC is doing an excellent job of embracing young new members such as me with a positive attitude and some great events. The overall feeling of being accepted into a new industry was outstanding and the people I met were always willing to share their knowledge.

I was also very impressed with the depth and breadth of attendees. This kind of membership fosters the ultimate environment for collaboration and education in a very efficient way. As a first time attendee, I quickly realized this conference offers a comprehensive and complete view of the industry and gives everyone from contactors to competitors a chance to interact.

Again, I cannot say enough for the networking opportunities available at this meeting, whether it is at the Exhibit Hall Extravaganza or a drink at Gatorville. I know the NAICC will continue to deliver excellent programs that bring the industry together for the benefit of individual members and agriculture as whole. See you next year!

NAICC Affiliates Can Now Increase Visibility Through NAICC.org!

In an effort to provide greater visibility and helpful online tools to affiliates, NAICC continues to offer its affiliates their own Web page.

Hosted by our Web server, the NAICC is collaborating with the Center for Integrated Pest Management to provide this

online communications tool, which could include a membership database, discussion board, calendar of events, etc. Visit <http://www.naicc.org/Affiliates/invitation.cfm> for more information about this cost effective, easy-to-implement opportunity.

Review of Suit Regarding Key EPA Water Pesticide Permits Declined

This month NAICC's Board was visible in the Nation's Capitol, discussing a recent decision by the Supreme Court to decline review of a court ruling subjecting pesticide spraying to Clean Water Act (CWA) permitting requirements.

Alliance members met with CropLife, Ag Retailers Association and government officials regarding the decision, which could boost EPA efforts to expand the scope of sources subject to water permit requirements.

In a February 22 order without comment, the high court denied a certiorari petition to review U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit's decision in *National Cotton Council, et al. v. EPA, et al.*

Some believe the review could have posed a major challenge for EPA and environmentalists in regulating releases from thousands of sources generally exempt from water permit requirements (i.e. fertilizer applications). Concerns included curtailed efforts of CWA permit expansion, which many environmentalists consider crucial to limiting pollution from storm water runoff and other nonpoint sources.

The 6th Circuit's January 2009 ruling in *National Cotton Council* vacated EPA's

2006 rule exempting agricultural pesticide users, state pest controllers and others who spray pesticides on or near water from having to obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit.

The exemption was deemed unlawful because it was determined that some pesticide spraying amounts to a discharge of a pollutant from a point source under the water act and is therefore subject to permit requirements.

While CropLife America, Senate Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry Committee Chair Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) and 36 other lawmakers and industry representatives and NAICC pushed for review, EPA urged the court not to review the ruling. The agency stated that while the 6th Circuit may have been wrong in declining to grant the agency Chevron deference to uphold the regulation, it only applies to a narrow range of pesticide spraying activities.

That narrow range could apply to some 5.6 million annual pesticide applications for 365,000 applicators, according to EPA. The agency is currently developing an NPDES general permit to cover spraying activities, but state officials say it may not ensure

compliance with many states' narrative water quality standards.

EPA is also considering expanding the definition of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) to regulate more farms in the Chesapeake Bay region. While CAFOs are already subject to regulation under the CWA, legal experts say a high court ruling upending Cotton Council might undermine the agency's authority on related matters.

Last week while in Washington, NAICC Executive Board members **Orvin Bontrager, Ron O'Hanlon, Blaine Viator, Stan Winslow** and NAICC Governmental Affairs Committee member **Joe Turner** met with officials from EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs. In this meeting, we learned that agricultural is currently not included in these regulations. However, later that day, **Gary Coukell** and **Donna Landis** joined the group at meetings with representatives from **CropLife America** and the **Ag Retailers Association** and the three groups agreed while it might appear that agriculture is "exempt" from permit regulations, their expectations are that ag will be drawn in eventually.

Green Bay "Focus on Precision" Meeting Was a Success

By Steve Hoffman, CPAg, Chair, NAICC Education Outreach Committee

The NAICC Education Outreach Committee partnered with the **Wisconsin Association of Professional Agricultural Consultants** to co-host a quality educational conference held in Green Bay March 3rd and 4th.

The conference began with a keynote presentation on variable rate nitrogen by Dr. Peter Scharf from the University of Missouri. Attendees had the opportunity to learn how fellow consultants are using

precision ag technologies and GIS in their businesses. There were eight presentations by consultants and several roundtable sessions.

Attendance was just over 100 people. There were attendees from New York, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Tennessee, Michigan and Canada as well as Wisconsin.

A special thanks to our exhibitors who turned out for the meeting. We benefited

greatly from the information on their products and services as well as their support of the meeting.

This conference was a great opportunity for NAICC to meet some potential new members and to highlight the 2011 Annual Meeting in Fort Worth.

Presentations from the conference can be viewed at the NAICC website.

The Education Outreach Committee is currently looking for an opportunity to serve the membership of NAICC by helping to organize an educational session. An educational session could be part of a state or regional meeting, or could be added on to the front end of the NAICC annual meeting.

If you know of a specific need for this kind of session, please contact 2010 EOC chair - Steve Hoffman at shoffman@lakefield.net or at (920)-758-2988

NAICC New Member Profile

The best indicator of a member organization's continued success is its growth in membership, and NAICC clearly continues to be successful as we welcome yet another new member – **Laura Donkervoort**.

A Research Scientist for Ecologistics Research Services in Thorndale, Ontario, Laura provides a wide array of services:

GLP studies, magnitude of residue studies, soil dissipation studies, variety testing, efficacy testing, crop tolerance studies, aquatic dissipation studies, biomonitoring programs and demonstration sites.

Prior to her current employment, Laura served as a Research Scientist with the University of Western Ontario. She is versed in GLP training, ARM analysis, advanced microbiological skills (imaging, culturing, staining, biodiversity analysis), GIS and geochemical analysis - field and laboratory (ICP, IC, numerical modeling, acid-base accounting, water chemistry). Laura's Master of Science degree is in Geology and Environmental Science.

So far, Laura said her experiences with NAICC have been very positive and encouraging. "I joined the organization for the educational and networking opportunities it provides," she noted.

"I think NAICC can best help its members by keeping them updated on the latest industry trends," continued Laura. "NAICC has the membership base to allow them to act as a vehicle for communication and cooperation between all industry members, from large corporations to small farms."

Regarding the future in ag research, Laura said she anticipates trials will become much more complex with respect to the registration process. "Biotechnology is pushing the boundaries of agriculture and what we as a society will accept. Testing these types of products will require more advanced training and equipment as well as an understanding of how these products can affect the environment as a whole," she added.

VIGILANCE to CHANGE Is One Focus of an Effective QAU

By Dr Stu Mertz, QA Representative on NAICC Newsletter Committee, & President, PEAK Quality Consulting, Inc, Cary, NC

EPA and sponsor inspection results show a history of our analytical laboratory and field-test-site contract research organizations demonstrating a high level of GLP compliance. To maintain this, periodic facility re-inspections by in-house and sponsor QA are necessary.

During my 14 years of experience in conducting facility inspections, the biggest Nemesis of Compliance is CHANGE! Lab & Field Researchers as well as their in-house QAUs can sometimes be "blind" to change (e.g., they may be "too close" to the situation or part of the situation). Consequently an external auditor makes a GLP Finding. So when I conduct a facility inspection, a key element is to learn what has changed since the last GLP inspection.

To assist your vigilance, please try the following checklist to determine whether any apply to your test site. Clearly, in-house QA are in the best position to identify these CHANGE agents on an on-going basis, and to alert management in a timely manner:

Clients Trust Independence

As a professional in the consultant business, your independence is extremely valuable. By certifying it through the NAICC your stature and marketability as an independent crop consultant are enhanced.

The NAICC Certified Professional Crop Consultant (CPCC) Program offers all the advantages of ag industry certification plus a certification category that will identify you as an independent contractor. The program applies to independent crop consultants, agronomists and individuals who do contract research.

With this program, clients are secure in the knowledge that their contractors are not tied to products in a warehouse.

The three categories of NAICC Certification include:

1. CPCC: a general category for all Professional Agronomists.

QA Corner

- inadequate number of personnel (to handle new workloads)
- inadequately trained personnel (new processes or procedures)
- new personnel (study conduct; management, QAU)
- significant change in the mental or physical health of personnel or one's family member or relative (e.g., sickness, injury, divorce, death, over-stressed, over-worked)
- new technology (e.g., biotechnology) and its set of compliance regulations
- new equipment type or make/model that is not described in your SOP (e.g., computers, GPS, HPLC/MS/MS)
- new research farm facility or new laboratory facility (e.g., update site or floor plans)
- new protocol features (e.g., add new type of experiment or new study director at a sponsor)
- protocol amendment or deviation
- new/revised analytical method
- new/revised SOP or SOP deviation
- new/revised GLP regulation or new EPA interpretation (e.g., person printing email must sign/date - see EPA GLP Alert #6 from 2009 NAICC mgt)

and the list goes on ...

2. CPCC-I: professional agronomists independent of product sales who derive income only from services or through employment by a firm that only sells services.
3. CPCC-R: a new category for professionals who do Contract Research.

Why Certify

- The CPCC certification program has been enthusiastically received by Washington, DC policy makers because of the rigorous standards for CPCCs.
- Being a certified professional further enhances marketability.

For more information about NAICC's certification opportunities or application forms visit NAICC.org or contact Allison Jones at 901-861-0511 or JonesNAICC@aol.com.



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NAICC 2010 Annual Meeting Photos



Many thanks to Michelle Hoffman and Tammy Case who volunteered all week at the registration desk.



Just a few of the 60 attendees at the New Member's Boot Camp.



Michael Voss presents Ag Leader's Emerging Technology during the Thursday afternoon session. Voss also gave a presentation during the Focus on Precision Conference in Green Bay, WI the following month.



Loarn Bucl welcomes first timer Camille Holladay at the New Members' and First Timers' reception.

AG PRO EXPO



Allen Scobie (AICC-UK) visits with exhibitor Luanne Anderson at the ICMS booth during the AG PRO EXPO.



Visitors to the Ag Renaissance booth get hands on experience with their new Field Recon software.



Greg Dahl with Winfield Solutions reviews new products and services offered by his company.



Phil Cochran and Jane Feagans welcome first time exhibitor and Emerging Technology presenter Jason O'Flanagan from AGCO Corporation.



Orvin Bontrager and volunteer Theresa Wyatt coordinate with Farm Press representatives Dick Wright and Glenn Luedke as they prepare to draw the winning card for the Exhibit Hall Extravaganza.



...and the winner is Tim Case! Dick Wright hands the prize to the lucky winner.

NAICC Business Meeting



NAICC President Stan Winslow presides over the NAICC Business Meeting.



Retiring 2009 Board Member Paul Groneberg gives the Certification Board report also during the Business Meeting.

Awards Ceremony



2010 NAICC President Orvin Bontrager presents Ken Trammel with the NAICC Service to Agriculture Award.



AMVAC's Paul Vaculin introduces the new training video that is part of the Ray Young Leadership program sponsored by AMVAC.



2010 NAICC Executive Board



2010 FEAE Board (from left) Don Jameson, Past President; Hylon Kaufmann, Vice President and Treasurer; Kathy Richards, Secretary; Rick Kesler, Board Member; Lee West, Board Member; Bill Peele, President and Glenn Luedke, Board Member.

Awards Ceremony, continued



Congratulations to our state and national Top Recruiters (from left) 2009 President Stan Winslow, Brent Wright (Canada), Phil Cochran (IL), Charlie Mellinger (FL), Marla Siruta (IA), overall top recruiter Fred Vaughn and Sue Bellman (WI), 2010 President Orvin Bontrager.



Rick Chamblee with BASF presents the Consultant of the Year Awards to Kevin Hollands and Amy Beth Dowdy. BASF and NAICC jointly sponsor the award each year.



Friday Night Beach Party!

Patrick Stephens from the UK comes prepared to the NAICC Beach Party!



Now Patrick shows his real moves!



Our loyal attendees, friends and exhibitors from AGVISE!



Sheryl and Bruce Niederhauser



Our lovely spouses and faithful volunteers.

Friday Night Beach Party , continued



The Mosers – enough said!



Don and Hazel Harlan



Rick Kesler with FMC sets the tone for the evening of fun, good food and networking! Thanks to FMC for sponsoring the Beach Party!



One last group outing before heading home.

Can't wait for next year!