PRESIDENT’S COLUMN

By Dennis Hattermann
NAICC
2011 President

BUILDING OUR ORGANIZATION

From its humble beginnings, NAICC has grown into an impressive organization. I attended professional meetings of other organizations before I found the NAICC 14 years ago. None were as advantageous to my career as the NAICC meeting. As a researcher, I can have face to face interaction with everyone that I work with, or can potentially work with, in the coming growing season. Maybe I am old fashioned but I just believe that there is no substitute for everyone being at the same place at the same time for learning experiences, whether they are personal or professional. I have met some really good, down to earth people (no pun intended) at our meetings that I am proud to call friends.

Sitting at your computer sending emails or text messages or tweets or whatever is the Internet social medium of choice at the moment just does not compare to personal conversation and face to face discussion in my opinion. Neither does video conferencing. It is just not the same. Have you ever had the experience of talking on the phone with someone for years before you finally meet them? You tend to form a mental image of them based on their voice. Once you actually meet them in person, it can be really surprising how different they look from your expected, made up image. If you have never experienced this think of a radio personality that you heard for a while and then saw a picture of eventually. It is the same thing.

Despite the fact that we have grown and changed substantially since 1978, or even since 1998, we are still the meeting of choice for many crop consultants and the majority of ag research professionals. We are now adding quality assurance (QA) professionals as they find a home among the researchers that they work with on a daily basis. We could add many more consultants as well as QAs, and I believe that with a proper approach we will.

There is another group of scientists who could find a professional home at the NAICC with some encouragement and program building and those are the lab analysts (also known as principal analytical investigators) for GLP research. We have several lab members but there are many more that could join. The Annual Meeting program could be strengthened with lab oriented topics that could benefit all members.

Just prior to the past Annual Meeting, I assembled a Task Force to encourage membership and Annual Meeting attendance from this important group. Several of them are currently participating in selected committees to find ways to add more lab oriented sessions to our meeting programs and to encourage increased membership among lab scientists. In general, the lab scientists I approached with this idea have been very enthusiastic.

Our meeting has a reputation as being mostly for “field people” but as our research and QA people know, lab analysis is the other half of a successful complete study. It is good for field people to know what goes on in the lab and vice versa.

I often call on crop consultants for information that I do not have prior knowledge or ready access to concerning practical farming trends and practices since I do not work directly with farmers. If it were not for the NAICC and my attendance at all Annual Meetings since 1998 (except for 2) I would not feel comfortable calling these people or even knowing who to call. There is no substitute for personal relationships and there won’t be any time soon. In addition, crop consultants are increasingly getting more involved in research and efficacy trials so consultants who wish to enter this arena can benefit greatly from interaction with our research and QA members at the Annual Meetings. So as you can see we do have a lot in common and it is a two-way street which is most easily travelled with personal contact at our meetings.

As I said in my speech at the Annual Meeting I am here (as is the Board and Allison Jones) to make this organization pertinent to you and your professional needs. That is our sole reason for existence and it is the primary function of the NAICC Executive Board. The board is working and is committed to increasing membership and Annual Meeting participation from all of our groups but we cannot make the decisions that benefit you and your needs if they are not known. Please take the time to make them known. Send an email or make a phone call and take the time to complete the next survey that you receive from NAICC. Then be patient since not all changes can occur over night and as you know you cannot please all the people all of the time. I can tell you though that the Board will do its best to please as many of our members as possible. That is how it should be in such a system where we, members of the board, have been elected to represent your needs.

Our organization and our profession are changing. Help to keep us vital and pertinent to the needs of our members and our industry. I don’t know about you, but I could not feel more motivated serving any industry in this day and age more than I do agriculture and rural America with sound advice and professional products. We are relying on your passion and participation. Won’t you join us?
While wet weather in Australia did cause some crop losses, the main impact was on quality, with a significant portion of wheat downgraded to general purpose or feed. Peracto has been very lucky through all of this. All our people across Australia and New Zealand are safe and well and looking forward to more moderate weather in the coming months.

A few facts
- Australia is a similar size to the USA
- Queensland is three times the size of Texas
- Tasmania is about the same size as South Carolina

The US has seen its share of natural disasters this spring. As US farmers, consultants and researchers struggle to make the best out of what Mother Nature sends our way, perhaps we can learn from our friends across the ocean who dealt with the same issues earlier this year. Ian Macleod, NAICC voting member and board member of the Global Alliance of Independent Agricultural Consultants shares his experiences with the disasters in Australia.

Australian Natural Disasters

By Ian Macleod, Devonport, Tasmania, Australia.

Australia is a huge land with many varied climates, cropping regions and environments. With much of Australia experiencing debilitating drought between 2001 and 2010, the cycle turned full circle in recent months.

2011 started with major rainfall in Central Queensland leading to flooding on a grand scale with the city of Rockhampton being the major population centre affected. The impact on coal mining and infrastructure (roads and rail) in the region has implications worldwide. As a major exporter of coal (50% of coal used in steelmaking globally) the effect is likely to increase global coking coal prices by more than a third.

Before the middle of January flooding and significant loss of lives had hit Southern Queensland and the city of Brisbane. Many of you may have seen graphic footage on TV of cars being washed away as people watched in horror.

Projections are that the Queensland floods will have cost over $10 billion. Flooding moved South with Victoria and parts of Tasmanian being subjected to heavy rain in late January. Again significant property and infrastructure damage occurred but not on the same scale as in Queensland. The day before I left home for the Fort Worth meeting, local river levels were the highest I have ever seen around my home town of Devonport, Tasmania.

Meanwhile on the other side of this vast country, Western Australia is still experiencing drought conditions and around the city of Perth bushfires took their toll on property in early February. Many lost their homes, thankfully no lives were lost.

In January, it is summer here and cyclone (hurricane) season in Northern Australia. This year these massive storms seem more numerous and threatening. The biggest one (category 5) hit Northern Queensland on 3rd February. Cyclone Yasi crossed the coast unleashing its fury on all in its path with winds of almost 200 mph and an eye over 20 miles across. 75% of Australia’s banana crop was wiped out by Yasi along with sugar cane losses estimated at half a billion dollars.

As I write this the rescue operations continue in the New Zealand Earthquake which has devastated Christchurch with a death toll continuing to rise.

La Niña conditions are set to prevail through into our autumn, with above average chances of exceeding median rainfall in Western Australia particularly welcome. The seasonal outlook is for warm and wet conditions.
FOCUS ON PRECISION

Attendees at the 2011 Focus on Precision workshop, held March 15-16, in Des Moines, IA were pleased with the information and contacts gained at the event. According to the follow-up survey, 100% of the respondents were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the meeting!

The NAICC Education Outreach Committee (EOC) partnered with the Iowa Independent Crops Consultants Association (IICCA) to co-host a quality educational conference. Shannon Gomes, NAICC member and IICCA program chair stated, “The line up of speakers we had was phenomenal as we had five Ph.D.’s speaking on diverse topics. The IICCA in general thought the meeting went well and was very informative.”

The conference began with a keynote presentation on global warming by Dr. Harold Van Es, from Cornell University. Attendees also had the opportunity to learn how fellow consultants are using precision ag technologies and GIS in their businesses. Presentations by consultants and ag industry leaders covered aerial imagery to guide nitrogen management, variable rate seeding, VRT cost analysis as well as an iPad demonstration by Matt Wilson from Pioneer and Jeff Caldwell with Successful Farming.

In addition to the popular roundtable discussions, an exhibitor introduction session was added. Each of the 16 exhibiting companies updated attendees on the latest in precision ag software and hardware. Attendees were able to talk one-on-one with vendors during the evening reception as well as during breakfast, lunch and refreshment breaks over the two-day period. Attendees benefited greatly from the information on their products and services as well as their support of the meeting!

Attendance was around 75 people from numerous Midwest states, NC, ME, GA and NY. This conference was a great opportunity for consultants to network with others from across the country and NAICC members were able to meet many potential new members!

We wish to give a very special “Thank You” to Gina McClintock, IICCA Executive Secretary for her hard work on the meeting. We also appreciate Steve and Michelle Hoffman who were also instrumental in making the meeting a huge success. “Michelle and Steve are always willing to step in where needed and lend a hand,” said Allison Jones who was not able to attend the meeting in Des Moines because the Executive Board Meeting and Crawfish Boil on the Hill were held at the same time. “Michelle can pretty much run all the NAICC meeting registrations and logistics with her eyes closed”. Steve is also Co-Chair of the EOC. We also appreciate Megan Hoffman volunteering her time and talents to design and publish the Focus programs.

Benefit to Consultants

We are a large crop consulting firm in northeastern Wisconsin that has spent a great deal of time on nutrient management issues and regulatory work. The Focus on Precision meetings held the last several years have been a refreshing change of pace. Our consulting firm has been happy to attend meetings that have a strong focus on production agriculture. The Focus on Precision meetings has provided information on hot issues in production agriculture by presentations from university, industry and consulting experts. High priced input costs on farms have led our firm to provide more complex testing of crops as they grow throughout the season. Specifically, the information obtained from the Focus on Precision meetings has provided our firm with better direction on the use of variable rate fertilizer, seeding rates and pesticides. The use of aerial imagery to fine tune fertility and pest management recommendations is also now more effectively used on our farms today. Most of this has been accomplished by better identification of management zones within a field, how they are made and where they make sense.

NAIICC PRESIDENT TRAVELS TO THE UK

2010 NAICC President Orvin Bontrager represented NAICC at the Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants annual meeting near Birmingham, England in January 2011. Below is his report submitted this past January.

It was a privilege to attend the Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants annual meeting in early January. After arriving very early on a Sunday morning, Andrew Watson, president of AICC, met me at the Birmingham airport. Mark Dewes, a local crop consultant, and Andrew were kind enough to give me a farm tour of the surrounding area. We inspected winter wheat, winter rapeseed and set aside acres. Surprisingly, I learned rabbits, pigeons, and slugs are some of the major problems in crop production. The extensive hedgerows that surround the small fields have been in place for several hundred years. They are not allowed to be removed. Pictured below is an example of the hedgerows that provide habitat for the rabbits and the resulting wheat damage.

Pigeons can also cause damage on the winter rape seed by physically removing the green foliage during the winter. Keeping
the rape seed plants damaged by the birds will thin the stand significantly.

Slugs are a problem following the rape or canola crops and damage the planted wheat. A product used for slug control may be lost due to minor amounts being found in ground and stream water.

Environmental constraints are much higher in the UK than what we have so far in the USA. Several sessions at the meeting entailed how to increase the plant diversity on the borders set aside strips to increase wildflower production. This would greatly enhance pollinator insects and wild bird populations. If the wild bird population keeps decreasing, according to government surveys, the need to increase the wildflower diversity will become mandatory nationwide.

Pictured below is an example of the required set aside border around a wheat field.

Very high average yields of 120 bu/acre winter wheat, with up to 160 bu/acre on the better soils, are common. The lack of high temperatures and harsh weather conditions during grain fill is very helpful to attain the high yields. Commonly, four foliar fungicide applications are recommended for disease control. Split applying nitrogen is very beneficial.

I was impressed with the professional crop consultant’s meeting. Excellent speakers and topics were addressed. It was very beneficial for me to get a better global perspective on agriculture. Crop consultants in the UK have many of the same issues we have in North America.
NAICC QA MENTORING AND NETWORKING LUNCH SPONSORED BY DOW AGROSCIENCES

By Valen Straub, LABServices, Inc.

On Thursday, January 20, 2011, fifty plus QA professionals gathered for lunch in Fort Worth, TX during the NAICC Annual Meeting for an opportunity to network and launch a Mentoring Program. This initiative was generously sponsored by Dow AgroSciences. Thank you, Mark Tumey and Tracey Froggatt for making this idea a reality. Invitations were issued just weeks before the meeting and the response was overwhelming. We had 12 volunteer mentors, 9 of whom were identified as having similar backgrounds to those who had requested mentor assistance and 12 mentees.

During the luncheon, mentors and mentees were seated together giving them an opportunity to get acquainted. Matches were based on areas of interest/specialties (i.e. lab QAs, agricultural QAs, etc.). Renee Daniel gave a brief introduction about the Mentoring Program, stating the belief that a need existed for this type of program. It would be a voluntary and informal effort by both parties. However, in order to monitor the success of the program, feedback at the end of the year will be necessary to determine if this initiative was worthwhile and whether it should be continued.

So what do we hope for our mentors?
• Freely share their own experiences, both successes and failures
• Offer insights that can come only with experience
• Give observations and explanations that will help the mentee learn
• Support and reassurance when needed

What do we hope for our mentees?
• Ask for help when needed
• Accept feedback and act on it responsively

I am excited about this program. I think we have all recognized the necessity to share knowledge and ideas with newer QAs. We have started the ‘ball rolling’ and now it is up to you to keep it going. Mentors, if you haven’t already contacted your mentees please do so soon. Give them your encouragement and make sure they have your contact information. Hopefully, the QA luncheon will become a fixture at the NAICC Annual Meeting for years to come. If anyone has ideas or suggestions for improvement or would like to help plan the upcoming QA luncheon in Reno please contact Valen Straub (valen@labservices.com) or Tracey Froggatt (TFroggatt@dow.com).

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW CERTIFIED RESEARCHERS

The following NAICC members recently received their Certified Professional Crop Consultant-Researcher designations:

Dan Easton, B.S., CPAg, CPCC-R
Easton Agri-Consulting, Inc.
Bagley, IA

Debra Keenan, M.S., PCA/PCO, CPCC-R
Research 2000
Chico, CA

Michelle L. Mitchell, B.S., CPCC-R
Coastal Research Services
Paso Robles, CA

www.naiccc.org
THE FERTILIZER INDUSTRY LAUNCHES NEW INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE NUTRIENT STEWARDSHIP

There is a new online resource aimed at helping farmers boost yields, manage input costs and maintain soil health. The website, www.nutrientstewardship.com, is a collaborative effort of the fertilizer industry aimed at increasing awareness of 4R nutrient stewardship, a site-specific, scientific framework that addresses farmers’ use of the right fertilizer source at the right rate, the right time and the right place.

Nutrient stewardship is a top priority for the entire fertilizer industry,” said TFI President Ford B. West. “The new website streamlines our industry’s efforts to promote awareness and adoption of science-based fertilizer best management practices, while also creating a brand for the 4Rs that will allow the agriculture community to speak with one voice regarding its commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainability.”

The 4R nutrient stewardship concept and website are a cooperative effort of The Fertilizer Institute (TFI), the International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI), the Canadian Fertilizer Institute (CFI) and the International Fertilizer Industry Association. The new site is designed to serve as an online clearinghouse for information on 4R-related tools and resources and will serve as the cornerstone for a multi-faceted nutrient stewardship initiative.

In addition to introducing site visitors to the 4R concept, the website offers information regarding a wide range of agronomic topics related to nutrient management, and provides a how-to guide for implementing the 4Rs on the farm.

“We’re in a time in agriculture where the risk of making the wrong decision when it comes to nutrient management is greater than ever before,” said Steve Phillips, IPNI Director, Southeast, United States. “In addition to meeting the challenge of feeding a growing population, agriculture is facing increasing regulatory pressure to limit the use of crop nutrients and those factors make right now the right time for promoting increased awareness and adoption of 4R nutrient stewardship.”

You can learn more about 4R nutrient stewardship by visiting www.nutrientstewardship.com to access a promotional video regarding the 4Rs and the new website.

SAVE THE DATE
2012 NAICC Annual Meeting
January 18-21, 2012
Peppermill Resort Hotel
Reno, NV

2013 NAICC Annual Meeting
January 23-26, 2013
Hyatt Jacksonville
Jacksonville, FL

NAICC Members, Join us for the ASFMRA Summer Education Week and Get our Member Rates!

All New Continuing Education Opportunities for Farm Managers and Ag Consultants! And Newly Updated Core Education Too!

Whether you are just starting out or looking to brush up on some skills, this is the place to do it. Come and join us at the ASFMRA 2011 Summer Education Week in Omaha, NE! There is something for everyone!

Here is just some of what you will see at the 2011 Summer Education Week in Omaha:

Updated core education:
Ag Land Management, Part 1
July 11-13, 2011
This course will cover topics such as Production Practices, Client Goals and Strategic Plan, Professionalism, Principles of Leasing, Property Risk Assessment, Conservation Practices, Listening Skills, Body Language, Selling Skills, Oral Presentations, Commodity Market Planning, Risk Management Planning and Budgeting & Financial Statements.

Ag Land Management, Part 2
July 11-13, 2011
This course will cover topics such as Locating and Characterizing Property, Project Management, Effective Negotiating, Customer Service, Business Structures, Analyzing Investments, Financial Ratios, Consulting Standards, Functions of the Dollar, Practice Management, Case Studies, Practical Applications of Budgeting and The Farm Plan.

Ag Land Management, Part 3
July 12-13, 2011
This course will cover topics such as Business Writing, Report Writing, Business Proposals, Document Control, Agents, Brokers and Consultants, Conflict Resolution and Understanding Appraisals.

All New Continuing Education offerings:
Cutting Edge Technology & Resources Workshop
July 11, 2011
This new seminar will survey new technologies like smart phones, GPS and iPads, phone apps, software, and web-based tools and their applications to appraisal, farm management and agricultural consulting.

Commodity Marketing and Risk Management Workshop
DTN Outlook - Weather, Grain Marketing and Crop Input
July 12, 2011
This seminar will cover the Crop Insurance Update, a review of the Government Farm Programs and a DTN Outlook on the Global Weather, Grain Marketing and Crop Inputs.

Capital Improvements, Budgeting and International Consulting Workshop
July 13, 2011
Please Note: A laptop is required for this seminar. This seminar addresses capital improvements, financial budgeting and international consulting for the Farm Manager and the Agricultural Consultant.

Like what you see? Want to know more? Then go to our ASFMRA Summer Education Week Information page, where you can get full descriptions of everything that is going on.