



January 2020

TRUE PURPOSE OF THE ANNUAL MEETING by Sandy Mackie

The NAICC exists to serve its members. We say that right up front in the mission statement: *"This alliance exists to unify and support independent consultants and researchers and provide a forum for information exchange within the agricultural community."* Through the Annual Meeting and AG PRO EXPO held every year in January at varying locations across the United States, we do just that.

The annual meeting has become THE place where the nation's top professionals come for networking and education opportunities. It is a great opportunity to meet NAICC members, sponsor companies, and vendors to exchange information, share stories, create new friendships, and rejuvenate old ones. The week consists of 3 days of pre-meeting workshops and training sessions, two more days of educational sessions, and our 85 booth AG PRO EXPO trade show that runs Wednesday through Friday. There are multiple social events also scheduled during the week.

How does the annual meeting get planned and organized? There are three education committees (Consultants, Researchers, and QA) of 10-15 member volunteers each under the leadership of the President-elect that work throughout the preceding year to plan the programs for each track and select the speakers and panelists. Substantial resources, such as honoraria and travel expenses, are allocated towards securing reputable speakers for each track.

As the NAICC has grown, sponsor and project management companies have found the annual meeting to be a good place to meet with researchers and lay plans for the

coming season. This was done early on by having sponsor-specific training sessions prior to the meeting, and this is still happening today.

More and more, sponsors and/or project management companies are asking researchers to meet with them during the NAICC scheduled program. This puts the researcher in the awkward position of not being able to attend the educational sessions that the NAICC has set up, as they feel obligated to meet with the sponsor so they can generate business for the coming year. The result is that some scheduled sessions are being poorly attended. The money paid by the NAICC for the speakers to come is not providing the value to the membership as intended, and the speakers are chagrined because they have allocated much time in preparing their presentations and there aren't many in the audience to listen. The many people involved in establishing the annual program are seeing their efforts being wasted.

As your Industry liaison to the Executive Board, I am asking all sponsor and project management companies to respect the mission of the NAICC. Please do not ask your valued researchers to miss the educational sessions so they can meet with you. There are opportunities outside of the scheduled NAICC program that can be utilized for these sidebar meetings. Wednesday afternoon the exhibit hall will be open, and there may be a window of opportunity if your people are not involved in committee meetings. You can catch up in the exhibit hall at the continental breakfast prior to the first sessions. There are short opportunities during the breaks between sessions. On Thursday there is a large window between 12:15 and 2:00 for networking lunches, as well as networking opportunities during the exhibit hall extravaganza on Thursday and the Friday night networking dinner. This may require more planning and scheduling on your part to meet with the people you want to see, but I know you can do it.

The NAICC greatly appreciates the sponsor and project management companies that come to the meeting and support the NAICC. We want to help facilitate your networking opportunities so you continue to receive value out of your attendance. But please be mindful of the work and resources being utilized to conduct the annual meeting, and respect that our researcher members want to attend the sessions as well as meet with you.

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If you have any hot topics that you would like to appear in the newsletter or a News Short, please email to Lisa at lwheelock@greatlakesag.com. What is important to one NAICC member is important to the organization!

NAICC

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