

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the Year 2000 approaches, the ARS National Secretarial Advisory Council (NSAC) has taken on a new perspective, broader goals, and fresh opportunities for the future. The main focus remains--to maintain excellence in program development, career enhancement, and employee dedication to the mission of ARS. The Council has undergone a major change in membership this past year, including a change for the 2000 Council name -**National Advisory Council for Office Support Professionals (NACOSP)**. NSAC projects which extend year to year include: the Home Page, Newsletter, Updates to the Quick Reference Guide, Quarterly Teleconferences, and responses to specific requests of the Agency. The NSAC HomePage (<http://www.ars.usda.gov/afm/nsac/>) details much of the work of the Council, as well as listing the bios of all members involved. The Home Page also provides a wealth of other information useful to ARS employees and other USDA agencies. The following report includes the activities, past accomplishments, and current and future goals of the National Council and of ARS Organizational Councils as well.

The National Secretarial Advisory Council held its annual meeting May 3-7, 1999, in Wyndmoor, PA, at the Eastern Regional Research Center (ERRC) hosted by the North Atlantic Area (NAA) Representative. At the top of the list of new projects for the Council is a Year 2000 Conference for ARS Office Support Staff, to be held Spring 2000, in Hunt Valley, MD. Planning is well underway for the conference, with old and new members working together to plan for a successful conference. Also in the development stage is a video presentation to ARS for April 2000 Secretaries Day. Many members of this year's Council will appear in the video introduced by Dr. Floyd Horn, Administrator, ARS and Mr. Wiz Horner, Deputy Administrator, Administrative & Financial Management (AFM). The presentation will be a prelude to the Spring Conference.

This Council continues to move forward with energy and enthusiasm for the mission of ARS and the role all support staff play in the Agency. All members are open to new challenges and experiences to enhance their careers and personal development. We must work collectively in identifying, sharing, and implementing the very best ideas and approaches available to efficiently meet the challenge brought on by changes as we look to the next century.

# NATIONAL SECRETARIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

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Members of the 1998–99 Council were:

CARMELA CARRICK, NPS  
JOYCE CRAIG, AFM  
PHYLLIS DAVIS, NAA  
TAMMY DURFEE, PWA  
MARCIA JENKINS, MWA  
OLGA LEE, NPA  
CATHY LONABERGER, OA  
JANNETTE REEVES, NAL  
FRANKEE SIMPSON, SAA  
KATHY TOWNSON, BA  
RUTH TREAT, SPA  
TONI WALLS, HRD  
SANDRA WARREN, MSA

Former members of the NSAC were:

MARIA ARCHER, NAL  
KAY CARR, SAA  
JANET FERST, OA  
LIBBY FOUSE, PWA  
NADINE HIERS, BA  
ANGIE MARCHETTI, AFM  
ELAINE MCGUIRE, BA  
MARY SILVA, NAL  
JOYCE SMITH, NAA  
MICHELLE SNOWDEN, OA  
QUEEN SPRIGGS, OA  
ANNE STEELE, SPA  
CECELIA STORTZUM, HRD  
GENEVIEVE SWARTZBERG, MSA  
SUE THORNBURG, NPA

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# NATIONAL SECRETARIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

## ANNUAL MEETING [May 3-7, 1999]

The ARS National Secretarial Advisory Council (NSAC) held its annual meeting May 3-7, 1999, in Wyndmoor, PA, at the Eastern Regional Research Center (ERRC) hosted by the North Atlantic Area (NAA) Representative, Phyllis Davis. Joining us the first morning were the NAA Director Wilda Martinez, ERRC Center Director John Cherry, Area Administrative Officer John Crew, and Associate Area Director Frank Greene, all welcoming and challenging the Council to be committed to our vision.

The *Quick Reference Guide* was discussed and plans were developed to update the guide by all Council members. The NSAC Newsletter, Home Page, and Training & Planning Guide were also addressed. Ongoing during the 3-day meeting, filming was being managed by Marco Ocadiz, Information Technology Division, for development of a video presentation for Secretaries Day 2000. The Year 2000 National Conference for ARS Office Support Staff was discussed at length. Subcommittees were formed to address each segment of planning, and a theme was chosen that envisions the future of office support employees. The NSAC met with ERRC secretaries and clerical staff for roundtable discussions, and toured the Eastern Regional Research Center.

This year's NSAC membership roster required major editing. Council members introduced their replacements, listed below:

<b>Area of Representation</b>	<b>Outgoing Member</b>	<b>Incoming Member</b>
MWA	Marcia Jenkins	Lori Wilson-Voss
BA	Nadine Hiers	Kathy Townson
NPS	Carmela Carrick	Linda Neuenhahn
NAL	Maria Archer	Jannette Reeves

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Priority Training Guide

The NSAC believes that standard secretarial training on some issues must be established for use across the board in ARS. Such a program will enable ARS secretaries to increase their knowledge and make them more effective.

In developing this list of training issues, we took the perspective of a new secretary, i.e. what information is most important to quickly become familiar with routine functions and what tasks are likely to be encountered next? Where possible, we have utilized or made reference to existing training materials. We have specifically avoided systems software training that should be developed and provided by other persons or groups. The majority of these training issues have been recommended for video presentations -- this will allow the information to be available at locations whenever needed.

A Priority Training Guide was developed and submitted. It is presently undergoing review by the staff of HRD.

### Home Page

The Home Page is constantly being reinvented and reorganized. Updates and additional changes to be included for the future are:

- Directives to Policies & Procedures
- Linking throughout the Page
- Color Changes
- Bios for Members
- Quick Reference Manual

### Newsletter

The NSAC Newsletter is published on a nonrecurring basis as information is disseminated. Suggested articles for upcoming newsletters include:

- Computer Tips
- Annual Meeting Highlights
- News from Organizational Councils
- "Headquarters Secretary of the Year Award" winner

## Teleconference Calls

Quarterly calls were held to discuss issues and plan methods and processes towards achieving the goals set. The minutes of each call is sent to all members so that the Council is constantly kept informed of activities and upcoming deadlines.

## Secretaries Day 2000 Video

Marco Ocadiz was available during the May meeting to film each of the NSAC members for a Secretaries Day Video/Satellite presentation to be aired next April 2000. ARS Administrator, Dr. Floyd Horn and Wiz Horner, AFM, will also address ARS on the video. The purpose of the video is to not only recognize ARS secretaries and office support staff, but to give visibility to the upcoming May 2000 Conference.

## Year 2000 National Conference for ARS Office Support Staff

Plans are well underway for a National Conference to be held in Hunt Valley, MD, Spring, 2000. In April 1998, the NSAC discussed the need to provide ARS office support staff an opportunity to: 1) Share information, including how to work together to support the ARS mission; 2) Learn ARS' vision for the next century and the role of the support staff in that vision; 3) Network with peers, and 4) Participate in appropriate training to ready ourselves in the changing technical environment. Committees were organized and duties assigned to members to begin the final phase of meeting preparation. The committee had worked separately on facility and location plans. At the annual meeting, the committee met with the full council and merged all information and efforts. It was decided that a Champion for the Conference needed to be found. As the Conference draws nearer, information will be widely distributed to all ARS.

## Trademark Project

A special project was given to NSAC by ARS Administrator, Floyd Horn. Six graphics (A Product of Agricultural Research--animals, crops, natural resources, aquaculture, nutrition, and forestry) have been trademarked by ARS to help identify products developed from agricultural research which accommodates products developed from collaborative research. The trademarks should be included in product packaging or on the products themselves. Each NSAC member will work directly with their Area Director and Technology Transfer specialist to implement the project.

## FY-00 GOALS

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- Assist in developing and presenting the video/satellite for Secretaries Day 2000 Presentation.
- Lead, plan, coordinate, and manage the Year 2000 National Conference for ARS Office Support Staff, "Odyssey 2000: Meeting the Challenge."
- Update the NSAC Home Page, Newsletter, and Quick Reference Guide.
- Monitor the Trademark Project and provide Dr. Horn feedback on its implementation.
- Continue with review and implementation of the Priority Training Guide.

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## SECRETARIAL RECOGNITION PROGRAM

Winners for 1998/1999 are:

- 1999 Headquarters Secretary of the Year, Sandra Warren, Executive Assistant, Mid-South Area Director, Stoneville, MS.
- Midwest Area Secretary of the Year, 1999, Sandra Groneberg, GS-6 Secretary, North Central Soil Conservation Research Laboratory, Morris, MN
- South Atlantic Area Secretary of the Year, 1998, was Bonnie Bayer, Center Director's Office, CMAVE, Gainesville, FL.
- Southern Plains Area Secretary of the Year, 1998, was Eilene Gibbens, Grazinglands Research Station, El Reno, OK.
- North Atlantic Area, 1999 Office Staff Recognition Program Award, Phyllis M. Davis, Center Director's Office, ERRC, Wyndmoor, PA and Tiffany Fisk, Geneva, NY.
- Mid South Area Secretary of the Year, 1998, was Pat Winston, Secretary, Administrative Office, Southern Regional Research Center, New Orleans, LA.

## REE SECRETARIAL AND CLERICAL COORDINATING COUNCIL (SCCC)

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The first issue of the REE-SCCC connection was sent in March 1999. It is hoped this newsletter and future issues will share information and improve communication among the secretarial and clerical employees throughout the REE mission area.

### **Background of Council**

In June 1997, the REE Under Secretary established the Council as recommended by the REE Secretarial and Clerical Program Results Team. The Council consists of two secretarial/clerical representatives from each of the four REE mission area agencies (Agricultural Research Service; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; Economic Research Service; and the National Agricultural Statistics Service), a representative from Administrative and Financial Management (AFM), and a representative from the Under Secretary's Office.

### **Early Accomplishments**

During the first year, the Council's focus was to share information, explore ways to improve communication, and address recommendations made by the Program Results Team. Some accomplishments were:

- Established charter and received Under Secretary's approval.
- Developed and distributed an informational brochure describing the Council.
- Extended support to established REE agency secretarial and clerical councils and offered guidance to agencies in the process of forming councils.
- Researched the *Skill/Will Leadership* method (as recommended by the Program Results Team) and submitted information to the Human Resources Division, AFM.
- Began an initiative to meet with agency secretarial and clerical councils to share information and discuss common issues and concerns.
- Met with the head of the Employee Development Section, AFM, HRD, to discuss career development and training opportunities.
- Published an article in the REE Newsletter announcing the establishment of the Council.

# **ORGANIZATIONAL SECRETARIAL ADVISORY COUNCILS**

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# ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (AFM) 1998-99 Annual Report

Melissa Goodloe – Co-chair  
Clarice Fleming – Co-chair  
Ann Bykowski  
Joyce Craig – Technical Advisor  
Dorothy Marshall  
Deadra Perry  
Linda Simpson

## Accomplishments

- The 1998 Annual Meeting was held on September 10. This meeting focused on teamwork and getting to know each other. The agenda included a team building exercise, on-site lunch, “Humor your Stress” video, and a brain storm on secretarial/clerical training needs.
- The OTTS Team handed out the completed “Survival Kit for AFM Secretaries” which has proven to be a very useful tool for AFM office support staff.
- In November, the Council held a brown bag lunch with the AFM Deputy Administrator, Wiz Horner, to discuss various issues to improve communication between support staff and management. Very good things came out of this meeting. Some of the subjects that were discussed were:
  - earlyout/buyouts offered to secretaries
  - including secretaries in decisions that affect their work assignments
  - consider having secretarial positions reclassified and advertised as ladder positions
  - an annual AFM Secretary Award
- The Council held a welcome reception for all new ARS Secretaries in the Beltsville Office Facility (BOF) which included AFM, NPS, IS, BPMS & OTT. The reception was a great opportunity for all ARS Secretaries in the BOF to meet in person.
- A few of our members attended the Beltsville Area Secretarial Advisory Council Workshop held on April 20. Clarice Fleming and Deadra Perry attended the session on Correspondence and Linda Simpson attended the session on PCMS. Both were very informative because we found that ARS as a whole is dealing with a lot of the same issues.

- On April 21, Secretaries Day, the AFMSAC held a viewing of a PBS Satellite Seminar, "Annual Briefing for Administrative Professionals" featuring Joan Lunden, former co-host of "Good Morning America." The Seminar focused on the changing role of administrative professionals. The seminar provided ideas on how to deal with change, new office technologies, and the importance of delegating and mentoring. Most of the local councils were represented.

## Goals

- 1999 Annual Secretarial Meeting in September
- Bi-monthly Brown Bag Lunches
- Working on the NSAC Y2K Conference
- Set up Training Workshops on Administrative Processes
- Improve Communication Among All Administrative Professionals in AFM
- Work Closely with other Local Secretarial Councils
- Restructuring the makeup of the Council

## BELTSVILLE AREA

The Beltsville Area Secretarial Advisory Council (BASAC) was established by Dr. K. D. Murrell, Area Director, in March 1995. Presently, each BA Center/Institute/Division is represented by one member. As of March 11, 1999 members of BASAC began to recruit one alternate member from each Center/Institute/Division in an effort to increase attendance at meetings, give others a chance to be involved, and bring new ideas to the committee. Meetings are held monthly. Current members of the council are:

Janet Gates, Natural Resources Institute (NRI) - Co-Chair  
Sheila Messineo, Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center (BHNRC) - Co-Chair  
Cindy Hanna, Livestock and Poultry Sciences Institute (LPSI)  
Janice Hill, Plant Sciences Institute (PSI) - Recorder  
Sylvia Stephens, U.S. National Arboretum (USNA)  
Carol Appelbaum, Facilities Management and Operations Division (FMOD)  
Lora Tanner, Beltsville Area Director's Office  
Kathleen Townson, (FMOD), Technical Advisor

## Accomplishments

- Secretarial Workshops. A one-half day BASAC Workshop for all BA secretarial and clerical support personnel was held on October 21, 1998. This special training opportunity consisted of a welcome by Dr. Phyllis Johnson, Area Director, and two sets of concurrent training sessions, where attendees could participate in the sessions that most interested them. The first two

- sessions were: T&A's mediated by Ted Nykiel, Management Analyst, FMOD, and Personnel mediated by Katherine Crouch, Administrative Clerk, FMOD, and Pat Tippet, then Area Ethics Advisor. Following a short break the sessions resumed with discussions on PCMS (Purchase Card Management System) led by Carol Sisas, Purchasing Agent, USNA, and Travel led by Dawn Ruffner, then Area Transportation Assistant, FMOD, and Janet Gates, Executive Assistant, NRI. During the sessions, participants were free to bring up issues and problems specific to their work settings. Most participants enjoyed the informal discussions and found them extremely relevant and helpful in their specific job duties.
- National Secretaries' Day Observance. Due to the overwhelming success of the first BASAC Workshop, a second one-half day workshop was held on April 20, 1999 in observance of National Secretaries' Day. Secretaries were welcomed by Dr. Ronald Korcak, Beltsville Area Associate Director. The first duet of sessions included an encore visit by Ted Nykiel, Management Analyst, FMOD, and Katherine Crouch, Personnel Assistant, FMOD, discussing T&A's and a RMIS session mediated by Michelle Garner, Area Program Analyst, and Chris Woods, Secretary, BHNRC. Following a short break, the sessions returned with a discussion on PCMS led by Michael Wyckoff, Head Contracting Section, FMOD, and Leon Dodson, Purchasing Agent, NRI, and Correspondence led by Lora Tanner, Executive Assistant, from our Area Director's Office and Janet Gates, Executive Assistant, NRI. Again, the sessions clarified many issues and a substantial positive response was received.
  - Newsletter. The BASAC Flyer was published in April and October 1998. The publication is designed to keep secretarial and clerical staff informed of happenings in the Beltsville Area. Subjects have included highlights of BASAC's activities and of specific offices in the Beltsville Area, articles of interest to working women in general, "how-do-I" and "did-you-know" columns with helpful tips, an up-to-date list of the Impact Line, and information on training, useful web sites, and employee achievement. Copies are distributed to all BA secretaries and clerical staff and the Beltsville Area Leadership Team.
  - The Impact Line. The Impact Line consists of field experts from the Beltsville Area in the areas of travel, RMIS, correspondence, and T&A's. An updated list of the names and numbers of these experts is made available to all secretaries through the BASAC flyer and provides an avenue for informal mentoring between experienced and new secretaries.
  - Partnership in Excellence. BASAC continued to pursue improvements in orientation and training for new secretaries and clerical employees in the Beltsville Area. Efforts were made in:

- C Development of Desk Reference Binder/Procedure Manual. Efforts are now underway by BASAC to create a desk reference binder/procedure manual for use by the entire Beltsville Area. A number of institute/center binders are being reviewed for ideas. Meetings with the BA Management Team proved that full support for this project exists.
- C Mentoring. BASAC proposed the inclusion of a representative to the Beltsville Area Mentoring Program (BAMP) Committee and a meeting was held to discuss the idea with BAMP. Members of the Mentoring Program were not receptive to this idea, so new avenues for formal/informal mentoring are being considered at this time.

## Goals

- Procedures Manual. Work will continue on creating a comprehensive and up-to-date Procedures Manual. There will be a workshop held to present the manual when it is completed.
- Workshops. Continue to hold BASAC workshops for all secretarial and clerical employees of the Beltsville Area, in order to maintain an informed and skilled workforce.
- C On-line Training. Hold on-line training for both RMIS and Travel to give new and current BA secretaries hands-on experience with both systems and how they operate most effectively. Formal training is needed as most seasoned employees learned the programs on their own and many new employees do not know how to operate the systems.
- Continue to coordinate special events with the Civil Rights Office and pursue collaboration with other BA Organizations. By combining resources with others, BASAC can achieve more goals than working independently. Also, by collaborating with other established groups, BASAC may become more visible, therefore, gaining increased interest and participation.

## MID SOUTH AREA

The Mid South Area Secretarial Advisory Council (MSASC) was established by Dr. Thomas J. Army, Area Director, in May 1996. The Council was restructured in May 1998. Members of the MSA Secretarial Council for 1998-99 are:

Vivian Collins, Stoneville, Mississippi – Co-Chair  
Cynthia Poynor, Oxford, Mississippi – Co-Chair  
Linda Althen - Mississippi State, Mississippi  
Brenda Aysenne - Houma, Louisiana  
Madeline Hall - Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
Myra Shaw - Oxford, Mississippi  
Pat Winston - New Orleans, Louisiana  
Pat Waldroup - Auburn, Alabama  
Sandra Warren, Stoneville, Mississippi – Technical Advisor

## Accomplishments

- An organizational meeting was held September 15-17, 1998, in Jackson, MS. At this meeting Brenda Aysenne was selected as Recorder; the Charter was revised and signed; a Plan was defined for conducting council business; and duties were assigned for hosting the Mid South Area Secretarial Meeting.
- Held scheduled quarterly conference calls.
- Council members met at Stoneville, MS, in conjunction with RMIS training on October 22, 1998. Copies of the updated *Quick Reference Guide* were distributed to all members for review.

The following Sub-Committees were established:

Welcome Package, Pat Waldroup

Mentoring Program, Madeline Hall

Training Program, Madeline Hall

MSASC Newsletter, Pat Winston, Chair, with Madeline Hall and Brenda Aysenne

Quick Reference Guide, Myra Shaw

Home Page, Vivian Collins

New MSA Secretarial Procedures Manual, Co-Chairs, Myra Shaw and Cynthia Poynor

All Council members will participate in Sub-Committees.

- Secretaries to Research Leaders were invited by the Area Director and attended the Mid South Area Leadership Meeting in Jackson, MS, on December 8-11, 1998. The Council held a brief “Getting-to-Know You” reception at the hotel prior to the meeting. Dr. Army, Area Director, and Dr. King, Associate Area Director, attended the reception. The *MSA Quick Reference Guide* was distributed to all secretaries attending and to Research Leaders who asked for one (and many did). The Council was introduced during the meeting.
- The first Mid South Area Secretarial Conference and Workshop was held April 19-21, 1999, at the Southern Regional Research Center (SRRC) in New Orleans, LA. The conference was funded by the Area Director. Dr. Army, Area Director, Mr. Archie Tucker, Area Administrative Officer, Dr. John

Patrick Jordan, Center Director, SRRC, and Ms. Pat Frick, Beltsville, MD, joined all secretaries at a reception the evening prior to the meeting. Dr. Army opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. Our keynote speaker was our own Sandra Warren, 1998 ARS Secretary of the Year. Jean Dunn and Pat Frick from Human Resources Division were speakers also, as well as Mr. Archie Tucker. The Area Office Management Team--Archie Tucker, Pat Brown, Paula Brodofsky, and Sandra Warren--held a panel discussion on conducting Area business which was very informative. Agenda items included:

- Tour of SRRC
- Files Management and Correspondence
- Budget & Fiscal Issues
- RMIS Workshop
- Cheat Sheets and RMIS Labels
- Travel Software
- Conflict Resolution
- Stress Management
- Occupational Therapy
- Self-Defense
- Dress for Success

The last day of the conference participants were entertained by the “stress reliever,” Mr. Chicken.

## Goals

- Develop “Welcome Package” for new secretaries.
- Continue with Mentoring Program.
- Organize secretarial “share sessions” at multi-locations during the year.
- Develop MSASC Home Page.
- Develop newsletter.
- Complete and distribute MSA Secretarial Procedures Manual.

## MIDWEST AREA

The MWA PASTG met three times in person, and held three conference calls during the past year. Members and the locations they represent for 1999 are:

- Sherri Buxton, Co-Chair, Peoria, IL
- Lori Wilson-Voss, Ames, IA, Co-Chair
- Sandy Groneberg, St. Paul & Morris, MN & Madison, WI
- LonaJean Strickland, Urbana, IL & West Lafayette, IN
- Diane Cronk, Ames, IA
- Sue Ohlendorf, NADC, Ames, IA
- Shirley Runge, NCAUR, Peoria, IL

Jean Sparks, Columbia, MO  
Sedina Lowe, Columbus, Coshocton, & Wooster, OH & East Lansing, MI  
Marcia Jenkins, Technical Advisor, Peoria, IL

New membership for 1999-2000 will be as follows:

Sherri Buxton, Co-Chair, Peoria, IL  
Sandy Groneberg, St. Paul & Morris, MN & Madison, WI, Co-Chair  
LonaJean Strickland, Urbana, IL & West Lafayette, IN  
Diane Cronk, Ames, IA, Location  
Shirley Runge, NCAUR, Peoria, IL  
Jean Sparks, Columbia, MO  
Sedina Lowe, Columbus, Coshocton, & Wooster, OH & East Lansing, MI  
Lori Wilson-Voss, Ames, IA, Technical Advisor, Peoria, IL

## Accomplishments

- Continue to update the MWA Standard Operating Procedures Manual which was developed and disseminated to all clerical employees. This manual serves as a desk reference for secretarial positions in the MWA. Updates are done during the PASTG meetings to keep the manual current. This manual was disseminated to all Headquarters, NSAC members, and the Area Directors' Secretaries in the Agency. It is the first of its kind and has been used by two Areas for SOPs now being developed, thus showing the large impact this document has had.
- 1999 marked the third year of the MWA Secretary of the Year program. Eight highly qualified secretaries were submitted for consideration. A panel unanimously selected Sandra A. Groneberg, Morris, MN. An awards ceremony will be held in her honor later this year.
- The PASTG continues to utilize the mentoring program. Last year at the suggestion of the directors, it was determined that all new MWA secretaries would be given a mentor for a minimum of one year. This program is having continual success with three mentees and mentors currently working together.
- At the direction of the Area Directors, the PASTG conducted a survey of the MWA Secretaries to determine the nature of the jobs we do and if the location of our units has any determining factors on our jobs. This information was provided to the Area Directors for their use.
- We continue to disseminate newsletters to all the secretaries in MWA.
- We continue to receive Issues Sheets from MWA personnel. This issues sheet was designed as a forum to relay to the Area Directors any concerns or issues that secretarial and support staff have.

- The PASTG took a lead in assistance to the East Lansing, MI, location when all secretaries and clerks left for other positions. For a three-month period of time, the membership of this committee completed all of the E. Lansing location travel requirements, 115s, CRIS actions, 425s, and 421s.
- Discussions are ongoing with regard to development of a Midwest Area PASTG Home Page. This project will be further addressed at our October meeting in St. Paul, MN.

## Goals

- Development of the Midwest Area PASTG Home Page.
- Explore the possibility of creating a chat room on the Internet for clerical employees to post questions or concerns and have others assist them in resolving problems.
- Continue to visit the MWA Research sites and interact with location secretaries.
- Establish a training library available for all MWA employees. This training library will consist of books and videos, both commercially produced and specifically designed by Area Personnel to aid in the training and career enhancement of the clerical staff.

## NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY

The National Agricultural Library (NAL) Secretarial Advisory Council (NALSAC) continues to work toward its goal of ensuring that NAL has highly skilled professionals working in partnership with management to meet its secretarial and administrative needs.

Council members for 1998:

Ann Palmes, Technical Services Division -- Chair  
Phyllis Bickerton, Information Systems Division --Recorder  
Nelsie Jameson -- Public Services Division  
Jannette Shuford-Reeves -- Office of Director  
Maria Archer -- Technical Advisor

## Accomplishments

- Updated the NAL Secretarial Handbook with pertinent information.
- Prepared a travel worksheet to assist the traveler in submitting requests for travel which will be helpful to the Travel Coordinators. It was reviewed by the

Management Team and passed on to Tiajuana Sizemore, our new Administrative Support for Travel, for final review.

- Recertification training in CPR was given.
- Worked with the Professional Leadership Development Group to bring a stress management seminar to NAL.

## Goals

- Continue to update the NAL Secretarial Handbook to include correspondence preparation guidance.
- Finalize travel worksheet and distribute to all NAL travelers and travel coordinators.
- Continue convening quarterly luncheon/information sharing meetings.
- Finalize recommendations on telephone coverage issues and voice-mail usage.

# NATIONAL PROGRAM STAFF/OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

## Accomplishments

- Interview Skills Workshop - the NPS support staff restructuring resulted in the opening of several new positions. To prepare the support staff for the interview process, OSAC organized an “interview skills workshop” which included overviews from Human Resources, the SMART Center the Beltsville mentoring program, and Cathy Lonaberger, Dr. Horn’s secretary.
- Workstation Review Committee - In preparation for the NPS move to the Beltsville Office Facility (BOF), OSAC members reviewed potential workstation configurations, compared these workstations to existing work space, and presented their findings to Dr. Murrell. The Workstation Committee report resulted in a more efficient design.

## Goals

- C To work more efficiently and professionally under the new support staff restructure.
- C NPS needs to revitalize the Council because two members and the Chair rotated off the Council; an election was not held due to move-related issues (NPS moved in February 1999) and NPS reorganization issues, along with the fact that the restructure resulted in NPS having only a few secretaries.

## NORTH ATLANTIC AREA

The 1998-1999 Secretarial Advisory Council for NAA is composed of the secretaries to the Area and Associate Area Directors, the Administrative Officer, the Center Directors at Plum Island Animal Disease Center and the Eastern Regional Research Center as permanent members and four rotating members selected from field locations. Current members are:

Diane Koch, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania -- Chair  
Joyce Smith, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania  
Prunella Brashich, Plum Island, New York  
Phyllis Davis, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania -- Technical Advisor  
Denise Madden, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania  
Nancy Brady, Newark, Delaware -- Rotating Member  
Patricia Coyle, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania -- Rotating Member  
Martha Rose, Kearneysville, West Virginia -- Rotating Member  
Linda Hopp, Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania -- Rotating Member

## Accomplishments

- Mentoring, shadowing and orientation was conducted twice this past year and continues to be an important part of the NAA Secretarial Advisory Council's activities. Orientation has been expanded to include not only secretaries, but other office support staff at our various locations. The orientation includes a session with the Area and Associate Area Directors' secretaries to acquaint new secretaries with the NAA Secretarial Handbook and other available resource materials. This includes an in-depth review of formal and informal correspondence, foreign correspondence and RPES case writeups along with general information and Ethics Orientation for New Employees. Sessions are also scheduled with the Area Administrative Officer and each of the sections of the Area Administrative Office which gives the participants an overview of the different operations within the Area, i.e., Travel, ARW, Contracts, etc. Training in RMIS is provided with hands-on experience followed by a day of "Shadowing" a secretary in the daily operations of an office. Also added this year is a session on Technology Transfer to provide background on this important area of ARS Research, which was considered extremely useful.
- New secretaries in the North Atlantic Area receive a call from either the Area Director's or Associate Area Director's secretary welcoming them to ARS. This call is made as soon as the Area Office is advised of their reporting dates and serves to advise new secretaries that we have a Secretarial Advisory Council and that a Member of the Council will be contacting them to assist them in getting acquainted with their jobs. The appointed Member is advised of new secretaries' arrival by the Area Director's office and contacts the secretaries to offer assistance in getting started.

- A "New Employee Welcoming Packet" containing a letter from the Area Director, a listing of the NAA Secretarial Advisory Council Members, a brief explanation of the North Atlantic Area along with a list of contact people to enable new secretaries and clerical employees to feel more comfortable in the early days on the job has been implemented. In addition, the information in the packet will be reviewed at orientation.
- The NAA Leadership Meeting was held November 16-19, 1998, and was hosted by the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, in Princess Anne, MD. The NAA SAC was involved in putting together the program for the secretaries in attendance at this meeting. Three very useful and informative sessions were scheduled addressing such issues as Career Enhancement/Development, "Where Can I Find the Information I Need" and a session devoted to Internet searching. The entire NAA secretarial community was addressed by the Area Director, Mrs. Wilda Martinez, and by the Secretary to the Administrator, Cathy Lonaberger, who gave us the perspective of their positions.
- The NAA SAC had an informal Face-to-Face meeting at the Leadership Conference in November 1998. The new Council was announced and introduced to those in attendance at the session on Secretarial issues. Due to the limited time available, beyond the agenda, no formal meeting was held.
- In July 1998, the senior members of the Council met at Plum Island, NY, to discuss the future direction of the NAA SAC. One of the most important items discussed was the membership of the Council and the changes needed to better represent the Area. It was decided at that meeting, that there would be three rotating members and the Technical Advisor to the NSAC. Alternating terms have been set (two terms of three years and two terms of two years) allowing for a smooth and effective transition without disruption to the Council. Revision of the NAA SAC charter was another major task accomplished as a result of this meeting. Some very thought provoking discussions took place with the end result of a charter we feel more accurately describes our Council.
- The NAA SAC has drafted, for the Area Director's approval, a newsletter which will initially be put out in print, but future editions could be put on the NAA Home Page. The newsletter is considered to be a good source of communicating new ideas and changes quickly to the secretarial community. With the ability to communicate electronically with all locations within NAA, the newsletter will now be considered a vital aspect for improved communication.
- The NAA SAC has made and distributed packets calling for nominations for the "Office Staff Recognition Program" (called Secretary of the Year in other Areas.) The packet contains the announcement of the award, the criteria and nominating procedures, along with colored flyers to be posted at each and every NAA location. Nominations are due to the Area Administrative Officer by June 1.

- A brochure describing the North Atlantic Area Secretarial Advisory Council has been prepared. This brochure details the mission and goals of the NAA SAC, along with its guidelines and membership, and will be given to the Area Director for approval. After approval, this brochure will be distributed to all secretarial and clerical employees and their supervisors. It will also be included in the "New Employee Welcoming Packet."
- Minutes from conference calls/meetings held by the National Secretarial Advisory Council are distributed to all secretarial and clerical employees.
- Minutes from the North Atlantic Area Secretarial Advisory Council (NAA SAC) are shared with all NAA secretaries, clerks, research leaders, and the National Secretarial Advisory Council.

## Goals

- Continue to improve and expand the mentoring, shadowing and orientation for new secretarial and clerical employees.
- Consider a name change for the NAA SAC to better reflect secretarial responsibilities. The word "secretarial" sometimes implies that typing, answering the phones, filing, etc. are the extent of our positions. However, that is not the case. The positions in the secretarial field in ARS are more involved in the program and administrative management tasks than ever before. We will consider several options based on trends we have seen in the private sector for addressing the "support" position titling.
- Set up a subcommittee to put together a Home Page for the North Atlantic Area Secretarial Advisory Council. Initially this Home Page will be part of the NAA Home Page with the expectation that a separate site will be set up in the not too distant future. The Home Page will contain the mission, goals, guidelines, membership, Council Members bios, electronic communications, and valuable links to answer everyday questions.
- Meet and plan for the upcoming May NSAC Meeting being held in Philadelphia. NAA SAC will have a face-to-face meeting as well as a joint meeting with NSAC. Prepare an agenda for the Face-to-Face Meeting and for the meeting with NSAC.
- Investigate availability of training opportunities via satellite downlink. There are many organizations that have presentations available which could greatly enhance the role of the secretary.
- An updated listing of Resource Personnel will be distributed to all secretarial/clerical employees in NAA.
- A subcommittee is working on a major revision of the NAA Secretarial Handbook. It is expected that this will be distributed some time in June.
- As a result of the NAA Leadership Meeting, Mrs. Wilda Martinez, Area Director, NAA, has tasked the NAA SAC to come up with a generic position description which more accurately reflects the secretarial involvement in both the program and administrative functions of their location. Position descriptions on file now

reflect the "secretarial duties" of the position and not the support provided to a Research Unit, etc. A small committee will be set up to address this issue.

## NORTHERN PLAINS AREA

The Northern Plains Area Secretarial Council (NPASAC) consists of the following members:

Kathleen Aragon, Laramie, Wyoming  
Louise Dalton, Fort Collins, Colorado - Chair  
Sandy Mathewson, Manhattan, Kansas  
Sharon Peterson, Grand Forks, North Dakota - Recorder  
Jan Preston, Lincoln, Nebraska  
Olga Lee, Fort Collins, Colorado - Technical Advisor

At the end of this year, there will be changes in the membership according to the charter.

## Accomplishments

- Continually provided mentoring, orientation, and basic in-house training for all newly hired secretaries and refreshers for those already on board. The new secretaries who received orientation training were very positive with their comments on the value of such training not only to become familiar with the people they will be in contact with, but also to gain an overview of the workings of an Area Office. More of the same is being done through the Colorado-Wyoming Secretaries Meetings at the Ft. Collins location. Other locations in the NPA have been encouraged to form similar type groups in order to disseminate information and share work related issues that would benefit all. Through this group, it proved possible to request changes in procedures to make everyone's jobs a little easier. Members of the group developed a guidebook called "RMIS for Dummies" that was distributed at the NPA Leadership Meeting in January, 1999 and has proved to be very useful, since it was developed by the users themselves.
- Through our Technical Advisor and NSAC member, Olga Lee, we continue to provide support to the NSAC and also receive support from them.
- Promote programs in support of professionalism in the secretarial field. Five secretaries from the Ft. Collins location recently attended an Administrative Assistants Conference. At the next CO-WY Secretaries Meeting, information gained from this seminar will be critiqued for the others and either recommended or not recommended. Other training sessions have been recommended, i.e., the Franklin Time Management Training, which several of the secretaries have attended, are now using the planner, and depend on the system.

- The NPASAC met November 3-4, 1998 in Ft. Collins, CO, mainly to work on the draft of the NPA Quick Reference Guide. A good bit of planning had already taken place by e-mail and conference calls and this was a working meeting to finalize the handbook. The goal of the Council was to have the handbook geared to NPA's needs and completed and ready for distribution during the NPA Leadership Meeting scheduled for January 1999. One more conference call was planned to go over each chapter before sending the book to the printer. All this was completed in time for the Leadership Meeting. The guide was a big success and is now being used as a reliable reference. Council members received an award for their contributions to the development of the Guide.
- Periodically, we have been asking for feedback on the value of the Council's efforts and all responses have been positive. Requests have been made to us that now that a guidebook has been developed, to please keep it up to date so that it does not lose its value. All in all, the feedback indicates that secretaries do have it a little better for our efforts and now have a more open line of communication with peers through networking, the use of the resource assistants list we developed during the past year, and the two guidebooks developed and distributed at the NPA Leadership Meeting.

## Goals

- C Continue to provide mentoring, orientation, and basic in-house training for all newly hired secretaries in addition to refresher sessions for those already on board. Refresher sessions will be organized and presented on specific subjects that come up once a year, i.e., ARMPS, or on the RMIS system which is ongoing.
- C Continue to provide assistance to the National Secretarial Advisory Council.
- C Promote programs in support of professionalism in the secretarial field.
- C Identify and provide outside training courses of particular value to secretaries and continue to encourage networking with peers.
- C Review the newly developed NPA Quick Reference Guide and issue additions and revisions on a periodic basis.
- C Continue to set realistic goals agreed on by the members and rely on feedback for furthering the goals.
- C Identify a replacement for Olga Lee as the NSAC Technical Advisor.
- C Identify replacements for two NPASAC members rotating off the council.

## PACIFIC WEST AREA

The PWA Secretarial/Program Support Advisory Council continues to work toward their goal of ensuring that PWA has highly skilled professional secretarial/program support staff working as part of the location leadership team to meet the program/administrative goals of the Agency. The PWA Council conducted its 1999 annual meeting at the Pacific West Area, ARS, Area Office in Albany, California January 19-22, 1999. Previous Council

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meetings have been held at the following ARS locations: Pullman, Washington; Phoenix, Arizona; Corvallis, Oregon; and Albany, California.

**Council members and their positions for 1998-99 are:**

Barbie Ballengee, Shafter, CA - Co-Chair  
Marla Lawrence, Phoenix, AZ - Co-Chair  
Julia Berrey, Wapato, WA - Recorder  
Judy Litster, Fresno, CA - Information Coordinator  
Veronica Cullum, Albany, CA - Area Office Representative  
Judith Flynn, Corvallis, OR - Handbook/Update Coordinator  
Tammy Durfee, Pullman, WA - Technical Advisor

Dr. Arthur Schipper, Associate Director  
Area Office Advisor/Coordinator  
USDA-ARS-PWA, Albany, CA

## Accomplishments

- Finalized/Distributed PWA Secretarial Handbook
- Developed/Implemented Electronic Newsletter
- Developed PWA Secretarial Handbook Update Subcommittee

## Goals

- Improve/Expand PWA Directory
- Create PWA Secretarial Council Web site
- Continue to motivate interest in the Mentoring Program & the “PWA New Secretary Training Program”.
- Develop & establish subcommittee for “Changing Roles of Secretaries” Survey.
- Continue to update PWA Secretarial Handbook

## SOUTH ATLANTIC AREA

The South Atlantic Area-Secretarial Advisory Council (SAA-SAC) strives to maintain an urgent Agency goal – To ensure that highly skilled, professional/secretarial support is provided for the Area. To that end, an Orientation/Mentoring Program is in place to provide professionals working in partnership with management to meet its secretarial and administrative needs.

Council members for 1998-99:

Susan Mewborn, Athens, GA – Chair

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Rhonda Harper, Athens, GA - Recorder  
Migdalia Malave, Mayaguez, PR - Scrapbook  
Sabrina Whitley-Ferrell, Raleigh, NC - Co-Chair  
Dean Toler, Raleigh, NC  
Peggy Zelonka, Gainesville, FL - Information and Training  
Debra Duckworth - Athens, GA (member at large)  
Frankee Simpson, Athens, GA – Technical Advisor

## Accomplishments

- Replaced one Council vacancy and added two new members - Dean Toler replaced Pat Fields; Debra Duckworth became the Member at large - a position that we wanted to fill from the beginning of the SAC; Dalma Dickens and Ellen Whitesides will be replacing Susan Mewborn and Peggy Zelonka as they rotate off the Council effective March, 1999. The SAA-SAC now consists of 7 members and a technical advisor.
- SAA Secretary of the Year Award for 1998: Bonnie Bayer, Center Director's Office, CMAVE, Gainesville, FL.
- Held annual face-to-face meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina, August 9-12, 1998 - where we made plans for upcoming year and held a day of training on the Internet/Intranet at North Carolina State University's Computer Center.
- In December, 1998, sent an article on SAA-SAC to Sandra Warren of National Secretarial Council for future NSAC's Newsletter.
- Added a reminder calendar to webpage for events and recurring due dates.
- Updated SAA-SAC members on our webpage to include current pictures and biographies.
- Started development of the SAA portion of a guide to accompany the "Quickguide" provided by the NSAC and with the use of the Midwest's SAC Standard Operating Procedure Manual as a guide. (This is a great SOP to use as an example, and we appreciate that their Council has allowed us to use it).
- Added a SAA-SAC Representative to the AFM Quality Council - Dalma Dickens agreed to serve and was appointed by AO/Council and she is now a member of the SAA-SAC which fulfills this goal.
- Updated/revised Charter at Annual August 1998 Meeting. Each year the SAA Council holds a meeting at a Council Member's location for Council visibility, and to meet and interact with other support staff at these locations. Training is planned and provided whenever possible to cut expenses and enhance job performance. Positive feedback from throughout the Area make Council members aware that this practice is effective.

## Goals

- Annual face-to-face meeting of the Council: To be held at the Mayaguez, P.R. location will consist of welcoming new members; going over the history, duties of positions/posts; review contact list; making any changes to Webpage (hot link to SOP); gathering pictures and bios/bios updates of SAC for Webpage; preparation of Accomplishments and Goals for the final draft of the NSAC Annual Report to the Administrator's Council; and signing of the Charter. Our main thrust will be to complete work on the Standard Operating Procedures Manual for SAA which we started work on in early 1999.
- This year we will devote most of our time to finalizing the SAA Standard Operating Procedure Manual which will encompass: Agency Abbreviations (Complete), Reminder Calendar - (Sabrina Whitley-Ferrell), Correspondence, Files, retention and disposition (Complete), Financial, Foreign Research Associate Program - (Peggy Zelonka), Mentoring - (new section for our SOP) (Rhonda Harper), Orientation - (Rhonda Harper), Personnel - (Debra Duckworth), Property (Complete as is), Research Position Evaluation System (add updated Directives and instructions from RPES Committee) - (Susan Mewborn), RMIS - Resource Management Information System - (Dean Toler), and Travel (Susan Mewborn). We will also plan strategy for distribution of the SOP.
- Create forms and procedures for the Mentoring Program. Check status of it.
- Give Progress Report on the Program. Make any improvements or changes.
- Develop a Training Survey for the South Atlantic Area.
- Established a Groupwise/E-mail mailbox for SAA Secretaries and Supervisors to make it easier to share Council information (to be handled through the Area Computer Staff)

### Council Members for 1999-2000:

Sabrina Whitley-Ferrell - Raleigh, NC - Chair  
Rhonda Harper - Athens, GA -Co-Chair  
D. Dean Toler - Raleigh, NC - Recorder  
Migdalia Malave - Mayaguez, PR - Scrapbook  
(99Annual Meeting Hostess)  
Dalma Dickens - Tifton, GA  
Debra Duckworth - Athens, GA  
Ellen Whitesides - Florence, SC  
Margaret Martin - Gainesville, FL (replacing M. Malave, May, 2000)  
Frankee Simpson - Athens, GA - Technical Adviser

## SOUTHERN PLAINS AREA

Members of the 1998-99 SPA Secretarial/Program Support Council are:

Sherry Dewald, Woodward, Oklahoma - Chair  
Pat Agold, Kerrville, Texas - Training Coordinator

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Lola Albright, Booneville, Arkansas  
Rayma Cox, Bushland, Texas - Recorder  
Rhea Fryar, Lubbock, Texas - Co-Chair  
Karen Wilcox, College Station, Texas - Information Coordinator  
Ruth Treat, Stillwater, Oklahoma - Technical Advisor

## Accomplishments

- Developed a home page for our Council based on input from the Council members. Incorporated links to other helpful sites as well information on each member.
- Continued to produce and distribute an informational newsletter. Several secretaries were highlighted, as was a secretarial staff meeting held at the Weslaco, TX, center. Articles by guest writers included a perspective on the benefits of serving on a CARE team, by Tammy Durfee, Pullman, WA; and tips for documenting duties performed outside your assigned duties, by Cecelia Stortzum, HRD.
- Developed a directory for the Southern Plains Area personnel, containing current titles, addresses, phone/fax, and e-mail addresses. This directory will be periodically updated and made available to the locations.
- Council Chair served on the planning committee for developing the program for the 1999 SPA Leadership Conference. The Council was responsible for planning and facilitating the breakout session for secretaries, and arranged for a portion of the time to be used by the Program Analyst for a discussion of RMIS issues.
- Continued to improve communications among the secretaries/program support employees through site visits, sharing of templates of commonly used forms, networking at various SPA activities, and promoting the SPA Shadowing Program developed in 1998.
- Discussed the development of an SPA-specific Secretarial Manual, either as a revision of existing materials or a completely new manual, with the consensus that work on such a document should be initiated during 1999 after new Council members were on board. Outgoing members will be encouraged to participate in this project.
- Identified and recommended replacement members for half of the SPA council to the Area Director. The 1999-2000 Council will include:
- Rhea Fryar, Big Spring, TX, as Chair, Rayma Cox, Bushland, TX, as Recorder, Karen Wilcox, College Station, TX, as Information Coordinator, Olivia Pedraza, Weslaco, TX, as Member, Justine Flowers, Little Rock, AR, as Training Coordinator, and Phyllis Hoffman, Temple, TX, as Co-Chair, and Ruth Treat, Stillwater, OK, as the Technical Advisor.

## Goals

- Develop an Orientation Package to be provided to new secretaries and O/A clerks, to include organizational information, list of SPA Council members for contacts, the Quick Reference Guide, information on the SPA Shadowing Program, the SPA directory of personnel, and other pertinent information.
- Develop a SPA-specific Secretarial Handbook.
- Continue to maintain communications through the newsletter, which will be distributed and posted to the Home Page, and through more personal one-on-one interactions such as site visits and forums for sharing of information.
- Update and maintain the SPA directory of personnel addresses, phones, and e-mail.
- Continue to administer and promote the SPA Shadowing Program implemented in 1998.
- Maintain the SPA Council Home Page, review and update links, and periodically refresh material presented to maintain recency and timeliness.
- Actively promote the SPA Awards Recognition Program by developing and distributing flyers and encouraging nomination of deserving employees by supervisors and co-workers.

**NATIONAL SECRETARIAL  
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**AND**

**ORGANIZATIONAL SECRETARIAL  
ADVISORY COUNCILS**

**ANNUAL REPORT — 1999**

**Prepared By**

**NATIONAL SECRETARIAL ADVISORY  
COUNCIL**

**AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**October 1999**

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