



Minutes

2010 CAPS Conference

I would like to bring everyone up-to-date on the recent developments surrounding the CAPS Conference as we talked about on our NCC conference calls. For perspective, I have included excerpts from the minutes of the April 1 call, and will follow with developments since that time.

From April 1 Minutes

There have been some recent developments in the approval process for the CAPS Conference. The message is that we must cut the cost of the meeting and revise the justification (the details of which I will not go into here). The meeting approval process just looks at the cost to PPQ, so this has no direct bearing on state personnel. The message coming out of the Secretary's Office is that USDA must cut travel costs. This is based on the economy, the unemployment rate, and the economic status of some department of agricultures. Spending large sums of money on travel does not send the right message to states and the public who are struggling, even though the travel may be justified. It is mainly about perception, but we need to reduce the cost of the Conference and show that USDA is cutting costs.

We have been directed to save meeting costs by reducing the number of PPQ personnel attending the meeting. As of right now, all support and meeting workers, extra facilitators, and those not directly engaged (or even marginally engaged) in the CAPS program were removed from the list of participants. This will result in the CAPS community having more of a working hand in running the meeting. We will have to depend on those attending the meeting to help with administrative functions, registration table, facilitating breakout sessions, note taking, etc. Additionally, I have asked all SPHDs and PSSs to indicate if they are not planning to attend. This 'natural attrition' also will save costs. We also are looking at different locations and determining what our options may be. If we cannot get the cost low enough with the meeting in New Orleans, we may have to go elsewhere (Kansas City, Oklahoma City, and Little Rock are possibilities). We will just have to see what the numbers come out to be. Cutting the meeting from three to two days only will be an option of last resort.

Recent Developments

Based on the direction and recommendations we received, the cost of the CAPS Conference was reduced approximately \$50,000 by cutting all non-essential PPQ personnel not directly engaged in the CAPS Program (all SPHDs and PSSs were not cut), and by moving the meeting to Kansas City, MO. A couple of SPHDs and PSSs responded to our request to let us know if they were not planning or could not attend the meeting. We took this as a good sign that most were planning to attend and participate. Approximately 75% of the SPHDs attended and participated in the last meeting in Phoenix in 2008. The meeting justification was re-written to include the Farm Bill as



recommended, and the draft agenda reflected this inclusion. As of yet, we were not asked to specifically cut the meeting from three to two days (but that could still happen when we re-submit the meeting request). There was near unanimous feedback from the Phoenix meeting that the CAPS Conference needs three full days, and that there was not enough time to fully discuss the topics in the breakout sessions.

We were prepared to re-submit the Decision Memorandum to the Department for approval when we were informed that we will need to combine the CAPS Conference with a PPQ internal, national SPHD meeting planned by the PPQ Regions. The SPHD meeting was initially rejected in favor of two regional meeting with lower costs. We had an initial conference call with those in the Regions planning the SPHD meeting when this issue first surfaced, agreed that our late-November and early December time frame was necessary as well as the location, and proposed a draft inclusive agenda that may meet the goals of both meetings. This topic was put on the agenda for a PPQ Leadership Team meeting, and a decision frame work document was prepared by the Regions (without Pest Detection comment). The Regions strongly supported an internal, national SPHD meeting over the CAPS Conference with cooperators. In the end, the decision was made to hold both meetings within the same week as the cost savings would be significant; approximately 50 PPQ personnel were scheduled to attend both meetings. Weekend travel was to be avoided. We were to work with the Regions to develop an agenda for approval as the Decision Memorandum for the Department would be forwarded as a combined meeting. This was like mixing oil and water due to the very different goals of the two meetings. The Regions insisted on a separate meeting agenda instead on an inclusive one. After several calls, we agreed on a basic outline where the meetings would be separate, but include a day where there would be common topics.

A draft agenda for the CAPS meeting was quickly developed and sent to the Regions to fill in the SPHD meeting topics. This agenda was shared with the NCC. Basically, the general outline is:

Monday, November 29	SPHD meeting participants travel to Kansas City
Tuesday, November 30	SPHD meeting all day CAPS meeting participants travel to Kansas City
Wednesday, December 1	Joint CAPS/SPHD meeting with common topics
Thursday, December 2	SPHD meeting am only CAPS meeting all day Workshops and demonstrations am Breakout sessions pm (w/ SPHDs participating)
Friday, December 3	CAPS meeting am only Travel home pm



NCC Conference Call

April 16 & 21, 2010

While this situation is not ideal, and not what was recommended by our cooperators, it is what we have to deal with this time around. Hopefully, the economic situation will turn around enough by the time for the next CAPS Conference, and we will not have deal with these incursions on our meeting by others.

Realize, however, that the meeting has yet to be approved by the Department, and we cannot make any commitments until that happens. This chain of events has put us way behind from where we should be, especially securing an appropriate hotel in which to have the meeting.

Notwithstanding, please mark you calendars for the **2010 National CAPS Conference** to be held **Wednesday, December 1 through Friday, December 3, in Kansas City, MO**, with travel days on Tuesday, November 30 and Friday, December 3.