

## MINUTES

**Meeting:** Southwest Council of Agribusiness  
Board of Directors  
Conference Call – September 19, 2007

**Attendance:** Board: Dee Vaughan, Rickey Bearden, Ted Higginbottom, John Johnson *for Wally Darnielle*, Mike Alexander, L.G. Raun, Ross Wilson *for Don McCasland*, Glen Schur, Steve Verett, Mark Williams, Matt Huie; Guest/Advisors: David Gibson, Jeff Nunley, Josh Winegarner, Wayne Cleveland, Robbie Blount, Rachel Meyers, Larry Combest, Tom Sell, Koby Reed, Johnny Anderson and Shawn Wade

SWCA President Mark Williams brought the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m. Following introductions Williams then asked Tom Sell to present a legislative report.

### **Item I. Legislative Report**

Tom Sell discussed recent activities in Washington relative to the development of the 2007 farm bill. He began by noting the announcement earlier in the week from Senate Ag Committee Chairman Tom Harkin that his Committee mark-up would take place the first week of October. He added that this was deemed a preliminary announcement in that Senator Harkin's plans for both the legislative content of the Chairman's Mark and the timing of its consideration are constantly in flux and changes occur almost daily. He also reported that since Senator Harkin appears to be headed in several different directions legislatively from what was approved by the House, several Ag Committee members, headed by Senator's Kent Conrad and Saxby Chambliss, have been working on an alternative that more closely mirrors what was approved by the House with changes that would benefit southern agriculture if approved in conference. He also pointed out the efforts of Senator Max Baucus, who is Chairman of the Finance Committee as well as being a member of the Agriculture Committee, to find funds for a permanent disaster program and other purposes. He concluded by noting that everything remains in a state of constant change with most discussions still in the early stages and no definitive plans announced by Chairman Harkin.

### **Item II. Washington, DC Trip Schedule**

Sell noted that SWCA's plan for a contingent to travel to Washington, DC during the third week of October in order to try and hit either the window between Committee mark-up and Senate floor debate, or to match up with one or the other of those events should the timetable change, appears to be on track. He noted that the Senate effort would be different than what was needed in the House since there were fewer offices to visit. He asked all SWCA Board members to please advise him of their interest in participating in the October trip and to remain flexible in case other needs have to be met. Larry Combest noted that Sell and Jeff Harrison are deeply involved in the process and that the Senate staff is getting a tremendous amount of input for them. He noted that staff is very sensitive about their time and setting up meetings just have them was not going to work in anyone's favor, including the SWCA. He advised that the best plan for now is to try to closely match SWCA action to the period between Committee mark-up and floor consideration. Mark Williams suggested that the Board stay ready and have a group prepared to come out on short notice if necessary.

### **Item III. Approval of Minutes**

Mark Williams asked the Board to consider approval of the minutes of the July 10, 2007 Board of Directors meeting. Following a motion from Rickey Bearden and a second by Ted Higginbottom the minutes of the July 10 meeting were approved as mailed by unanimous vote.

**Item III. Finance and Membership Reports**

Following a finance report from Steve Verett, Koby Reed discussed the status of SWCA membership recruitment and retention efforts. Reed explained that since the last meeting a new Southwest Council of Agribusiness corporate logo had been finalized and used in the creation of a SWCA membership brochure. He then reported that on the basis of overall support, approximately \$220,000 in new and renewal memberships had been signed to date and that \$22,000 was new membership support. He then discussed plans to meet with several potential new members in the Panhandle and other parts of Texas who have expressed interest in becoming SWCA members. Further discussion included gathering ideas on how to distribute the SWCA brochures to gain maximum effect. It was agreed that one of the best ways to get the word out would be to provide current members with a small quantity and request that they share with individuals they identify as potential new members.

**Item IV. Other Business**

Tom Sell asked whether the current process of using email as the SWCA Board's primary communication tool was working and if there were any enhancements that the Board felt needed to be made to improve the information flow. It was agreed that the email system was working well and no changes were suggested.

Following a discussion on the timing of an SWCA Annual Meeting, Steve Verett was asked to help begin moving the process forward. Discussion then turned to issues outside of the 2007 farm Bill debate that have some impact on the SWCA membership. Larry Combest noted at the conclusion of the discussion that at some point in the future the SWCA Board would need to begin thinking through what type of process they prefer for establishing SWCA positions on issues such as crop insurance or immigration following the conclusion of the farm bill debate. Williams agreed and noted that one of his biggest concerns following the House debate on the farm bill was how much the crop insurance program had come under fire.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Shawn Wade,  
Recording Secretary