

January 20, 2017

From: Debbie Moreland

To: Conservation District Directors and District Employees

It is unfortunate that everyone has been drawn into an issue between one district and the AACD board. Any comments I make are mine personally and not at the direction of any member of the AACD Executive Board or others. I have been a part of AACD since 1993 as a district director, Area President, AACD President and ultimately as a private contractor working on AACD's behalf. After we found ourselves without an Executive Director in 2005 Paul Whittington and W.D. Looper asked me to come to work for AACD as the Executive Director. I was initially reluctant and continued to serve as AACD President for 6 months without an Executive Director. Ultimately they convinced me to accept this role but I maintained it should be as contract labor for a variety of reasons. At that time it was determined that I would be paid \$20/hour with travel expenses, no health insurance, retirement or other benefits and a \$60/monthly phone allowance. During Sonny Jones' tenure it was raised to \$22/hour in 2007. It has remained the same since that time. Based on our income and expenses we continued with this agreement. Roy Mahler, past Treasurer from Madison County CD, can tell you about some of the financial difficulties this organization faced and our commitment to ensure that did not happen again. For many years board members served without reimbursement for travel, etc. to help build the organization back. Previous Executive Vice Presidents made far more in salary and benefits than I and had staff to provide assistance. I have never had full time staff, only occasionally part time to help with specific projects and district employees who were kind enough to help.

I also realize this is not a popularity contest and as a small child I learned that not everyone in the world is going to like you. However, I have strived very hard over the years to build AACD into a stronger organization. One that is recognized by other agencies, universities and organizations as someone they could work with, trust and support. The entire purpose was to benefit conservation districts by bringing programs and opportunities to them. Do I wish that we were getting more money from the state legislature? Absolutely! However we were told for many years that the governor wanted a flat budget and no increase would be forthcoming. During the last budget season an increase was put into the ANRC budget but not funded. Could we have done more, perhaps, but it was not because we were not trying. While I have built many good relationships with legislators over the years they always respond more to their own constituents. Many of you have heard me ask districts to talk to their legislators at area meetings and other AACD events. If districts make their legislators aware of the financial needs they have then the AACD Board can work with them to determine how to address those needs. AACD does not have the ability to do this alone. This organization is built on all of us working together and is not built on just a few. I think everyone is aware that after all of the dialogue of the past several months my reputation and credibility have been damaged to the extent that my ability to get much help at the Capitol has been severely limited if not destroyed. So, if districts want more funding they must step up and fight for it. We have distributed packets on how to communicate with your elected officials more than once and they will be available for you at the Annual Meeting.

Now, I would like to address some of the remarks about AACD Board members and their ability to manage and lead AACD. These are some of the finest men and women I have ever known. They come with a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences.

AACD Board Members and their Backgrounds

Rocky Harrell – longtime chairman of Faulkner County CD with a farming operation and trucking business

Martha Manley – was the chairman of Lee County CD now retired from a farming operation and land leveling construction company specializing in WRP contracts

Bill Bailey – was the chairman of Randolph County CD who served as an international consultant helping countries restore their aquaculture industry

Woody Ray – chairman of Crittenden County CD now managing thousands of acres of farmland for the Ritter Agricultural Farming Company

James Mitchell, WC Area President – chairman of Yell County CD with beef cattle & forestry operation, a nursing home and commercial real estate interests

James Widner, NW Area President – chairman of Boone County CD who operates a poultry operation and serves as Justice of the Peace in Boone County

Steve Martin, Central Area President – board member in Faulkner County CD now retired as Deputy Director of ADEQ

John McAlpine, SE Area President – chairman of Drew County CD and operates a forestry/wildlife consulting business

Robby Bevis, East Central Area President – board member of Lonoke County CD, serves on the Bayou Meto Irrigation and Drainage District, Arkansas Soil Health Alliance President, Lonoke County Farm Bureau, as well as other organizations.

Amy Cowling, SW Area President – chairman of Nevada County Conservation District and rancher.

Jerry Don Clark, East Arkansas Area President – chairman of Craighead County Conservation District and large farming operation

I believe you can see that these are individuals who have a vast experience in managing businesses and organizations effectively and successfully. To suggest that these individuals are not fulfilling their roles as board members with anything but the utmost integrity and skill is mistaken. While I am fortunate that the board members listen to my ideas and recommendations that does not mean they don't make their decisions based on what they believe to be the correct action to take for the good of the organization. They give of their time and resources to serve in these roles without compensation other than travel reimbursements. I think anyone who serves in their community knows the sacrifices that

one makes to serve on a board such as this. I have always deeply appreciated what they do for districts and the landowners of this state. I have been with them when they traveled to Washington, DC to ask NRCS Chief Jason Weller for drought assistance, funding for forestry programs such as Western Arkansas Forestry Restoration Initiative, MRBI Initiative, EQIP and CSP as well as many other programs. They have visited congressional offices to educate our delegation about the work that is being done to address resource concerns. They attend board meetings and other events, read my endless emails, and do it to the best of their ability. Arkansas has ranked #1 in the nation for financial assistance to landowners in large part due to their continued efforts to push for more funding for conservation.

I would recommend reviewing the district training manual regarding personal liability and disparaging a private individual. No one should ever suggest in any form that this board does not do an excellent job of providing oversight and direction for AACD. AACD has to work for the benefit of all 75 districts and cannot favor one district over the others financially or physically. Hopefully districts will not allow this situation to undermine what AACD has built up over the last 80 years as well as your reputation. This has reached the halls of the Capitol and it will not help you get the funding you need at the legislative session if it continues to appear AACD is in turmoil. So please be reassured that the AACD Executive Board has and always will provide the leadership and fiscal management that you can be proud of. As per the Bylaws, at the Annual Meeting Business Session a financial report is given each year but districts must be present. We have provided Agreed Upon Procedures and an Audit for 2015 as well a financial report. The treasurer provided far more at the February 2016 Business Session than was provided in years past.

Finally, last year I informed the AACD board that I would no longer manage their finances due the continued insinuations on my character and turned all financial activities over to a bookkeeper and CPA. Our attorneys are CPAs as well and at their recommendation, along with our CPA, we will be asking the board to go back to an audit. They feel that the Agreed Upon Procedure is too specific to districts and not recognized by some funders. My only role is to provide documents to the treasurer and bookkeeper and mail the checks when ready.

I have attached my activities profile for your review. Don't hesitate to call me if you have questions and I want to thank those districts who have reached out in support. It is deeply appreciated and your kindness will not be forgotten.

Respectfully,

Debbie Moreland

Activities Profile

Debbie Moreland

Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts, Program Administrator (2005 – Present)

Background: I have served as a Conservation District Director since 1993 which included a term as President of AACD. I also served as Chair of the Water Resources Committee for the National Association of Conservation Districts. I have a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing from the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences Center. I am also co-owner of Moreland and Son Farms. President of Pinnacle Realty, Inc. 1996 to Present.

Current Activities: I work with ANRC, NRCS and conservation partners on the following activities:

- Regional Cooperative Partnership Program
- Water Resources Tour for legislators and conservation partners
- Mississippi River Basin & Healthy Waters Initiative
- Row Crop Phosphorus Index Task Group
- Feral Swine Initiative
- Emerald Ash Borer Work Group
- Working Lands for Wildlife: Quail Special Project, Quail Focal Area and Acres for Wildlife
- National Water Quality Initiative
- Cover Crop/Soil Health & Water Management 2016 Conference
- Arkansas Soil & Water Conference/Irrigation 2016 Expo

Other activities include:

- Natural Resources Conservation Service State Technical Committee
- NRCS Subcommittees (Water Quality, Water Quantity, Forestry/Wildlife, Energy, Grazing)
- Arkansas Grazing Lands Coalition
- U of A Division of Agriculture Agricultural Development Council
- CARET - Council for Agriculture Research, Extension and Teaching (1995 to present)
- LeadAR Advisory Council (LeadAR Class 5)
- Razorback Chapter – Soil and Water Conservation Society – Past President
- Discovery Farms Technical Committee
- Arkansas Association of RC&D Councils
- Pulaski County Farm Bureau – 2nd Vice President
- Farm Service Agency Committee Member for Pulaski County

Past activities include:

- Phosphorus Index Work Group
- EPA Hypoxia Regional Meeting & Tour
- Southwest States RC&D Councils Board Member
- Arkansas Rice Depot Food Bank
- Herbicide Resistant Weeds Training
- Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council – President (1999-2001)
- Pulaski County Planning and Development Commission
- Alternative Energy Commission
- Lake Maumelle Watershed Task Force