HOSTING A LEGISLATIVE MEETING

Each SDACD Area generally holds a meeting annually with their legislators. If you are asked to host the meeting, here are some things to consider. Example letters follow---notice that the districts within the area are defined so that the legislators, county commissioners, and others know what districts will be represented.

1. Find out where the event is to take place. Usually the place is decided upon by the supervisors at their area meetings. If your district is hosting, you will need to call to reserve the place and to let them know about how many people you expect. This can be a ball park figure for now. .

2. If there will be a dinner, find out what the costs will be. You may want to limit menu choices to two or three dinner selections so that costs can be minimized. Be sure that the person in charge of the dinner understands that all meals will go on one ticket, whether or not to add a gratuity and who will be paying the bill at the end of the evening. If there will be a bar, be sure you let both the bar manager and the people you invite know who is paying for the drinks. (Frequently the meeting will entail a 'no-host' bar meaning that all individuals are responsible for paying for their own drinks.)

3. Put a list of legislators together. Include state legislators from every legislative district in your conservation district area. If you don't know, ask your fellow area employees who their legislators are. You can use the current Legislative Directory to get addresses. In an election year, be sure to include candidates running for office---each district can get that information through their county auditor's office. You will also need to send an invitation to our national legislators. They frequently send representatives to the meeting.

4. The supervisors from your area may want to invite others. These may include the NRCS Field Support Offices, NRCS State Office, the Division of Resource Conservation & Forestry, the South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts, RC&D, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and of course all the conservation districts in your SDACD area.

5. Prepare letters of invitation. The basic letter will be the same, however small changes may need to be made to invitations for legislators & others. The invitation to the area conservation districts will read quite a bit differently than the legislators/others invitations. See example letters. Keep them simple and to the point.

6. Prepare RSVP form and return envelopes. Be sure to include deadline dates for responses.

7. Mail invitation, RSVP form, and return envelopes to legislators, others, and districts.

8. Keep a master list of all those who have been invited. Keep track of the responses. At least one week prior to the event, call the caterer/restaurant to let them know how many plan to attend. Usually the caterer/restaurant won't care if a few more show up than anticipated but you might want to ask them how many "extra" can show up without reservations.

9. Prepare a Legislative Meeting Roster. Have a place for the name, the organization they represent, and the city. See example. You will need this to figure costs later.

10. Normally the conservation districts share the expense of the meals for legislators and others. Each conservation district pays for the meals for their board members and county commissioners.

11. Compute the costs and bill your area conservation districts.

12. Prepare a comment sheet. Use it to describe how you did things, who you contacted for help, and suggestions for next year----even if it won't be you doing it. It is so nice and so appreciated when you forward your knowledge and advice to the next employee who must take charge of the event.