

# Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics

**SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**  
February 22-23, 2005



**U.S. Department of Agriculture**  
**NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE**

**Summary**  
**Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics (ACAS)**  
**February 22-23, 2005**  
**Marriott Crystal City**  
1999 Jefferson Davis Hwy  
Arlington, VA 22202  
**Attendees at Meeting**

**Members Present**

<b>Patricia T. Berglund</b>	Bobby R. Phills
Carl W. Brothers	Ronald Plain
Roger M. Cryan	Ira Silvergleit
Jacklyn Marie Folsom	Ranvir Singh
Terry L. Francl (Tuesday only)	John Smylie (Tuesday only)
Phil Fulton (Ex-Officio)(Tuesday only)	Robert William Spear (Tuesday only)
R. Edmund Gomez	Mark E. Whalon (Chair)
John J. Hays	Ewen M. Wilson (Census Bureau Ex-Officio)
A. Gene Nelson	Ronald C. Wimberley

<b>Members Absent</b>	
Gary M. Adams	Lucy C. Meyring
MeeCee Baker	Ron Olsen
Carol A. Gregg	Ross R. Racine
William Lapp	Kent G. Schescke
Sheila K. Massey	

**NASS Personnel Participating:**

Carol House, Committee Executive Director and Associate Administrator  
Joe Reilly, Deputy Administrator for Field Operations  
Rich Allen, Deputy Administrator for Programs and Products  
Bob Bass, Associate Deputy Administrator, Western Field Operations  
Roberta Pense, Chief, Geospatial Information Branch, Research and Development Division  
Hubert Hamer, Associate Deputy Administrator, Eastern Field Operations  
Jack Nealon, Director of Information Technology Division  
Steve Wiyatt, Director of Statistics Division  
Joe Prusacki, Chief, Crops Branch, Statistics Division  
Dan Kerestes, Chief, Livestock Branch, Statistics Division  
Jacqueline Moore  
Jim Ewing  
Dania Ferguson  
Kathy Ott  
Dan Lofthus  
Jay Johnson  
Dale Hawks, Committee Secretary

**Public:**

Jonathan Becker, EPA	Tim Kiely, EPA
Liu Chuang, NRCS	Carrie Litkowski, BEA
Jen Cook, GAO	Paul Marsh, Prudential Mortgage Capital Co.
Stuart Gage, Michigan State University	Jack C. Mitenbuler, Dow
Leonard Gianessi, Crop Life Foundation	Lisa Phares, BEA
Gloria Graham, GAO	Nathan Reigner, Crop Life Foundation
Jennifer Hoef, OBPA	Ross Vani, Statistics Canada
Allen Jennings, ARS	William Woodfield, OBPA

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## **Day One Summary - February 22, 2005**

### **I. Introduction**

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair, Mark Whalon on February 22, 2005 at 1:00 p.m. Committee Members and NASS staff were asked to introduce themselves. Mark welcomed everyone to the meeting and then asked Executive Director, Carol House, to start the meeting with the "State of NASS" presentation.

### **II. State of NASS**

Carol House, started by welcoming the members to Washington, D.C. and especially the new members. This year we have eight new members with six of them present; Patricia Berglund, Carl Brothers, Terry Francl, John Hays, Gene Nelson, and John Smylie.

Carol provided a brief overview of the new administration, NASS programs and budget. Carol mentioned the fact that we have a new Secretary, Mike Johanns but our Under Secretary Joseph Jen has been asked to stay.

NASS appropriated budget for FY 2005 is \$128.4 million compared to \$128.2 million in FY 2004. In FY 2006, the expected budget total is \$145.2 million with the majority of this increase due to the preparation of census activities. These budgets reflect appropriated monies.

On June 3, 2004, NASS released the final 2002 Census of Agriculture for every county and state in the Nation. The 2002 Census of Agriculture contains the first census data set on a coverage-adjusted basis representing all farms to the county level. To aid data users, the 1997 Census of Agriculture files were reprocessed, using the new procedures, to provide comparable data for 1997 and 2002. This will provide the bridge from the earlier census data series to the new levels. NASS has received very positive comments on this change in methodology. Joe Prusacki will be following this presentation, so he will cover this in more detail as NASS looks ahead to 2007.

The progress of last year's Advisory Committee recommendation is as follows. NASS has been and will continue to work within the Department and other agencies to improve the representation of minority farms in our statistics. In October 2004, NASS released a joint release with Statistics Canada on hog inventory, this was based on committee recommendations last year. NASS is also adding a liaison position in New Mexico to help improve the statistics on reservations.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) wants agencies to have methodological reviews from outside agencies. This would help the agency look at how to improve performance. Other assessment tools include the Performance Assessment Rating Tool (PART), which gave NASS a moderately effective rating on its statistics program, and American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), which is a standard measure in meeting customer's needs.

NASS has been working on establishing Continuation of Operation (COOP) in two emergency relocation facilities. The contingency planning has to include information technology and a contact phone information data base, which needs to be in place in case of an emergency. NASS will still have to be able to put out reports to the public.

NASS will continue to utilize administrative and internal data to lessen the response burden of farmers that report to NASS. Also, the added benefit of having a full time liaison person working with American Indian reservation will enhance our American Indian statistics.

### **III. 2002 and 2007 Census of Agriculture Content**

Joe Prusacki presented the topic “2002 and 2007 Census of Agriculture, Content Lessons Learned and Things Planned.” Joe covered the overview of the 2002 Census of Agriculture, reviewed items introduced for 2002, solicitation of information for 2007, and discussion of content changes for 2007.

The 2002 Census of Agriculture was the first census that NASS had completed from start to finish. New concepts were introduced into the processing of the census like scanning and optical character recognition, nearest neighbor imputation, minimum cost flow disclosure, and coverage adjustment with a major redesign of the computer processes.

Joe also presented information to the Advisory Committee based on feedback from various solicitations; the following changes are being considered for the 2007 Census of Agriculture. The Census Data Content Team asked the Committee its opinion for each of the following items:

1. Different handling of private rented land versus public rented land. This change is being considered due to possible reporting problems and regional differences.
2. Add veal production to the cattle section. The industry is requesting this information but no standard definition for veal production exists.
3. Add practices and land features section. This section would provide an indication for various emerging issues in agriculture and provide a sampling basis for special studies of those issues.
4. Move potato and sweet potato questions from field crops sections on questionnaire to the vegetable section. This change is due to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) coding of potatoes and sweet potatoes as vegetables. Producers of these commodities may not consider them as vegetables and misreport.
5. Drop field crop production and collect only acreage. This change would reduce response burden, but could impact data users.
6. Number of feeder pigs sold/moved as a subset of total pigs sold. NASS is asking if this data is used and can respondent provide the proper information.

## General discussion

The first part of the discussion centered around the term of small family farm and what defines a family farm. There are many different definitions associated with smaller farms.

A second discussion centered around emerging issues. The census is the most complete data set to give a clear picture of agriculture and those emerging issues. For example, 4 or 5 of the possibilities for the Practices and Land Features section are about conservation. Animal Unit Month (AUM) is very important in western states as more grazing land is needed due to the ongoing drought. Water use/rights will become more of an issue as the pressure grows, especially in the West, to take water away from agriculture and give it to other industries or uses. The Great Lakes Annex has just instituted a new water source policy for which a reasonable use must be given for water rights. This has a huge potential impact on agriculture.

The Committee discussed dropping field crop production from the next Census. NASS is considering this option to reduce respondent burden. NASS already estimates most field crops at the county level for major producing states. The census also provides differences between irrigated and non-irrigated crops which are not part of NASS estimates for all states. There are many data users who may be dismayed if this consistent data series was disrupted, unless NASS somehow incorporates its annual estimates into the census release.

The Committee discussed veal production questions on the Census questionnaire. The Committee was questioning the reasoning and usefulness of these veal questions. The main problem is that the definition of veal might not be consistent.

The Committee's next discussion was on agri-tourism. The Committee questioned whether or not this included bed and breakfasts farms. It was suggested that the Census Bureau be contacted on how they classify bed and breakfast facilities in the other economic surveys.

The next topic that the Committee commented on was "value added" on farm commodities. One of the biggest issues is how to obtain a report on all products that have value added. One suggestion was for respondents to list items that have been value added. The list of items that were supplied by the respondents would be used for follow-on surveys or pilot studies. These follow-on surveys and/or pilot studies would determine the list of value added items for future censuses. There is not enough time to do a pilot survey before the 2007 Census of Agriculture but it is suggested that we add yes/no questions to the questionnaire and have a space to write in the product.

The Census will be collecting horses on farming operations, regardless of ownership. NASS has not collected information on boarding stables and racetracks because this is not the farming economic sector of equine. Congress has not funded NASS for this sector of equine.

## **Day Two Summary - February 23, 2005**

### **IV. Confidentiality and Data Sharing Legislation**

Carol House gave a presentation on recent legislation on data sharing and confidentiality, including likely impacts on NASS confidentiality policies.

In 2002, Congress passed the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA), which provides stronger confidentiality protections for data collected for statistical purposes and encourages efficient use of those data. This legislation is Title V of the E-Government Act of 2002. In 2004, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued draft guidelines on how Federal statistical agencies should implement and interpret this law. The guidelines were published on the Federal register for public comment and will be finalized soon.

The confidential data NASS collects are now protected from improper release by both Title 7 and CIPSEA. CIPSEA provides harsher penalties (than does Title 7) for improper release of confidential data. At the same time it encourages appropriate use and sharing of statistical information. Along with the OMB guidelines for its implementation, CIPSEA provides a clearer view of how confidential data should be safeguarded, and how and under what circumstances confidential statistical information can be utilized.

Most CIPSEA guidelines conform closely to the procedures and policies that NASS has implemented for years concerning confidential data. It allows NASS to have “sworn agents” and allows the use of data labs for research purposes. The OMB guidelines allow those data labs to be in different locations, both within and outside of NASS space, as long as strict security (both physical and electronic) measures are in place and that only NASS employees or sworn agents have access to confidential data. NASS must maintain control of confidential data at all times. Under these guidelines, NASS has partnered with the Economic Research Service to provide a Web Access Tool which allows researchers (with approved projects and who have signed all confidentiality forms) to run tabulations and model ARMS data online while preventing their direct access to the data files. NASS will be reviewing its existing data lab and security policies and procedures to ensure that we conform to all CIPSEA guidelines. We will be reviewing the locations of our data labs and will consider locating a data lab in USDA space outside of a NASS facility.

### **V. Subcommittee Report on Pesticide Data**

Jack Mitenbuler and Leonard Gianessi gave a presentation on the pesticide data subcommittee. The main premise of the topic was based upon the amount of suppressions that NASS has to publish, which leads to publishing less data than the industry needs.

Maybe one role for Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the subcommittee would be to compare the usefulness of Doane’s data verse NASS data. The cost for NASS to do a more comprehensive survey would cost about \$32 million. Crop Data Management Systems, Inc. (CDMS) and NASS should work together on a national standard for pesticide data reports.



Pesticide use data is collected using a mix of government and private initiatives. No single source is broad enough or deep enough to meet the wide variety of government, regulatory, and commercial needs, including but not limited to, dietary risk assessment, environmental risk assessment and commercial evaluations. The work of the Sub Committee on Pesticide Data is to consider a highly collaborative means by which pesticide data are gathered, organized, analyzed, reported and used in order to meet the needs of the entire base of data users.

With education, government, and industry all budget constrained, yet facing no less of a need for accurate, frequent, comprehensive, and reliable data, the subcommittee affiliation of academia, government and industry represents a public- private collaboration that hopes to offer all stakeholders an opportunity for broader access to data to cover a greater range of needs including marketing, risk management, tracking, and market value assessments. Another possible benefit is reduced cost for everyone.

Pat Berlund and Terry Francl had interest in working on this committee.

## **VI. Subcommittee Report on Sprawl and Its Impact on Agriculture**

Mark Whalon introduced his colleague Stuart Gage, Center for Global Change and Earth Observations at Michigan State University, who presented information on sprawl and its impact on Agriculture.

Stuart models different types of data changes over time by integrating climate, agriculture, ecosystems, and soils into a database. This database integrates long term analysis of regional climate influence on cropping systems. Modeling these factors gives the ability to discern temporal and spatial patterns. Databases, procedures and protocols for a geo-temporal analysis of the agricultural system requires the combination of many agencies databases with NASS's rich statistical data set of crop production being a key component.

The database application must be able to forecast agricultural variability and change along with integrating satellite and other technology. The database should provide an ecological context for crop production and develop a template for pests, diseases, and weeds. The application should be able to analyze climate change scenarios and conduct regional-scale assessment models.

The population growth in rural areas has caused decentralization of jobs with the outer suburbs experiencing most of the job growth. Urban metabolism is having an impact on the local and global environment. Identifying standard land use classes to examine change in land use over time and the use of existing land use digital maps will be some of the approaches and methods needed. While using all of these variables to extrapolate projected change based on current information.

The complex nature of multiple environmental stresses which impact agriculture and put sectors and economies at risk and make people and livelihoods vulnerable. Counties will reach a tipping point at different times based on proximity to urban centers and transportation corridors. Regional planning is crucial to sustain agriculture.

## **VII. Response to Hog Subcommittee Recommendations**

Dan Kerestes and Dan Lofthus presented the results of a study that NASS conducted based on recommendations from the 2003 subcommittee reviewing the Hog Estimation Program. They started with the history of the monthly hog survey.

In December 1998, an unexpected large number of hogs came to market, straining slaughter capacity and causing low prices. As a result of this extreme market response, representatives within the pork industry pushed for a monthly survey. This led to the passage of Public Law 106-78 on October 22, 1999. The law stated that NASS should keep the quarterly survey, while working on the monthly. However, the monthly survey negatively impacted response rates of the quarterly report. A subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics was convened in February 2003 to review USDA's hog estimation program and determine what course of action, if any, should be taken to resolve perceived problems with the monthly hog estimation program.

The subcommittee recommendations from the 2003 meeting were the following: that the Monthly Hogs and Pigs Survey be discontinued as soon as possible; that the budget savings, thereby realized, be used to enhance and improve the Quarterly Hogs and Pigs Survey; that NASS work with hog producers to make the quarterly survey consistent with industry records; and that NASS develop electronic reporting instruments.

The last monthly publication was August 29, 2003. Research was conducted to satisfy the remaining recommendations. The research was conducted and the following conclusion were reached: that the June sample size not be increased as an approach to obtaining a improved June report; that three and six month farrowing intentions continue and that nine and twelve month farrowing intentions do not begin; that weight groups data continue to be asked rather than age groups; that an electronic reporting instrument be developed; and that all NASS staff work to improve response rates to quarterly surveys.

## **VIII. Status of Programs for Minority and Small Farms**

Rich Allen gave a status presentation that was designed to inform new ACAS members about 2002 Census of Agriculture demographic data improvements; highlight and summarize some of the unique new data relationships in the 2002 Census data files; alert all ACAS members to special brochures and releases of 2002 Census demographic results; and highlight NASS efforts to provide USDA agencies with the most useful 2002 Census data on Minority and Small farms.

For the 2002 Census of Agriculture, data for all farms was collected not just from the census mail list like agriculture census but include adjusted coverage for list incompleteness. Data was also collected for all farm operators not just the principal operator and new race codes were added to the census to include breakdown of the Asian category. Operators could check more than one race in 2002. Extra efforts has been made to improve American Indian data with a special project in 3 states to improve cooperation and estimate agriculture on reservations. Additional economic data was collected concerning each household. The special publications of the 2002 Census of Agriculture data expanded in Appendix B of Volume 1 reports along with a

paper on farm succession. The census data was used by other agencies within USDA for evaluating socially disadvantaged programs, Farm Service Agency (FSA) county elections and Secretary Johanns used county summaries his first week in office.

## **IX. Subcommittee Report on Minority and Small Farms**

Bobby Phills gave an update on the accomplishments of NASS to last year's recommendations from the subcommittee on minority and small farms. The Committee would like to give thanks to NASS for the rapidity with which it moved to initiate the implementation of the committee's recommendations from our last meeting.

NASS has been working on a department-wide effort to ensure that all agencies efforts are conducted in a fashion that brings about the enumeration of all minorities involved in agriculture. In addition, NASS has been reviewing some enumeration problems in New Mexico and are establishing a liaison position to help develop relationship with American Indian reservations and minority farms/ranchers.

NASS will continue to research the development of state enumeration committees comprised of representations of minority groups within each state, plus the following federal and state agencies: NASS, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension, Service (CSREES), FSA, Rural Development (RD), Risk Management Agency (RMA), and the State Department of Agriculture.

In addition, NASS will continue this subcommittee and coordinate its efforts on minority participation with other NASS supported groups/committees, the National Enumeration and Outreach working group, and any others that may evolve.

## **X. Agriculture Finance - Farm Credit**

John Hays presented the topic of agriculture finance. He stated that comprehensive data on agricultural lending/lenders is not available from any USDA source. Statistical estimation is made on agriculture debt but not on financial institutions or lenders.

In addition, the ERS has disbanded its agricultural finance team necessitating external analysts to study the marketplace. The questions on the ARMS questionnaire measures some of the debt/lenders information on the sampled farms but the estimation based on the sample can easily over or under estimate debt/lenders information.

An example of problems with existing information, Mr. Hays indicated that the 1999 AELOS over-estimated commercial bank agricultural lending by \$7 billion and under-estimated Farm Credit lending by \$15 billion and 120,000 farmers. This comparison is based on lending information each group reported to their Federal regulators.

## **XI. Other Committee Topics**

The Committee discussed the inclusion of data from private, federally managed and other “common land” grazing utilizing animal unit months or per head leases follows.

Livestock grazing is and has been a vital and economically important agricultural industry in the Western States within the past three hundred years and where most Western States are comprised of a 30 – 70 % federally managed land base.

Federally managed land (USDA Forest Service (FS) & Bureau of Land Management (BLM)) is grazed through a permit system which utilizes the Animal Unit Month (AUM). The AUM’s reflect grazing management practices utilizing either the growing season or the dormant season in its rotational sequence. Grazing permits are recognized as collateral and/or property for the purpose of seeking production and/or expansion loans by banks. Grazing land permits are sold or traded or transferred to others for a fee after the approval of USDA FS to qualified ranchers.

Currently, NASS excludes acres of private, federally managed and other common land leases that utilize AUM’s or the per head lease. This represents millions of acres of grazing land information that has never been collected or included in the Agricultural Census.

Western States rural counties depend on Federal managed grazing land to support their livestock tax base. These Western States have also experienced a severe drought these past 6 years, thus livestock numbers have been fluctuating due to this circumstance. Local county governments, as well as Western State governments, are developing strategies to remain economically reliable in the near future. Missing NASS data relating to private, federally managed and other common land grazing utilizing AUM and per head leases would considerably impact future strategic planning for these government units.

## **XII. Suggestions on Functioning of the Committee**

1. Enhance communications with the Minority and Small Farm Subcommittee, specifically regarding continued progress on the New Mexico Minority Farm Pilot Project.
2. Appoint a NASS staff person to work with the subcommittees to facilitate setting up conference calls, emails and face-to-face meetings as a means of subcommittee operations. **Appointed Dale Hawks**
3. Establish procedures for replenishing the subcommittee membership as current members rotate off the Committee.
4. Extend the activities of the Subcommittee on Sprawl for another year.

### **XIII. New Chairperson**

The election committee nominated Jacklyn Folsom to serve as Chairperson for the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics, beginning with preparation for the 2006 meeting. Jacklyn accepted the nomination and was approved by attending members.

### **XIV. Closing Remarks for the Advisory Committee**

Carol House announced that the next meeting is tentatively scheduled for early 2006 and will be held in Washington, D.C. the same week as the USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum. The meeting was adjourned.

### **XV. Committee Recommendations**

1. The Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics recommends communicating successful outcomes of the New Mexico Small Farms Pilot Study to State Directors in preparation for implementation nationally.
2. The Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics recommends initiating interagency strategy sessions nationally with agencies for whom minority and small farm undercounting have been issues of concern. Concurrently, establish on-going dialogue with other USDA agencies and community based organizations that work with small and limited resource farmers to ensure accurate census counting and assistance.
3. The Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics recommends including a representative from the Minority and Small Farm Subcommittee on future external reviews of NASS programs and products.
4. The Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics recommends keeping the crop production questions on the 2007 Census of Agriculture.
5. The Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics recommends against adding the veal production questions on the 2007 Census of Agriculture.
6. The Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics recommends changing the wording of the agri-tourism question on the census to “Agri-tourism and recreational services, such as farm or winery tours, hay rides, hunting, fishing, etc.”
7. The Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics recommends adding a question to the 2007 Census of Agriculture in the Practices and Land Features section for “value added” on the farm to products. This question can be used for follow-on surveys.
8. The Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics recommends adding debt and lender questions (similar to those on ARMS) to the 2007 Census of Agriculture questionnaire.

9. The Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics recommends that NASS develop a process/strategy to include the collection of data relative to private and public common grazing land on the 2007 Census of Agriculture Census.
10. The Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics recommends that the subcommittee on pesticide data use continue to study ways to enhanced Federal collection initiatives on pesticide data that is more comprehensive and complete for public consumption.

## Appendix I - Agenda

New Advisory Committee Members Orientation: Tuesday, February 22 at 10 a.m.

### Tuesday, February 22

<u>Time</u>	<u>Topic/Activity</u>	<u>Discussion Leader</u>
1:00 p.m.	Call to Order, Introductions, and Overview	Mark Whalon, Committee Chair
1:15 p.m.	' <i>State of NASS</i> '	Carol House, Associate Administrator and Committee Executive Director
2:00 p.m.	Discussion	Mark Whalon
2:30 p.m.	Break	
2:45 p.m.	2002 and 2007 Census of Agriculture Content Lessons Learned and Things Planned	Joe Prusacki, Chief Crops Branch
4:00 p.m.	Discussion and Recommendations	Mark Whalon
4:45 p.m.	Adjourn	
5:15 p.m.	Reception	

### Wednesday, February 23

8:00 a.m.	Call to Order and Overview of Day 1	Mark Whalon
8:10 a.m.	Confidentiality and Data Sharing Legislation	Carol House
8:40 a.m.	Discussion	Mark Whalon
8:45 a.m.	Subcommittee Report on Pesticide Data	Jack Mitenbuler Dow Chemical
9:15 a.m.	Discussion and Recommendations	Mark Whalon
9:45 a.m.	Break	
10:00 a.m.	Subcommittee Report on Sprawl and its Impact on Ag	Mark Whalon
10:30 a.m.	Discussion and Recommendations	Mark Whalon

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NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

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10:45 a.m.	Response to Hog Subcommittee Recommendations	Dan Kerestes, Chief Livestock Branch Kathy Ott
11:00 a.m.	Discussion and Recommendations	Mark Whalon
11:15 a.m.	Status of Programs for Minority and Small Farms	Rich Allen, Deputy Administrator for Programs and Products
11:45 a.m.	Lunch	
1:00 p. m.	Subcommittee Report on Minority and Small Farms	Bobby Phillips
1:15 p.m.	Discussion and Recommendations	Mark Whalon
1:30 p.m.	Committee Requested Topics and recommendations	Mark Whalon



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**Wednesday, February 23**  
(Continued)

2:30 p.m.	Break	
2:45 p.m.	Agriculture Finance - Farm Credit	John Hays
3:15 p.m.	Discussion and Recommendations	Mark Whalon
3:30 p.m.	Public Questions and Comments	Mark Whalon
4:00 p.m.	Recommendations and Wrap up	Mark Whalon
4:45 p.m.	Closing Remarks and Adjourn	Carol House