



# ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER ORGANIZATION

## Asian Pacific Islander Organization

### MINUTES OF APIO VIDEO TELECONFERENCE OCTOBER 6, 2011 4:00-6:00 P.M. EST

**APIO**  
PO Box 6054  
Olympia, WA 98507

**Jay Mar**  
President  
(860) 871-4011  
jay.mar@ct.usda.gov

**Angela Biggs**  
Executive Vice-President  
(217) 345-3901 x5  
angela.biggs@il.usda.gov

**Gina Schworm**  
Vice President  
(740) 452-8618  
Gina.Schworm@oh.usda.gov

**Nick Vira**  
Treasurer  
(360) 748-0083  
nick.vira@wa.usda.gov

**Oliver Miranda**  
Secretary  
(301) 934-9588 x3  
oliver.miranda@md.usda.gov

A professional employee group of  
NRCS

Visit us at [www.apio.org](http://www.apio.org)

Non Profit Status  
#DLN 503150066

Present: Chief Dave White, Pamela Aguon, Angela Biggs, Winnie Chen, Rebecca DeWind, Jay Mar, Kent Matsutani, Oliver Miranda, Cheryl Morton, Gary Parks, Yuri Plowden, Gina Schworm, Nick Vira, Dave Fischer, Reese Libby, Dan Curtis, Shawn McVey, Ly Phuong, Kurencio Ngowakl, Joe Toquero, James Tillman, Eugene Barber, others and guests.

#### Call to Order.....Gina Schworm

- The meeting was called to order at 4PM EST by Gina Schworm. She introduced herself as the vice president and moderator of VTC. She provided information on guidelines for appropriate use and etiquette for VTC and those using teleconference.

#### President's Welcome.....Peter Bautista/Jay Mar

- Peter Bautista introduced himself and participants to VTC with him. He greeted and welcomed the Chief, State Conservationists, SEPMs and APIO members to the 2011 VTC. He indicated that APIO national conference planned for Providence RI was cancelled and in its place we have VTC.
- Jay Mar welcomed everyone, and was in gratitude that we are able to use modern VTC technology for our national conference. He introduced Chief Dave White.

#### Opening Remarks, Future Insights, Q&A.....Dave White, Chief

- The Chief gave greetings to APIO. Thanked APIO for the use of VTC technology that provided savings to the agency. He briefly discussed about congress funding bills. He indicated that a "Super Committee" is working on Farm Bill programs. VERA and VSIP (voluntary early retirement authority and, voluntary separation incentive payment) will be offered. VSIP will offer incentive of up to \$25,000. NRCS will have to respond accordingly if sister agencies close offices and if they are the primary agency on the leases. It was said that NRCS does not intend to close offices. He indicated that NRCS is a highly respected agency across the country. NRCS is regarded highly by the Council of Environmental Quality of the Whitehouse, Office of Management and Budget, the Senate and the House Agriculture Committees, Appropriation Committee, the Conservation Group, the Agriculture Groups, and Stakeholders. NRCS is well known for delivering products to people. Streamlining initiative is moving forward. In October, NRCS will roll out in fifteen states "Pilot Desktop" that access all programs and "Client Gateway for farmers" access to NRCS programs. There will be improvement in Human Resources, Public Affairs, Acquisitions and Finance. Science and technology infrastructure realignment will be done to better serve the states.

- A period of questions and answers followed. The Chief responded to APIO members' questions.

**New Officers Assume Duties-President Comments.....Peter Bautista, Jay Mar**

- Peter gave thanks to the Chief for allowing APIO use VTC and listen to employee issues. He talked about milestone which was the first joint organization conference in Kansas City Missouri where the organizations had an opportunity to work together on common goals, and priorities including Basu Scholarship program, creating a full time permanent AAPI SEPM, establishment of AAPI scholarship program like the 1890 program, creating leadership program, and mentorship program and training opportunities for employees from the pacific islands to provide equity in promotion, assessment of pacific islands operation and re-organization, and return rights controversy.
- Peter discussed highlight of last year's accomplishments. He indicated that Basu scholarship was successful. Half of the scholars are still in school and the other half have completed. He worked with a committee in preparing a plan for AAPI initiative under an executive order in the fall of 2010 for USDA and NRCS, and worked with Talent Management for an action plan. Three scholarships were awarded, farmer of the year was selected, the constitution and bylaws were updated and, planning VTC meeting was completed. He mentioned working on cross-cutting activities with other employee organization. He added that with grants and agreements, APIO can help implement plans and move towards improvement in mutual goals in outreach, program delivery and diverse workforce. He quoted statement from Mahatma Gandhi, and thanked for being given the opportunity to serve.
- Jay introduced himself and expressed his vision for APIO and the importance of working together to reach mutual goal of promoting diversity in the workforce, and outreach to communities. He wants to promote a strong leadership that strengthens the cooperative partnership with NRCS and, the inclusion and representation of AAPI at all levels of the agency. He will look for strategies that will make known AAPI cultures. He expressed that the new set of officers and committees are open and committed to serving all.

**Officer Transition (Past and Present)-Report Provided  
Executive Vice President-Vision/Direction from**

**New officers.....Jay Mar/Angela Biggs**

- Jay talked about the importance of opportunities to strengthen and build partnerships, and build diverse workforce to increase visibility and include AAPI at all levels.
- Angela introduced herself and thanked everyone for support. She indicated the importance of opportunities provided by APIO in one's career and the commitment to serving all. She encouraged everyone to feel confident and

free to contact her and the national council. She is Assistant Conservationist for Operations in Illinois.

**Vice President.....Gina Schworm**

- Gina introduced herself and indicated looking forward to working with the national council and members of APIO. She expressed openness and willingness to work with everyone. She is with NRCS in OH.

**Treasurer.....Nick Vira**

- Nick introduced himself as the Treasurer of APIO and described his duties working with government agencies, and financial transactions and budget. He mentioned that APIO headquarters is now relocated to Washington State.

**Secretary.....Cheryl Morton/Oliver Miranda**

- Cheryl welcomed everyone. She briefly described the responsibilities of the secretary and expressed gratitude for being able to serve two years as the secretary for APIO. She expressed commitment to work with the new secretary and transfer important information, documents and provide a smooth transition.
- Oliver introduced himself and expressed gratitude to be able to serve APIO, and learn new duties as the secretary. He is a district conservationist in Maryland.

**National AA/PI SEPM/APIO Advisor.....Kurencio Ngowaki**

- Kurencio welcomed everyone and introduced himself as the new National AA/PI SEPM. He thanked Angela for keeping good records and Pete for the leadership, passion and support. He is glad to be part of APIO as an adviser. He appreciates everyone's support and look forward to meaningful work on mutual goals. He mentioned the importance of a national conference. He is with NRCS in Guam.

**Regional Representative Transition (Past and Present)-Report Provided**

**East .....Yuri Plowden**

- Yuri greeted everyone and introduced herself as the new East Region Representative. She took over this position when Shawn McVey was transferred to NRCS NE. She thanked everyone for continued support. She described the States that comprise the East region and welcomed new members to this area. She mentioned her goal is to improve operation and communication with members in this region, and contact with Kurencio. She is a resource soil scientist and AAPI SEPM in PA.

**South.....Yi Kum**

- Not present

**Midwest.....Mani Phengrasmy/Winnie Chen**

- Winnie welcomed everyone introduced herself as incoming Midwest Region Representative. She indicated that she is interested in knowing members' concerns and encouraged everyone to feel free to contact her. She is a Wetland Biologist in MN.

**Northern Plains.....Dan Curtis**

- Dan explained that with his collateral duty as Veterans SEPM, phasing out of RC&D coordinator position and Army Reserve called to active duty for short period of time, he respectfully requested to relinquish his position as Northern Plains Representative. He was in contact with Shawn McVey, Soil Scientist in NE who was willing to take over and finish his term as regional representative. He also introduced NRCS KS State Conservationist Eric B Banks and, Public Affairs Specialist Mary Schafer present with him at the VTC conference room. He mentioned his memorable trip to veterans meeting in Washington DC.
- Jay and Pete thanked Dan for his service.
- Gary introduced Shawn. The latter provided a brief statement. Shawn indicated he moved from CT to NE about a year ago. He is happy to help out and take over Northern Plains Representative position.

**West.....Phuong Ly**

- Phuong introduced herself as the new West Region Representative. She also introduced four other NRCS employees present at the VTC conference room Nick Gallagher, Ha Truong, Steve Hill, and Ray Tolentino. She indicated that she is fortunate to be the West Region Representative. She emphasized her goal on outreach to AAPI communities in CA. She recognized the outstanding contribution of Sam Vang, Soil Conservationist in Fresno County, for work in these communities. She mentioned a two- day outreach activity completed recently celebrating Asian culture and food. She plans to work on marketing and outreach strategies for CA.

**Pacific Islands Area-East (10:00 same day).....Dave Fischer/Reese Libby**

- Dave Fischer asked participants of VTC to wave hands to verify everyone can hear him. Dave is with Cheryl and Reese Libby in Honolulu VTC conference room. He is a resource engineer and, one of the few remaining charter member of APIO. He submitted regional report posted on the APIO website. He explained that the Pacific Islands East Region includes the State of Hawaii and Samoa Islands. He reiterated the significance of the issue of guaranteed return rights. This is a big issue in the islands. He was glad to have served as the regional representative for the Pacific Islands East Region.
- Reese greeted everyone Aloha. He is a geographer/GIS specialist for Hawaii also in the big island. He is a longtime resident of Hawaii. He does a lot of

community outreach. He thanked APIO for confidence in him to be the new Pacific Islands Regional Representative.

**Pacific Islands Area-West (Pacific Basin).....Pamela Sabian-Aguon/Joe Toquero**

**(6:00 a.m. next day Friday, October 7, 2011)**

- Pam greeted, Hafa Adai! She mentioned she is outgoing Pacific Islands West Region Representative. She also mentioned the issue of guaranteed return rights policy in the Pacific Islands West Region. That it is an issue on promotion and leadership positions.
- Joe greeted, Hafa Adai! Joe is a Soil Conservationist with NRCS. He thanked everyone for being a part of APIO. He plans to do his best as the new West Regional Representative. He expressed the importance of networking with others.

**Standing Committee Transition (Past and Present)-Report Provided**

**Asian American/Pacific Islander Farmer-of-the-year.....Shiraz Vira/Winnie Chen**

- Winnie gave a power point presentation for the 2011 Farmer of the Year. The recipient of this award is Adam Nguyen from Georgia operating a 40-acre Broiler poultry farm. The presentation provided highlights on the farm operation.
- James Tillman, Georgia NRCS State Conservationist, recognized the great effort of Soil Conservationist Eugene Barber in outreach and work with AAPI producers including non-traditional projects. An APIO backpack was presented to Eugene.

**Mentoring/Recruitment/Career Development/Outreach.....Hue Dang/Angela Biggs**

- Angela provided a brief update. There is a pilot program in mentoring. The mentors and protégés will receive training using outlook live meeting. She encouraged everyone to sign up with this program through the NRCS website by December 2, 2011. Indicate APIO in the application. The mentors will receive training on January 24 and 25, 2012. The protégés on January 25 and 26, 2012.

**Awards and Scholarships.....Dave Fischer**

- Phuong Ly mentioned the names of 2011 award recipients. They include Yuri Plowden for Leadership/Visionary award, Bob Rhode for API community award, Phuong Ly for Outstanding member award, Jean Foster for Natural Resources award, and Michelle Moore for Special Achievement award.
- Dave was glad to report that three bright and talented students have been awarded scholarships from eleven applicants. The 2011 awards included scholarships for \$1,000, \$1,500, and \$2,000. He mentioned that we need to look for other means of funding our scholarship program.

**Communications.....Liz Warner**

- Kent Matsutani provided report for communications committee. The committee worked on APIO website and the newsletter. A report of accomplishment has been submitted. He gave compliment for the great work Liz has done. He added that Liz is also a charter member.

**Natural Resources.....Oliver Miranda**

- Oliver indicated that the Natural Resources is a new committee. He will recruit members and prepare a plan.

**Constitution/Bylaws/Elections-Constitution/Bylaws.....Gary Parks**

- Gary said that the committee had a good year. Voter participation was up to seventy five percent. He indicated that his term is up this year and Jay will be looking for good candidates.

**Budget/Ways and Means.....Rebekah DeWind**

- Not available

**Grants.....Gary Parks**

- Gary indicated that the grant application was not funded. He plans to attend a grant writing workshop, and will work with the Budget/Ways and Means Committee and the Scholarship committee in securing grants.

**Ad Hoc/Conference.....Yuri Plowden**

- Yuri described the process in planning the conference. She has learned a lot working with other conference planners and partnering with other groups like the Technology Group, and WIN.

**Membership.....Regional Representatives**

- Phuong Ly provided the report. She mentioned that this committee is new and she looks forward working with the Regional Representatives on recruitment strategies and activities.

**Approve Minutes from 2010 Kansas City, Missouri**

**Business Meeting.....Gina Schworm**

- In order to track the votes, Jay asked everyone to raise their hand for a “yes” vote and then visually accounted for through the VTC screen, and say “yes” as a group when he conducts roll call of the different regions.
- Angela presented a motion to approve the 2010 Kansas City Missouri meeting notes. Gary provided second on the motion. The hand-raising votes counted through the VTC screen include eleven for East, two for Midwest, two for Northern Plains, two for Pacific Islands West, and two for Pacific Islands

East. The regional roll call had “yes” for all regions and none for “no “vote. None opposed and there was no further discussion. The motion was carried.

**Old Business (Bylaws-Proposed Amendments).....Gary Parks/Jay Mar**

- Gary explained the proposed amendments. The president position is to be a successive position and filled from the Executive Vice President position, who has served two years in that capacity. The National Council will determine the appropriate method of holding future national conferences including the use of VTC as an alternative. Two new committees have been added. These are the Budget/Ways and Means Committee, and Farmer of the Year Committee. The way of addressing conflict with disbursements was added. Change in article 2 was proposed where the order of chain of command is now changed to President, Executive Vice President, and then Vice President.
- Peter presented a motion to accept the proposed amendments as presented. Pooh provided second on the motion. The hand-raising votes counted through the VTC screen include ten for East, two for Northern Plains, two for Pacific Islands West, and two for Pacific Islands East. The regional roll call had “yes” for all regions and none for “no “vote. None opposed and there was no further discussion. The motion was carried.

**New Business (Task Force).....Angela Biggs/Jay Mar**

- Peter said that the Task Force was formed to plan strategies for national conference. This metamorphosed into the agreement with NRCS with FY2011 funds.
- Jay explained content of the \$200K agreement with NRCS including the deliverables. There was \$100K set aside for organizations to use for mutual goal projects. Fiscal responsibility for these agreements will be handled by non-NRCS employee, perhaps retired employees. All professional organization proposals have been submitted to NHQ.

**Closing Remarks.....Chief Dave White/Peter Bautista/Jay Mar**

- Peter wished all incoming officers the best of luck. He envisions APIO to satisfy financial needs, goals of agency, and implement the action plan.
- Jay thanked everyone for the successful VTC, for dedication and commitment. He thanked the outgoing leadership team for providing a good start for the new team.

**Adjourn.....Jay Mar**

- Dave Fischer presented a motion to adjourn the VTC, and Winnie provided second for the motion. There were ten “yes” votes, none “no” vote, no further discussion and the motion was carried.