

TACC NEWSLETTER

TEXAS AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE COUNCIL

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Farm Store Summit -- Restoring Purpose and Profitability

TACC's second annual Farm Store Summit, held virtually and in-person at the Inn on Barons Creek in Fredericksburg, Texas, was a resounding success through group participation and intriguing speakers. Over 40 individuals were present for the hybrid meeting, which made it possible for several co-ops to host their whole group of farm store leaders from home, thus expanding the reach of the summit.

Once again, cooperative and farm store managers were able to speak openly in a round table format discussing their operations and brainstorming in a group setting. CoBank economist, **Ken Zuckerberg**, bridged the ag industry's current situation with market forces that open business opportunities for cooperatives and their farm stores. The new Texas Beef Council CEO, **Dr. Molly McAdams**, used the council's social media accounts to demonstrate and encourage cooperatives having an online presence to build member and customer relationships.

Matt Wohlman from Land O' Lakes and Tennessee Farmers' Cooperative CEO, **Bart Krisle**, presented ways to increase member outreach and community engagement through potentially getting involved in providing WiFi connectivity in the community or hosting family or educational events. Krisle also explained to the group their organization's venture into opening stores (*Stockdale's*) that serve "rural lifestyle" consumers and hobby farmers.

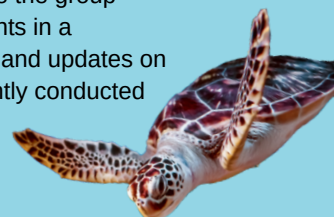
Even as the meeting took on a slightly different look this year, the drive to improve farm stores and their profitability and outreach tactics was tangible. Participants made this meeting the success it was — so thank you to everyone that took the time to participate and help continue to build this special program.



Co-op Virtual Retreat Tops Attendance Records

Given the environment and protocols surrounding an in-person meeting, TACC's annual Director Development Program took on a different look. The title this year was the Co-op Executive Virtual Retreat & Learning Experience—a fully virtual meeting featuring the always-popular co-op attorney mastermind, **Gary McLaren**, and co-op tax whiz, **Greg Taylor**. University cooperative chairs, **Dr. Michael Boland** from the University of Minnesota, and **Dr. John Park** of Texas A&M, delivered an overview and simulation of the online new director training program assembled by a national group of university co-op chairs. The meeting hosted 149 attendees in 84 co-op locations across the state & it was FREE!

Similar to last summer's virtual tailgate meeting, **Gary McLaren** gave the group updates on pertinent legal topics such as annual meeting requirements in a pandemic, membership list exemptions, force majeure clause cases and updates on the PPP loan. **Greg Taylor** covered his initial findings from the recently conducted TACC co-op compensation study.



The Cooperative Council Takes on San Antonio --- Again, with surprising numbers!

Mark your calendars --- it is almost annual meeting time! Last year, the Joint Cooperative Meeting took a hit and was canceled, so we are thrilled to be able to host this year's meeting at the fan-favorite La Cantera Resort & Spa in San Antonio, Texas on March 14-16, 2021. The theme will be "Co-ops: Turning Challenges into Solutions," as speakers and breakout sessions explore moving on and up from 2020, while utilizing the inherent benefits of the cooperative business model. Some 370 people are expected.

Keynotes include a well-known advocate for farmers, a noted ag economist, and a high-flying Navy Seal with expertise in leadership in high-risk, high-consequence environments. Breakout sessions cover labor, legal, and tax issues facing co-ops, new fees, and regulatory trends in the industry, and an in depth look at TACC's results from the 2020 Co-op Compensation Study.

The Co-op Internship Program --- Doing Our Part to Re-establish a Workforce

This spring semester kicks off the 13th year of TACC's Summer Co-op Internship Program where students are matched with co-ops across the state in an effort to attract and recruit top talent. Thus far, a student from Tarleton State University, one from Texas Tech University, another from Texas A&M University and one student all the way from Georgia have applied and all show great promise fitting into the co-op business model.

Though this semester continues to look a little different than usual, several co-op managers have expressed an interest in hosting an intern over the summer. If your cooperative is in need of an intern this summer, please let our office know! Over the years, this program has been an excellent opportunity to build professional and successful future employees and market the industry to the next generation of college graduates.

Bookkeepers & Operations Personnel Set to Boost Their Profession... Virtual NSAC Meeting Set for March 12th

The National Society of Accountants for Cooperatives Texas Chapter will be holding their spring meeting virtually on Friday, March 12. Office and bookkeeping professionals at both the local and regional co-op level and those CPAs that work in co-op audit firms are encouraged to attend. More information regarding the meeting will be forthcoming. **Russ DuBose**, with D. Williams and Company CPA firm in Lubbock (806-785-5982), serves as president of the Texas Chapter. TACC's **Tommy Engelke** will be presenting to the group on legislative topics. [This virtual event is FREE to all participants!](#) is a great occasion to receive required CEU credits for those who need them.

Keeping Austin Weird — Such Legislation on Display

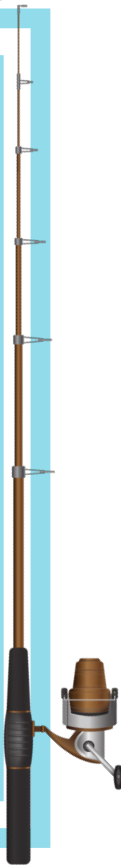
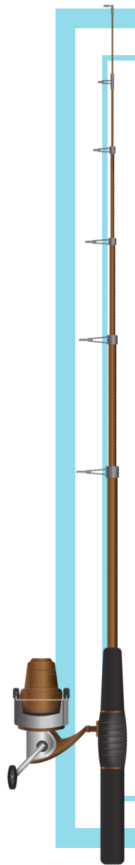
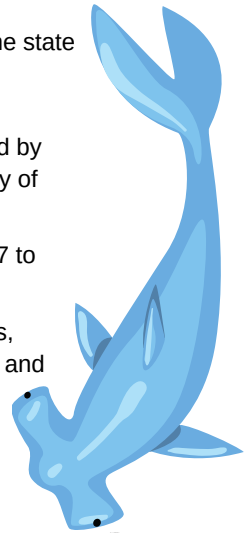
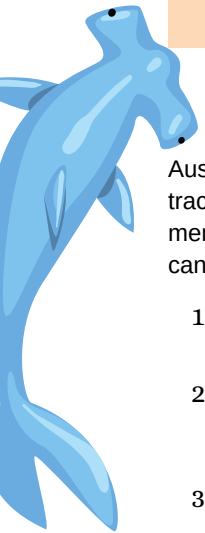
Austin is still keeping it weird, and the state legislature is no exception! TACC has worked over the past several months tracking legislation of interest to cooperatives and rural Texas and recently preparing a summary of these bills for the membership. Here are several strange bills filed so far this session to give you a look at just how interesting the bill filing can be:

1. Whether this bill will get out of committee is yet to be seen, but H.B. 185 from D) **Thresa Meza** of Irving makes not safely storing a firearm in a locked storage device, gun safe or gun cabinet a Class B misdemeanor.
2. Filed by R) **Kyle Biedermann** of Fredericksburg, H.B. 1359 allows the citizens of Texas to vote on whether the state should secede from the United States and establish an independent republic. As you may have seen, this bill garnered some media coverage several weeks ago.
3. While some bills change or create policy, others call for a study to be conducted. In the case of H.B. 1651 filed by R) **Terry Wilson** of Marble Falls, the Texas Department of Transportation is called upon to study the feasibility of charging a pavement consumption fee on public roads by commercial vehicles.
4. Following the health crises the state has experienced this past year, R) **Candy Noble** of Lucas filed H.B. 1687 to protect employees unwilling to receive a COVID vaccine shot from hiring discrimination by an employer.
5. If H.B. 1758 filed by R) **Matt Krause** in Ft. Worth passes this session you will no longer be able to attach guns, explosives or chemical spraying devices to your drone, unless on your own property. Ag-friendly associations and representatives are looking at making an exception for agriculture as it relates to chemical use.

A Focus on Opportunity

If your co-op is looking for a way to engage members and draw non-members in the doors, consider developing or enhancing your business' social media presence. Facebook has nearly 3 billion monthly users with approximately 25% of users being between 24 and 44 years old and around 14% between 45 and 64 years of age, women being more active participants. If this sounds like a new area to expand your marketing, here are several post ideas to aid you in developing a social media strategy:

1. Give followers a sneak peek into how the co-op functions on a daily basis by providing behind the scenes pictures and videos. Educate followers on how products are made, make management or employee introductions, or maybe show how the machines run to process a commodity.
2. Don't hesitate to get personal with your audience perhaps by sharing a message or note from the CEO or board president to boost a sense of transparency and familiarity with how the business is managed and operated.
3. Co-ops are an ideal place to share knowledge about the agriculture industry with customers potentially looking to become involved in some capacity. Increase the reach of your information by sharing tips and tricks of the trade on social media or by hosting educational events and promoting these online.
4. Facebook is an extensive place to promote discounts or sales the store may be holding. Consider the online marketplace and what products your audience would be most interested in --- animal health and nutrition, gardening or tires --- when posting offers.
5. If you have felt disconnected from the membership or potential customers given recent events, contests and giveaways work great online and allow your audience to easily share and enter to win. This could be an opportunity to get the co-op's name out to the public and potentially have a first-time customer into the store.



Out and About (Since December 16, 2020):

- Began gathering information for and developing the nine-page 2021 Legislative Bill Summary to give members an update on legislative efforts in Austin.
- Attended a preview of the Texas Legislature on January 7 hosted by state political magazine, the Texas Tribune.
- Initiated the process to elect new Division Officers for the TACC Executive Committee.
- Assisted as a judge on March 5 for the Texas A&M University virtual Agribusiness Entrepreneurship class project.
- Sat in on the Texas Tribune's interview of the new Texas House Speaker, R) **Dade Phelan** of Beaumont on January 11 as he provided his plans for the 2021 legislature.
- Participated in weekly meetings of the 65-member group of ag associations receiving updates and legislative priorities for state regulatory, legislative, and university leaders.
- Visited students at Angelo State University on March 3 in San Angelo about the Summer Co-op Internship Program.
- Assisted in leading a trailblazing strategic planning session for multiple departments and the board of **United Agriculture Cooperative, Inc.** in El Campo on January 14-15 and then again January 19-20.
- Participated in the weekly Thursday webinars held by Land O' Lakes regarding their broadband initiative.
- Attended the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives' virtual annual convention on February 9-11.
- Initiated the 13th year of TACC's Summer Co-op Internship program by posting to online job boards at state universities and presenting virtually to a class at Texas Tech University on February 24.
- Continued conducting annual dues solicitation.
- Continued TACC's daily Facebook posts since December 2016, and weekly LinkedIn posts since July 2020.
- Solidified plans for the January 12 State Legislative Session in Austin.
- Finalizing all speakers and activities for the March 14-16 TACC Joint Cooperative Meeting in San Antonio.
- Initiated the analysis portion of the 2020 Compensation Study reported results.
- Participated in meetings on legislative priorities for the Keep Texas Trucking Coalition on January 14 and March 2.
- Coordinated registration and developed a legislative presentation for the Texas Chapter, National Society of Accountants for Cooperatives meeting on March 12.
- Finalized benefit gifts & purchases for those cooperatives participating through donations to the TACC-PAC.
- Performed daily review of all 4,000-plus bills filed at the State Capitol & further exhausted those having an impact on rural Texas & cooperatives.
- Participated in the February 11 virtual annual meeting of the National Cotton Council.
- Received a second PPP loan on behalf of the Council.
- Attended a virtual meeting of the State Board of Directors of the Certified Crop Advisers on February 22.

Will Be:

- Soliciting attendees for and conducting the upcoming TACC Joint Cooperative Meeting in San Antonio March 14-16.
- Attending and presenting to the Texas Chapter, National Society of Accountants for Cooperatives virtual meeting on March 12.
- Finalizing plans for the July 14-16 TACC Cooperative Managers Conference in Ruidoso, NM.
- Preparing and developing the agenda for the July 28-30 Cooperative Board Chairmen's Conference in Ruidoso, NM.
- Continuing to write daily Facebook & weekly educational LinkedIn posts.
- Attending and participating in weekly ag commodity group lobby meetings (Texas Ag Council) at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesdays.
- Continuing to update and share TACC's Legislative Bill Summary containing nearly 65 bills impacting rural Texas.
- Begin the initial process to produce an early May distribution of TACC's comprehensive Co-op Directory and Handbook.
- Preparing for the May 12-13 TACC Board of Directors Meeting in Austin.
- Continuing to assist co-ops on numerous personnel requests.
- Finalizing TACC's 2021 Summer Co-op Internship Class.
- Distributing TACC's 2020 every-five-year Co-op Compensation Study.
- Monitor the legislative session status.

Calendar of Events

March

- 12 Texas Chapter-National Society of Accountants for Cooperatives Meeting – Virtual
- 14 Daylight Savings Time begins

14-16 TACC Joint Cooperative Meeting – La Cantera Resort, San Antonio

April

- 2 Good Friday Holiday

May

12-13 TACC Board of Directors Meeting – Austin

- 31 Memorial Day Holiday

June

- 27-29 Texas Cotton Ginners Association Summer Meeting – Austin

July

14-16 TACC Cooperative Managers Conference – Inn of the Mountain Gods, Ruidoso, NM

28-30 TACC Cooperative Board Chairmen's Conference – Inn of the Mountain Gods, Ruidoso, NM