

MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF THE USDA, NASS, MINNESOTA FIELD OFFICE

1910: USDA appointed Paul Kirk, Special Agricultural Agent, in charge of following spring wheat progress in the Dakotas and Minnesota.

1914: Minnesota Statistical Office was created and located in the Old Capitol Building, St. Paul, MN. All Minnesota statistics were generated from that location.

1922: The State of Minnesota and the USDA signed a cooperative agreement to “Safeguard against duplication of effort, to widen the scope of operations, and permit more complete and efficient use of facilities.”

1931: The office relocated to the “new” State Office Building with a staff of six people.

1945: The office grew to a staff of 14 people as the need for agricultural statistics grew with New Deal legislation and the Great Depression in the 1930’s, followed by WWII.

1940’s-1950’s: Data, gathered by county assessors and mail surveys, were compiled and published into the *Crop Reporter*, which had a mailing list of over 5,000 subscribers. By 1947, over 200,000 questionnaires were being mailed to producers in Minnesota.

1960’s: The first part-time interviewers, called “enumerators”, were hired to collect data from producers in person. The June Enumerative Surveys began along with the Objective Yield Program. The Weekly Crop-Weather report began in 1963.

1970’s: Large random mailings were being phased out, replaced by statistical samples of producers. In 1974, the office relocated to the Metro Square Building in St. Paul. By 1978, the first Agri-View newsletter was published and mailings of that report and others topped over one half million reports mailed to data users that year. In 1979, the first Crop Weather Radio Tape was recorded and provided to 10 radio stations. Also that year, the office moved to the Agriculture Building at 90 West Plato Blvd, reuniting with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

1980’s: Micro-computer technology first appeared in the office in 1983. By 1986, telephone enumerators were collecting data using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) software.

1990’s: Local Area Networks and other computer technology allowed efficiencies in collecting and disseminating data. These efficiencies allowed NASS to increase the scope of its program. In 1994, the office relocated to the Commerce Building in St Paul with a staff of 22. In 1997, NASS developed its first web site to communicate with producers and data users. Also, in 1997, NASS was assigned the responsibility for the U.S. Agricultural Census program.

2000’s: The Minnesota Field Office was one of the first NASS locations to utilize a NASS Regional Data Collection Center. The 2002 Census of Agriculture was conducted, followed by the 2007 Census. Beginning in 2007, Electronic Data Reporting (EDR), a web-based tool, was implemented that allowed producers to complete their forms on-line. In 2008, the office relocated to its current location in the Alliance Bank Center, St Paul.

2010: The work continues... “We are proud to carry on the cooperative agreement with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the long standing tradition of producing high quality, accurate and timely Minnesota agricultural statistics.” Douglas A. Hartwig, Director, USDA, NASS, MN FO.