

## A Message from MIDAS Leadership

By: Taylor Chasteen

I am Taylor Chasteen and I am currently serving as your new MIDAS program executive. It is my good fortune to join your ranks as a member of the Department of Agriculture and to be a small part of the MIDAS Project. Why? The MIDAS



**Taylor Chasteen**  
MIDAS Program Executive

initiative has the potential to make a huge positive difference for all those it touches. Having dealt with national security in the Department of Defense for many years, I feel qualified to offer an opinion on the topic. For many years the Department of Agriculture and the Farm Service Agency have strengthened America's farmers and ranchers in order to preserve this country's ability to feed itself and many parts of the world. Maintaining this capability is, I believe, a matter of national security. Many of us also believe that the MIDAS initiative will contribute significantly to this mission by improving services to our customers, equipping the Farm Service Agency with modern technology and better processes, and attaining a greater capability to understand the business.

We are making good progress. Our current status is that we have crossed the threshold of project planning, although planning never stops, and entered into the "blueprinting" phase of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) project. It is extremely important to emerge from this phase with a good blueprint of business processes that will most efficiently help our staff serve America's farmers and ranchers.

Although there will always be the unforeseen things that will trigger necessary adjustments, we will strive to minimize these events. The successful end of the "blueprinting" phase will lead to the "realization" phase in which we will configure the MIDAS solution and begin delivering capabilities. I should add that the team also developed a MIDAS

demonstration concurrent with "blueprinting" activities that illustrate the power of the integrated business solution that we chose as the MIDAS platform. Thus far, the response to this demonstration has been favorable. There will be challenges, no doubt; however, with your determination, help and support we will be successful — together.

## MIDAS Demonstrations

The MIDAS project team has been hitting the road this summer. Several locations across the United States hosted MIDAS demonstrations for the local state and county employees. The focus of the demonstrations was to provide a better understanding about how FSA data and processes can be integrated within a single system, as well as learn more about the overall objectives of the project. Demo sites included:

- Lancaster County, Pa.
- Kansas City, Mo.
- Livingston County, N.Y.
- Sutter County, Calif.
- Spokane County, Wash.
- Iowa County, Wis.
- Kossuth County, Iowa
- Sampson County, N.C.

In addition to learning more about MIDAS, the demonstrations provided an opportunity for the project team to obtain feedback and input from the field and other stakeholders on what they would like to see in the final system solution. For those unable to attend a live demo, a recording will be available online by late July. Be sure to check the [MIDAS website](#) for more information.

## Coming Soon

Mark your calendars for the 2011 NASCOE National Convention, August 8 – 13, in Corpus Christi, Texas. The MIDAS team will be presenting a project update and will be available to answer your questions. Be sure to stop by our MIDAS booth!



MIDAS Demo in the New York Field Office

## MIDAS Team Kicks Off the Change Agent Network

In May 2011, the MIDAS project team launched the pilot Change Agent Network (CAN). The purpose of the CAN is to generate awareness and provide communications about the MIDAS project throughout FSA by utilizing a group of change agents selected from the state and county offices, as well as representatives from Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs and Kansas City. The change agents work directly with the project team to learn first-hand information on project activities and then share that information at the local level. Along the way, they will share comments, questions, and concerns from the field and funnel them up to the project team. Additionally, the CAN will be utilized to:

- ◆ Inform and engage local FSA employees in MIDAS Project activities
- ◆ Share responses to MIDAS with the project team and provide ongoing feedback
- ◆ Identify potential problems and assist in the development of plans to address issues

This pilot phase is scheduled to run through fall of 2011. During this time, the change agents will provide feedback on the overall process and their role. The feedback will be used to define the future growth of the CAN and how the network will be enhanced in the upcoming project phases.

We look forward to working with the CAN to support the success of MIDAS!

## Change Agent's Perspective from MIDAS Demos

*By: Daniel C. Smeal*

On June 7, 2011, I attended a MIDAS field demonstration at the Lancaster Service Center along with other state and county office staff from both Pennsylvania and Maryland. We heard a lot about MIDAS during the past few years, but it seems as though it is coming together now and coming together quite nicely. We have been told MIDAS will completely change the way FSA does business. After the demonstration I have to fully agree. The benefits communicated to our group included the potential to go paperless, electronic signatures for approval, history logs, integrated GIS and increased ability for producers to apply for programs online. The MIDAS project team has listened to what the field offices want and I look forward to seeing the final product!



## Letter from Washington, DC

*By: Dan Holen*



What a difference a year makes. About a year ago I realized there was an opportunity for me to assist on the MIDAS project in Washington, DC. It has been an incredible year of change for my wife and I, moving here to a whole new way of life

and work. For the previous 31 years, I was the County Executive Director in a combined county office located in Baudette, Minn. It is small town USA located right on the Canadian border with a population of about 1000 people.

We moved in June 2010 and did not bring a vehicle. Relying totally on public transportation (subway and busses) along with a thing called a Zipcar, we have survived almost a year now. I went from about a five minute commute to my home in rural Lake of the Woods County, to about an hour ride home on the Metro. My trips to and from work are a lot more "interesting" than back home.

The MIDAS project team has been reviewing all the FSA programs with an eye toward key business processes that will be used in the final solution under MIDAS. We have been considering these at "high levels" at this point in various blue-printing sessions. All that will change in the next few weeks as the work will be getting down into the real details of the variety of FSA programs. My co-workers have been great. I am one of the senior members of the MIDAS Team gathered from state and county offices across the country. The help, support and friendship they show as we work together toward a common goal has been one of many positive WDC experiences.

## Northeast Area Rally Recap

Jean Knight and Steve Stark, members of the MIDAS Business Process Analyst Team, addressed attendees of the NASCOE Northeast Area Rally and provided an overview of the MIDAS Project goals and a project update. Approximately 65 people were present for the Saturday morning meeting. Details of the proposed MIDAS solution, such as the ability to access all programs and functions through a single sign-on and the interactivity between GIS and acreage reporting, were well-received with enthusiastic support from the audience.

This meeting provided an excellent opportunity for clarification of key concepts for the MIDAS approach. MIDAS seeks to reduce the current stove-piped approach (different software for each program) by emphasizing common processes applicable to all programs. Additionally MIDAS is focusing on the implementation of a new software package. Surveys of those in attendance indicated the information presented at the Northeast Area Rally gave them a better understanding of these new concepts.

## From the Field

Check out what our demo participants are saying about MIDAS.

***“As an employee of FSA for 35 years and a CED, this is the most exciting direction we are encountering. I was thinking about retiring next year but I may change my mind.”***

-County Executive Director (Pennsylvania Demo)

***“Great Demonstration. Can’t wait for it to get up and running and to our county offices.”***

-Program Technician (Wisconsin Demo)

***“This is awesome! There are too many steps involved now that it’s easy to forget something. This will be great. Thank you!”***

-Program Technician (Pennsylvania Demo)



## MIDAS Trivia

Which of the following is one of the largest government entities using SAP?

- A. NASA
- B. USDA
- C. Navy
- D. IRS



MIDAS Demo in Dodgeville, WI

## Looking Forward

The Fall 2011 issue of the MIDAS Press will feature details on the online availability of the demo and a recap of the project team’s experience at NASCOE. Look for our fall issue this October.



Trivia Answer: C. Navy