The NECC will hold its Cooperative Leaders Forum and 61st Annual Meeting on March 18-19 at the Doubletree Hotel in Syracuse, N.Y. The Forum is held in conjunction with CoBANK’s customer meeting.

Dr. Brent Huetl will kick off the Forum on Thursday with an address on “The Economic Impact of Cooperatives in the U.S.” Huetl is the Director of the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives and Associate Professor in the Dept. of Ag and Applied Economics. Professor Huetl received his Ph.D. in Ag and Natural Resource Economics from the University of Maryland, College Park. Prior to joining the University of Wisconsin, Brent spent two years at the University of California Berkeley as a Research Economist, and eight years at Iowa State University as Associate Professor in Economics. His research and teaching focus on cooperative organizations and agricultural markets. He is a co-editor of the recently published book titled Cooperative Conversions, Failures and Restructurings: Case Studies and Lessons from U.S. and Canadian Agriculture which is available online at www.kiss.uwsc.edu/CoopOut.html.

Charles Conner will offer “An Update from Washington.” Conner became President and CEO of NCFC in February 2009. Before joining NCFC, he served as Deputy Secretary and COO for the USDA overseeing day-to-day operations including $95 billion budget for the 26 USDA agencies representing 300 programs and more than 100,000 employees. He represented the USDA on the President’s Management Council providing executive expertise to proposed government-wide policy direction on key management initiatives, and effectively communicating all aspects of the USDA mission through speeches, presentations and forums. Conner interacted directly with President George W. Bush and his senior staff to formulate food, trade, security and energy policies. He led development of the Bush Administration’s $330 billion Farm Bill proposal and the strategy to educate and inform industry, constituents and Congress. His role in communicating USDA policy involved live appearances on Fox News, CSPAN and the Squawk Box. He previously served as President of the Corn Refiners Association when he navigated and negotiated the interests of both large and small companies to gain consensus on the association’s budget and policy direction. In addition, he directed a successful World Trade Organization (WTO) and NAFTA trade case against the Government of Mexico. Conner is a graduate of Purdue University, with a Bachelor of Science Degree and is the recipient of Purdue’s Distinguished Alumni Award.

Dr. Marci Rossell will present an “Economic Outlook.” Rossell is a former CNBC Chief Economist and Co-Host of Squawk Box. She electrifies audiences nationwide, speaking on the nexus of economics, politics, culture and the media. Her animated style was honed when she served as the popular, lively Chief Economist for CNBC in the months immediately following September 11. She takes complex economic issues, often dull in the button-down business press, and makes them relevant to people’s lives, families, and careers. Prior to her career in broadcast journalism, Marci served as Corporate Economist and Investment Spokesperson for Oppenheimer Funds, one of the nation’s largest mutual fund companies. Before moving to Wall Street, she was an expert witness for Deloitte and Touche in court cases involving economic issues. Marci began her career as an Economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. She is currently a visiting Professor at DePaul University.

John Sununu will address the subjects of “Finance and Energy Policy.” He has been called both a philosopher and the smartest man in the Senate. Senator Sununu (R-NH) cut a unique path from the private sector to public office, serving three terms in the House and six years as the youngest member of the U.S. Senate. Before entering public service, Sununu worked for emerging high-tech firms as an Engineer, Strategy Consultant and a CFO. In Congress, he served on Senate committees such as Commerce, Finance, Banking and Foreign Relations. He draws from his engineering and business background to speak passionately and in great detail about the economic landscape, financial and regulatory reform, the science and economics behind the climate change debate, and the
PhD at Michigan State University. Before his academic appointment, he had extensive international experience, having spent four years in Africa with the U.S. State Department, the United Nations and the World Bank. His research interests include new product introductions, branding commodities, linking customer satisfaction to firm performance, retailing and trade promotions. His research has appeared in numerous journals including Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Research, American Journal of Agricultural Economics, and Journal of Retailing.

He has won national awards for distinguished research and teaching and is also Professor of Retailing at the Nyenrode, The Netherlands School of Business and teaches retailing strategy at IESEG, Lille France. McLaughlin serves on the Boards of Directors of several companies, and has served on the Retail Board of the Produce Marketing Association and is a current PMA Educational Foundation Board Member.

Brian Henehan will moderate a panel discussion on “Marketing Sustainability.” Henehan is a Senior Extension Associate in the Dept. of Applied Economics at Cornell University where he serves as Director of the Cooperative Enterprise as well as NECC Secretary. The panel members include Prof. McLaughlin, Rick Nacci and Jed Davis.

Jed Davis is Director of Sustainability for Cabot Creamery Cooperative; Vermont’s historic dairy farmer cooperative dating back to 1919. Jed has a lifetime involvement with agriculture and cooperatives and nearly two decades of service in the cheese world. Born and raised on a six-generation family farm in central Massachusetts, Jed received his Bachelor of Arts and Masters Degrees from Dartmouth College in 1991, he began working at Cabot and has since held a variety of marketing, sales and operations positions. Jed has previously served as Cabot’s “ambassador” to numerous industry groups including the American Cheese Society, the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade, the Vermont Specialty Food Association and as a founding member of the Vermont Cheese Council. In 2008, Jed was named Cabot’s first Director of Sustainability and his efforts now center on helping Cabot achieve its own underpinning sustainability goals. “Living within our means and ensuring the means to live” – from cow-to-creamery-to-customer. Jed represents Cabot on state initiatives including the Vermont Sustainable Agriculture Council and Green Up Vermont, as well as on national efforts with the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy.

Richard Nacci is COO of American Dairy Association and Dairy Council, Inc., headquartered in Syracuse, N.Y. Since joining ADACD in June 1990, Rick has directed the association’s programs in retail category management, dairy promotion, nutrition education, and advertising on behalf of dairy producers in New York, northern New Jersey and northeastern Pennsylvania. While CEO of ADACD, Rick also served as Executive Vice President of Strategic Industry Analysis and Evaluation at Dairy Management Inc. (DMI), where he is managing an industry-wide sustainability project for DMI. Rick is also DMI’s primary contract liaison to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In addition, Rick is responsible for oversight of both the focused and external evaluations of DMI programs. In 2006, Rick served as the Executive Vice President of U.S. Sales and Marketing, where he led the development and implementation of school food service and education programs, retail marketing, food service and information insights. In 2006, Rick served as VP of Sales and Marketing where he worked with state/regional and DMI staff to assure the development and implementation of effective marketing, account development and education strategies in the school channel. Rick is a graduate of the University of Connecticut with a Animal Science degree.

The forum will continue on Friday with a presentation by Dr. Ed McLaughlin on “Trends in the Supermarket Industry.” McLaughlin is the Robert G. Tobin Professor of Marketing, Director of the Undergraduate Business Program and Food Industry Management Program at Cornell University. He received his PhD at Michigan State University. Before his academic appointment, he had extensive international experience, having spent four years in Africa with the U.S. State Department, the United Nations and the World Bank. His research interests include new product introductions, branding commodities, linking customer satisfaction to firm performance, retailing and trade promotions. His research has appeared in numerous journals including Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Research, American Journal of Agricultural Economics, and Journal of Retailing. He has won national awards for distinguished research and teaching and is also Professor of Retailing at Cornell University. Despite current budgetary issues, Cornell continues to indicate it's willingness to support the Council and Northeast cooperatives. Another key partner has been CoBank. By combining our collective organizational and financial resources, we are able to make our annual meeting a success, year after year. Going forward, we plan to continue to talk to the Mid-Atlantic Alliance of Cooperatives, our neighbors to the South, about ways to collaborate to benefit both our organizations.

Finally, I’d like to thank council membership for their ongoing support through attendance at meetings, annual dues and stepping up when needed. Remember to visit our Web site www.cooperatives.aem.cornell.edu for recent news releases, presentations from past annual meetings and leaders’ forums, as well as other information. Happy Holidays to you and your families.

Will Baildon