



Organic Matters

MOA's Ninth Annual Conference Report

By Kate Hilmner

In December, I was fortunate to attend the Montana Organic Association's ninth annual conference in Billings. As a delegate of *Good Food World*, I sat in on two days worth of lectures, audio/visual presentations and roundtable discussions on a variety of topics that concern Montana's organic community. As a consumer, this was a rare opportunity for me to witness the larger world behind organic food production and distribution. Even more importantly, I was able to meet many of the individuals who are working hard to grow, distribute and promote real food in our state.

After an introduction on Friday morning by MOA's Board Chairman, Daryl Lassila, the conference jumped into a discussion on improving access to conservation support for organic farmers. While I often got lost in the technicalities of legal advice, hearing personal accounts from the farmers gave me a new insight and appreciation for those who produce our food.

Doug and Anna Crabtree of Vilicus Farms shared their experiences using beginning farmers' programs. They promoted connectivity with the land and asserted the belief that farming that relies on chemical input should not be accredited with the term "conventional," reminding us that natural methods were the norm long before chemicals came into play, something that consumers and

younger generations would do well to remember.

In between the talks, I took time to thank my sponsors and meet with the individuals that *Good Food World* had mentioned—among them Ole Norgaard, owner of North Frontier Farms near Lewistown and former Chair of MOA.



MSU Roundtable discussion. Photo by Casey Bailey.

He let me in on a personal philosophy: "Certified organic is a step in the right direction, but we as farmers should also educate ourselves even more on how to improve nutrition and energy levels in the food we produce." As the conference con-

tinued and I heard more voices from the community, the more I saw that Norgaard wasn't alone in his thinking. Getting the organic label didn't seem to be top priority, but it seemed the best place to start as a steppingstone for larger, more encompassing goals.

Casey Bailey, who raises wheat and barley outside of Fort Benton, is converting his crops to organic. He spoke about the theological questions that surround his work. Through ventures in religion, philosophy, social work and music, he too developed a sense of connectivity that extends to the land he's farming today. It involves a desire to be free, as he put it, "from chemicals, from subsidies and from culpability."

According to Bob Quinn, president of Kamut International and owner of Quinn

Inside This Issue

NRCS's 2012 EQIP Program3
New MOA Board Members3
Grain Growers Gone?	4-6
Just Label It6
A Major Transition in Ag7
Conservation Stewardship7
Introducing Oaec7
NOSB Update	8-9
Coexistence	10
MOA Awards Presented	11
Member Benefits	13
Calendar of Events	13
A View from the Chair	14

Montana Organic Association is a 501(c)6 non-profit organization dedicated to advocating and promoting organic agriculture for the highest good of the people, the environment and the State economy.

Organic Matters is published quarterly by the Montana Organic Association. Send queries, suggestions, letters, and requests to: *Organic Matters* Montana Organic Association PO Box 570 Eureka MT 59917 mtorganic@hotmail.com (406) 788-7423

Organic Matters occasionally includes guest articles and opinions. While we review these for relevance to our mission, the opinions in these articles may not reflect the opinions or policy of the Montana Organic Association.

Editor: Susan Waters
MOA Newsletter Committee:
Casey Bailey - Chair
Steve Baril
Tara Blyth
Doug Crabtree
Lou Ann Crowley
Wes Gibbs
Amy Grisak

Organic Matters is printed on 100% recycled paper

continued on p. 2

Conference Report *continued from p. 1*

Farm and Ranch, this type of thinking is exactly what we need to solve problems of food; not only in Montana, but worldwide. Chemical farming systems and GMOs, he said, are non-sustainable and only exist with government subsidies, yet they are quickly taking over the world's food supply. Organic farming systems are our last best hope, or as he put it, "the only thing standing in the way," of this takeover. In the face of this opposition, Quinn asked us all to make the hard choice, beginning with supporting organic farmers and bringing organic production back home.

In Montana, this could mean reaching out to new communities. There are many Hutterite colonies here that are farming conventionally and possess the land and manpower to farm on a large scale. Potential farmland might also be found on the Reservations, where the introduction of organic agriculture would likely provide much-needed jobs, a better diet and opportunities for education.

In other areas of the state, educations in agriculture are well underway. At Montana State University, students in the College of Agriculture program are researching sustainable food systems and conducting studies on the nutritional value of organic vs. conventionally grown food. In the past few years,

MSU has seen a significant increase in the number of agriculture students, an encouraging trend that will hopefully continue and serve as a model for other universities.

The MOA conference proved to be a valuable resource of advice for those who are new to the business, providing many opportunities for more experienced farmers to give advice ranging from pest control to the use of CSAs as a business model.

Jacob and Courtney Cowgill have just finished their third year of farming. They run four different CSAs outside of Conrad, distributing organic vegetables, grains, heritage turkeys and home-baked breads to the community. Being certified organic was important to them from the start and they have remained optimistic about the challenges of organic certification. Rather than balk at the strict guidelines, they appreciate the standards as a guide for running their farm. As Courtney mentioned in the grower's roundtable, "It's all very extensive and it takes a lot of work, but it's been really useful for us as a resource on pest control, rotation and keeping records."

Still, other farmers have struggled to find success under the organic model. A few vented their frustrations with trying to meet the USDA's organic certification

GRAIN & SEED CLEANERS

Capacities from 20-1000 BPH

From



**PORTABLE MODULAR
AIR SCREEN**

MODULAR DESIGN ADVANTAGES

- Low cost initial investment.
- Basic units have the same heavy duty construction as the larger units.
- All steel construction.
- Very economical maintenance.
- Modules for air separation metering feed and additional screen area available.



THE MINI AIR SCREEN



The Leader in Modular Air and Screen Machines in the Northwest.

★ Made in the USA ★
Designed & built by seedsmen

1-800-977-6514
406-727-6514

**Financing
Available OAC**

Visit www.benchindustries.com to see our equipment selection.

standards. Patricia Espenscheid from Wholesome Foods spoke about the experience of small farmers seeking certification, calling it “an adversarial relationship.” In the end though, it seemed a small price to pay for the rewards of living their values through their work. Many of the farmers repeatedly expressed a determination and a passion for their cause. As Espenscheid put it, “When you’re making good food, it’s a marvelous way to spend your life.”

Attending the conference has given me insight into the family-like community that exists around organics in Montana, and it has given me an idea of where I might fit into the equation. Everyone I met was connected to each other: researchers, policy experts, farmers, certifiers, processors, distributors, retailers, and consumers interact together.

While MOA has succeeded in their goal of strengthening existing connections, it’s up to all of us to continue our organic efforts—each a small step in creating new connections and educating consumers throughout Montana and across the globe.

Kate Hilmer learned to cook at home as a kid, but fell in love with food while working at various bakeries and coffee shops throughout college. She graduated in 2010 with a Bachelor’s in Fine Art and spent six months in a teaching internship abroad before returning to Montana to pursue food and art as a career. Thanks to Good Food World for sharing their resources with MOA and visit them at www.goodfoodworld.com.

NRCS’s 2012 EQIP Program

Attention organic farmers and ranchers: The NRCS is accepting applications for the 2012 Environmental Quality Incentive Program Organic Initiative (EQIP) for Montana. While application to this program can be done at any time, the next submission date is March 30, 2012, so make sure to contact your local NRCS soon about details.

Since 2009, over \$2.5 million dollars has been provided to 85 transitioning and existing organic farmers and ranchers in Montana to assist them in improving conservation benefits on their farms and ranches. Maybe this is the year to transition or explore win-win conservation practices that can help your bottom line.

For more information and updates about the EQIP Initiatives and other 2008 Farm Bill topics, please visit the NRCS website at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip>

New MOA Board Members

Newly elected Board Member, Wes Gibbs, lives in Fort Benton with his wife Linda and is a manager for Montana Flour & Grains. He is a former MSU Extension agent for Judith Basin County, and was raised on a farm and ranch near Judith Gap in central Montana. At one time, Wes and Linda also published two county newspapers and a horse magazine.

Wes feels strongly that the future of food production is tied to organic and sustainable practices. While operating his family farm in the 1980s and 90s (before knowing about organic principles), Wes moved his farming strategies toward sustainable practices of crop rotation and reduced chemical use. “It made common sense to make use of nature’s techniques,” says Wes. The best part of his job now is working with organic agricultural producers who love the land and with food customers who appreciate where their food comes from.

“I have been a farm kid, a student of agriculture, and a professional agrarian through every stage of my life,” states Chaz Holt, new MOA Board Member. Chaz, along with his wife and 2 children with another on the way, has been involved in Montana organic agriculture since 2004.

Originally from a multi-generational, diversified family farm in NW Georgia, over the recent years Chaz: created and managed the Red Lodge Farmers market (2004 to 2007); owned and operated an organic farm and garden supply business in Joliet, MT and NW Georgia; worked as the first farmer liaison with Emory University in Atlanta GA; became the first certified sustainable farm of 25 acres in vegetables for the southeastern US; served on the board of MOA (2005-2007); and generally has been involved in a wide range of value-added and diversified sustainable production practices around the state. Currently he is managing Towne’s Harvest Farm with Montana State University.



Wes Gibbs



Chaz Holt

Where Have All the Organic Grain Growers Gone? by Amy Grisak

Editor's Note: This article is the first of a three-part series. In the next Organic Matters, we'll explore the marketing end of the organic industry. We'll hear from the processors, and those who bring organic products to the public, to discover trends in the industry and examine the relationships between growers and processors. The third article in the series will focus on resolutions. We'll hear from growers who have tackled the challenges to learn how they are able to continue in organic production. We'll also hear from agricultural scientists about current research and provide growers with additional tools to battle age-old issues.

Despite an increasing consumer base eager to buy organic food, we're losing certified grain growers in Montana.

"In our region we have a new reality," says Doug Crabtree, organic certification program manager for the Montana Department of Agriculture. For the first time in the ten year history of Montana's program, we lost growers and acreage. Over 30,000 acres of land in Montana has reverted to non-organic management over the past two years. The 'lost' acres represent over 20% of the total organic crop land in the state and nearly all of the acres are devoted to grain production. Crabtree says he thought it was an anomaly, but realized Washington, Idaho and North Dakota are having similar issues. To find the answers on these

decisions, which are not taken lightly, we need to talk to those on the front lines of production.

Mikel Lund of Scobey has been an organic grower since before there was any kind of paperwork to call him one. He obviously understands the value, yet is facing a behemoth with no easy answers. "After 20-25 years of trying to practice organic, and using tillage as the main weed control in this environment (which does not have a lot of rain, nor a long growing season), the weeds tend to get to the point where you lose production," Lund says.

He says he can live with the winter rye, pigeon grass, and even the Canada thistle using the standard organic practices. It's the field bindweed that is forcing him to take radical measures. When there are stalks of wheat with five, six or maybe ten kernels on it, something has to change. "It's all kind of cumulative," he says. "I'm not excited or happy about it at all, but it's not sustainable anymore."

It became glaringly evident when he took a look at his farm on GoogleEarth® last year. There was a field where his son, who is assuming management over more of the operation, pre-sprayed, seeded and

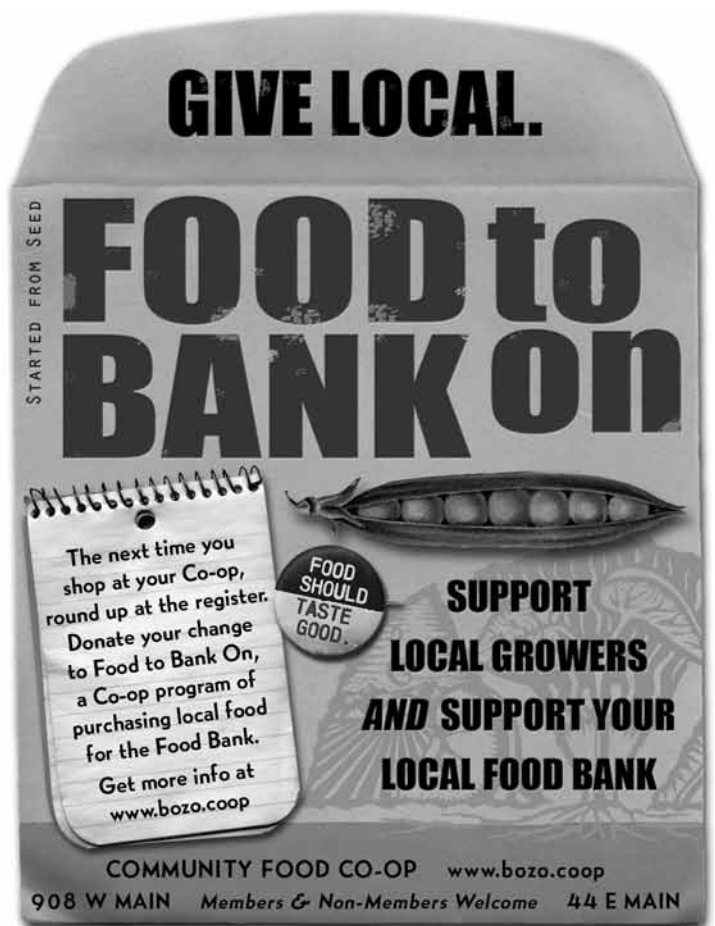


EAT GOOD FOOD
Breakfast. Lunch. Dinner.

- Self-serve hot dishes, soups, salad bar.
- Good-to-Go packaged entrées.
- Deli made wraps and salads.
- Made to order sandwiches and smoothies.
- Co-op baked treats.
- Co-op made artisan and sandwich breads.
- Produce, meats, cheeses, wine and beer.
- Packaged grocery, dairy and so much more...

CO-OP DOWNTOWN

44 E Main, Bozeman 406-922-2667
www.bozo.coop Everyone Welcome



GIVE LOCAL.

FOOD to BANK ON

STARTED FROM SEED

The next time you shop at your Co-op, round up at the register. Donate your change to Food to Bank On, a Co-op program of purchasing local food for the Food Bank. Get more info at www.bozo.coop

FOOD SHOULD TASTE GOOD.

SUPPORT LOCAL GROWERS AND SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL FOOD BANK

COMMUNITY FOOD CO-OP www.bozo.coop
908 W MAIN Members & Non-Members Welcome 44 E MAIN

post-sprayed. It was obvious the bindweed dominated the fields in some of the organic sections. "You could see the little circles (of bindweed patches) on the organic parts," Lund says. "How am I going to deal with this? I've agonized over this for the past five to seven years."

Lund isn't turning his entire operation into non-organic crops, and will keep what is not infested with bindweed in the program. And it's not as if he's throwing in the towel without a fight. He utilized a Noble blade, which is a plow designed to cut the weeds below the surface without actually turning over the soil, to try to keep the bindweed at bay. He also experimented with vinegar in his own yard where bindweed crept into the lawn. "It just burns off the tops. You haven't done anything to the root," he says.

He had a glimmer of success in dealing with it in a few small spaces by heavily seeding alfalfa in those spots, such as low lying areas or near the creek bottoms. "Last year, I do not recall having white blossoms from the bindweed (in those areas)," he notes. "It definitely could be an answer."

Realistically, though, transitioning to an alfalfa farm simply isn't feasible. His greater hope is to find organic means to deal with the noxious weed. Until then, he needs to bring out chemical measures to eradicate the monster so he and his son can continue to have a productive operation into the future.

A concern about the future farmer is one reason Dan Nefzger of Vida is going with non-organic methods. He rents his land and has been growing a fair amount of organic crops in his operation since 1999. "I enjoyed the organic part. I was really tired of using all of the chemicals. This might sound strange coming from someone whose original degree is in chemical engineering," Nefzger notes. "I turn 60 years old this year and at some point I'd like to retire," he says. "This bindweed problem is getting worse and worse. I've used the Noble blade, but some years I couldn't work it enough. I didn't want to leave the land in poor shape."

As with Lund, Nefzger tried various means to gain a hold on it. "I looked to see if the soil was mineral-deficient," he says. "I actually underseeded alfalfa instead of sweet clover." Unfortunately, the alfalfa didn't take hold enough to choke it out. Other weeds, such as Canada thistle and cockleburs, are also becoming more of an issue. So Nefzger decided it was

time to clean it up. He says he figured he would spend a year or two bringing the weeds under control before he retires because he doesn't want to leave the weeds to the next grower who would have to spend a considerable amount of money clearing the fields.

While weeds are a perennial issue, they aren't the only factor driving growers out of organic production. Roy Benjamin of Shelby started out as an organic grower six years ago, but is leaving the program partly due to basic business rationale. "I grew up on a farm. I started farming organically as a small acreage opportunity." Benjamin also notes, "My dad switched to organic, and will remain that way. Overall there was a big delay in delivery and settlement in the industry," he says. It wasn't unusual for him to store grain for eight to 14 months, so cash flow was a major issue. "It was the rule rather than the exception in my organic career."

On top of this, he notes higher labor costs, including the detailed paperwork, makes the effort less worthwhile. Benjamin says, "I have a nice office, but I want to be a farmer." He recognizes the need for documentation to ensure universal standards, and appreciates what Montana has done to streamline the process, but it's something that he struggled with as part of the overall organic operation.

Wind erosion is another significant factor because certain sections of his farm weren't holding the soil with the tilling practices. Benjamin says it is noticeable, measurable and more every year. "I do still think organic farming is good," he says. "But I fail to see the benefit here in recent years. I left because you have to be able to sell what you produce in a reasonable amount of time."

Organic or not, if the soil blows away, growing much of anything is a moot point. "We're huge believers in organics," says Shawn Matteson. She and her husband, Greg, have farmed organically in Galata since 1998. "At the same time, my husband feels a huge responsibility to the land. It ripped his heart out to watch his soil blow away." They live in an area that often receives less rain than their neighbors, and the wind blows so severely it carries away the precious topsoil. Matteson says it isn't unusual for her to clean over a half-inch of soil from the window frames of the house.

Matteson says her husband also wants to take care of the bindweed situation. Greg worked a nuisance patch for weeks and weeks without eradicating it.

continued on p. 6



Photo by Kamut International

Grain Growers *continued from p. 5*

She says they're hoping to be able to spray responsibly to eliminate the weeds and leave it.

Timely payment is another critical issue. "We see a glut. We ended up sitting almost two years on our product," she says. She felt their stepping out of the program, during a time she felt there are more people coming into it, would allow them to remedy the problems of soil and weed issues without being missed. It might also give the market time to catch up so growers don't have to hold onto their grain as long. Fortunately, the Mattesons have been in organics for so long that they know they can also convert back. "This is not necessarily permanent," she notes.

There are no quick fixes to remedy the challenges facing organic growers these days. The growers recognize the benefit of organic crops, yet the realities of the business climate, as well as issues of weed control and soil erosion, are part of the reason more of them are leaving the program. This doesn't mean it's a long term trend. Unless these issues are addressed, it could mean a prolonged downturn in the number of organic grain growers in the entire eco-region.

Amy Grisak is a freelance writer in Great Falls specializing in gardening and agricultural-related topics. Read more about Amy and explore her work at www.amygrisak.com.

MOA Endorses "Just Label It"

A recent study shows that 93% of Americans support mandatory labeling of genetically engineered (GE) foods. Yet for 20 years we have been denied that right. Without labeling of genetically engineered (GE) foods, we cannot make informed choices about the food we eat.

The Just Label It: We Have a Right to Know campaign was created to advocate for the labeling of GE foods.

MOA is the latest of hundreds of partner organizations that have joined together in support of the FDA petition and the mandatory labeling of genetically engineered foods.

We hope to raise awareness of this issue, drive consumers to submit comments to the FDA and let Washington know that Americans want labeling of genetically engineered foods.

Please visit www.justlabelit.org for more information and instructions on how to submit your comments to the FDA.



**FRESH
MARKET**

Fresh and Friendly

Visit us in store or online!

Store Hours: Mon thru Sat 9am-8pm • Sun 10am-7pm

105 Smelter Ave NE • Great Falls, MT

www.2JsFreshMarket.com

406-761-0134



A Major Transition in Agriculture

by Ron de Yong. Excerpt by Steve Baril.

The following is excerpted from a presentation at MOA's Annual Conference on December 10, 2011. Ron de Yong is the Director of the Montana Department of Agriculture.

All of you should feel extremely proud of your accomplishments in organic production and marketing. MOA has been in existence for over nine years. The Department's organic program and the national organic program have been in existence just 10 years and have built a tremendous base for future expansion.

I would like to list just a few accomplishments to indicate the impact that you have today:

- Ole Norgaard, Daryl Lassila, Bob Quinn, Kiki Hubbard, Jonda Crosby and others were active participants in the passage of our coexistence legislation on sampling and mediation.
- MSU is doing an increasing amount of research on rotations, alternative crops, and cover crops.
- I noticed that several MOA members actively participated in policy discussions and decisions at the Montana Farmers Union (MFU) convention.
- Organic producer Alan Merrill is President of MFU.
- Kamut International, a certified organic operation, received Montana's Exporter of the Year Award
- The Governor appointed an organic producer, Randy Hinebauch, to the Montana Wheat & Barley Committee.
- Montana organic producer Jon Tester is one of our U.S. Senators.
- USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan has played and continues to play a major role in the development of our organic community with the support of Secretary Vilsack.
- Montana producers are developing and expanding organic seed production.

There are probably many more examples that could be mentioned here and know that your efforts are appreciated. Your blood sweat and tears are at the forefront of a major transition in agriculture.

Congratulations to all of you. Quoting the old cigarette commercial for women, but even more appropriate here: "You've come a long way, baby."

Well done!

Conservation Stewardship

2011 Program Sign-Up Results

USDA committed more than \$191 million a year to enroll 12.75 million new acres in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) in fiscal year 2011. USDA signed 9,630 contracts in 49 states. In Montana, 270 contracts were honored covering 964,233 treated acres, for a total of \$9,175,260 obligated. Under CSP, farmers and ranchers sign five-year contracts to manage, improve, and increase conservation activities that result in environmental benefits on working land.

With this latest sign up, CSP became the largest long-term USDA conservation program, with over 38 million farm and ranch land acres enrolled across the country. Over the course of the first three enrollment years, over 30,000 producers are now participating in the program.



Introducing OAEC

At MOA's annual conference in Billings, the Organic Advisory and Education Council (OAEC) was introduced to the Montana organic community. The foundation of the Council is based on the need for more organic research in Montana. With its establishment as an independent, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, OAEC's mission is "to encourage sustainable and responsible organic agricultural practices through investments in research and through education as to organic and sustainable food and agriculture."

The appointment of an initial Board of Directors was based on recommendations from different organic organizations and has provided a broad-based structure to represent the organic community. Currently, Ole Norgaard is serving as President and Treasurer and Sam Schmidt is serving as Vice President and Secretary. With a full assembly soon, OAEC will start off its inaugural year and refine more developmental tasks and goals for the future.

One such task will be to determine what research is the most relevant to pursue. Communication with, and direction from the organic community itself will help determine this. Project fundraising is also on the docket and OAEC's tax-exempt status allows for funds to come from a variety of sources, including grants (Industry, Federal, State, etc.), industry donations and directly from the organic community.

If you would like to learn more about OAEC, or directly support organic research, please feel free to contact us at mtoaec@hotmail.com.

**GOOD
FOOD**
S T O R E

www.goodfoodstore.com
1600 S. 3rd St. West | Missoula

NOSB Update by Barry Flamm

Visit www.montanaorganicassociation.org/nosb.htm

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) held its fall meeting November 29-December 2, in Savannah, Georgia. The purpose of this and all the meetings is to receive public comment on committee proposals and other matters of interest to the organic community. On the final day, the full Board votes on recommendations and conducts other Board business including voting on officers for the next term.

Prior to this meeting during the written comment period, we received 1013 comments. At Savannah, we heard from over 100 members of the public specifically on the committee recommendations and discussion papers, plus on other issues such as concern over the impacts of GE and the need for follow up action on NOSB previous recommendations on conserving biodiversity.

The written and oral comments provide very valuable information in the formulation of Board decisions. In Savannah, persons from all over the US representing various interests and concerns attended. I was especially impressed by the passionate talks by several local farmers from SAAFON (SE African American Farmers Organic Network) describing their commitment to organics, successes and problems.





**MONTANA
FLOUR &
GRAINS**

PO Box 517
275 Montana Hwy 223
Fort Benton, MT 59442

Montana's First Certified Organic Grain Processor...

**We buy all classes of organic wheat.
Also organic barley, rye, and peas.**

Call André or Eldon 406-622-5436

montanaflour.com



Home of
KAMUT®
BRAND KHORASAN WHEAT



As you know, the Organic Food Production Act (OFPA) mandates that in order to be sold or labeled as an organically produced product it must have been produced and handled without the use of synthetic chemicals, EXCEPT as otherwise provided. Exceptions are dealt with in the law by requiring the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a National List of approved and prohibited substances that shall be included in the standards for organic production and handling. The National List is based on that proposed by NOSB and this task is a major undertaking of the Board. Interested parties may petition the Board to have a substance added or removed from the list. Petitions are submitted to the NOP, which after consulting with NOSB, determines the petition's sufficiency. If the petition meets standards, it is sent to the NOSB, where it is assigned to the appropriate committee. Subsequently, technical reviews are requested to provide the committee with the needed information to develop a recommendation.

Ten petitions were considered at the Savannah meeting. You can find the details for each action on the NOSB/ NOP websites. The petition that was of particular interest, especially to one of MOA's own, was the petition to remove the limiting annotation for use of sulfur dioxide in wines. The current listing allows sulfur dioxide for use in wine labeled "made with organic grapes." The petitioner wanted this limitation removed so that SO₂ could be used in wine certified as organic. There was much public comment and debate revolving around essentiality of sulfites in wine production and its compatibility with organic principles. Andy Spoonseller, owner of Ten Spoon Vineyard and Winery, traveled from Missoula to present strong testimony against allowing sulfur dioxide (sulfites) in organic wine. The full Board went against the Handling Committee recommendation and rejected the petition.

OFPA requires that in order to remain valid, all substances on the National list must be reviewed by the Board within five years of being listed. This is called the Sunset Provision and involves much work by the Board. This time only nine substances were up for Sunset review. The synthetic version of Tartaric acid was voted to be removed from the list as no longer necessary, while the other eight substances were voted to continue listing. Pending are recommendations to add further restrictive annotations to the use of peracetic acid.

Few NOSB topics have received more public comments and debate than that for animal welfare. This very important and complex subject finally required compromises by Board members in order to finally

adopt recommendations to NOP on strengthening animal welfare requirements. The Board passed recommendations for new regulations on physical alterations, living conditions for mammals and birds, animal handling and transit to slaughter. Stocking rates for chickens were also recommended. Other animal welfare proposals were withdrawn for further work and consideration. Please see the details of these complex recommendations on the NOSB website.

The Board also passed recommendations:

- for the NOP to actively regulate Material Review Organizations in order to achieve consistent and uniform material review decisions.
- that NOP develop guidance on qualification criteria for organic inspectors.
- that NOP develop guidance on unannounced inspections.

In addition, the Board passed recommendations from the Policy Development Committee to increase Committees' transparency by posting committee minutes and other material and to clarify transition procedures for officers, committee chairs and new members.

Savannah was the last Board meeting for Steve DeMuri, Tina Ellor, Katrina Heinze, and Tracy Miedema. New members' five-year terms begins 1/24/12 and include Harold Austin (Handler), Carmela Beck (Producer), Tracy Favre (Environmentalist), Jean Richardson (Consumer) and Zea Sonnabend (Scientist).

The final business of the Board was to discuss committee work plans and to conduct election of officers. I was elected Board Chair, Mac Stone as Vice Chair and Wendy Fulwider as Secretary.

The Spring Board meeting will be May 21-24 in Old Town Albuquerque, NM. The NOSB fall meeting will be October 16-19, 2012 at the Providence Biltmore, Providence, RI. I hope to hear your comments before then. Until then, be well.

Barry R. Flamm
295 Montana Landing , Polson, MT 59860
Phone: 406-883-2858
Email: barryexplorer@yahoo.com

Editor's Note: Congratulations to Barry on his new position as Chair of the NOSB! Also, check out the feature article about Barry in the Missoula Independent, October 27, 2011 (<http://missoulanews.bigskypress.com>). During his career as an environmental scientist, Barry distinguished himself as a conservationist and wildlife advocate. During an assignment in Vietnam, he observed first-hand the use of agent orange and returned to the state to publish a paper on its adverse environmental impacts. Barry started the first certified organic sweet cherry orchard in Montana and is a co-founder and past vice-chair of MOA.

Coexistence to Address Key Issues

by Ron de Yong. Excerpt by Steve Baril.

Following is part of a talk given at MOA's annual conference. Ron de Yong is the Director of the Montana Department of Agriculture. The state legislation referenced is Senate Bill 218 passed by the 2011 Montana legislature and now codified in Title 80, Chapter 5, MCA. This law establishes standards for notification, sampling, mediation, and venue when the owner of a protected plant (includes genetically modified plants) claims that plant protection rights were violated.

I personally believe that agricultural diversity is what is needed to feed the world. Feeding the world's increasing population will require small, medium and large producers, urban farming on rooftops and vacant lots, hoop houses and greenhouses, and organic, conventional and genetically modified production.

Genetically modified corn, soybeans and canola make up a huge share of the market and lack agricultural diversity but will be with us for a long period of time. That is the reality of the current environment.

However, increasing problems with weed and insect resistance in conjunction with higher seed prices may result in producers raising genetically engineered crops to explore alternative practices. Organic

rotations and practices will increasingly find their way into non-organic systems.

In the future some of the acreage currently producing genetically modified crops will transition to conventional and organic production for alternative markets in local food systems.

Secretary Vilsack's work on coexistence reflects USDA's attempt to maintain and increase agricultural diversity. Coexistence is going to require federal legislation and rule making. Montana has taken the lead in state legislation passed this last session. The process used pulled a very diverse group of producers together and is instructive on how future legislation may be accomplished.

The State Department of Agriculture invited approximately ten producers representing organic, conventional and genetically modified production and also representing different agricultural organizations to participate in a mini agricultural law seminar. They were given a scenario where an organic, conventional and genetically modified producer bordered each other. Then they were asked if and how Montana law might address genetic, chemical or weed seed drift amongst the three farmers.

The process allowed everyone to get to know each other better, there was a lot of laughter, and a

continued on p. 12

GET FRESH

**EVERY DAY IS
EARTH DAY AT
GOOD EARTH
MARKET**

**GOOD EARTH
MARKET**

3024 2nd Ave North
Billings, MT 59101
(406) 259-2622
www.goodearthmontana.com

Timeless Food

**Certified Organic lentils,
flax, peas & specialty
grains**

**Custom Cleaning and
Packaging**

2012 Production Contracts

Telephone -- 406 278 5722

Main Office: Conrad, MT

Production Facility: Ulm, MT

Timeless Food

MOA 2011 Awards Presented

The MOA awards are given each year to honor and recognize two special members of our community who have demonstrated outstanding service to organic agriculture. This year's awards were presented at the MOA conference in Billings, on December 9.

The Lifetime of Service Award is presented to an organic producer, handler, retailer, researcher, service provider (or other) who has demonstrated a long-term commitment to organic agriculture in Montana.



Steve and Cindy Baril

This year, the honor went to Steve and Cindy Baril. Steve and Cindy have grown market produce for over 20 years, and currently grow certified organic vegetables and herbs on their small farm near Helena. Steve is a retired state worker, 25 years of that with the Montana Department of Agriculture, finishing his career as the bureau chief of the department's field programs. He worked with the organic community to develop the department's organic certification program that was accredited by the USDA. Steve is the recipient of numerous awards for his work in organics, is a former organic inspector, past chair of MOA and currently serves on boards of the Helena Farmers Market and the Organic Education and Advisory Council.

Cindy is a lifelong advocate of organic farming and is dedicated to providing quality, healthy food that is good for soul, body, and mind. She has two passions – the farm and her career as the manager of the Senior Companion volunteer program for the non-profit agency, Rocky Mountain Development Council. She is past president of the Montana Gerontology Society and has been involved with hosting numerous conferences on aging issues over the years. She is a past board member of AERO and currently sits on Helena's Transportation Advisory Council, which is planning the city and county bus system.

"We are humbled and grateful for the recognition from our friends and peers at MOA. It is so meaningful coming from folks that we admire for their

commitments to organic agriculture and to healthy living and environment" remarked the Barils.

The Leadership in Organics Award is presented to an organic producer, handler, retailer, researcher, service provider (or other) who demonstrates an on-going commitment to advancing the adoption, practice and success of organic agriculture in Montana.

Nancy Matheson, Special Projects Coordinator in Agricultural Marketing and Business Development, Montana Dept. of Agriculture was honored with the award this year. Nancy got her start with organics in Montana in 1986 at AERO, managing that organization's then brand new sustainable agriculture program. During her 11 years at AERO, Nancy helped support the development of Montana's first organic grower organization, the Organic Certification Association of Montana, and later helped with the organizing effort that led to the creation of the state's own organic certification program at MDA. It was Nancy's work with the region's pioneers in organic agriculture that inspired her to farm organically since 1992.

Nancy currently works at the Montana Department of Agriculture where her focus is on supporting redevelopment of a Montana-based food economy. She has served on the boards of AERO, Grow Montana, and the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, and was appointed to the inaugural Montana Organic Commodities Advisory Council, and to her current position on the Montana Community Service Commission representing the Department of Agriculture.



Nancy Matheson. Photo by Margaret Scales.

"My life's path would not have been what it is without the inspiration, knowledge, and moral support of Montana's organic and sustainable ag community. It is this amazing and diverse group of caring, curious and creative people that has enabled me to have a lifetime of work and accomplishments in sync with my values."

MOA extends its congratulations to both of our award winners as well as our deepest appreciation for all of their hard work on behalf of organic agriculture in Montana. Keep up the great work!

Neptune's Harvest Organic Fertilizers

Increase yields

Products Include:

Cold processed Liquid Hydrolyzed Fish, Seaweed, Blends, Dry and Liquid Humates, Dry Crab Shell and Kelp Meal.

INSECT REPELLENTS and more are also available!



Commercially proven

Our fish increases protein and sugar levels in crops and repels deer!

Fish, Kelp, and Crab also make excellent **ANIMAL FEED!**

"Our Products Work!"

Call for a **FREE** catalog and **sample**

(800) 259-4769

www.neptunesharvest.com

Buy Fresh, Buy Local!

Produce • Meat • Cheese • Flour • Grain • Eggs • Peas • Lentils



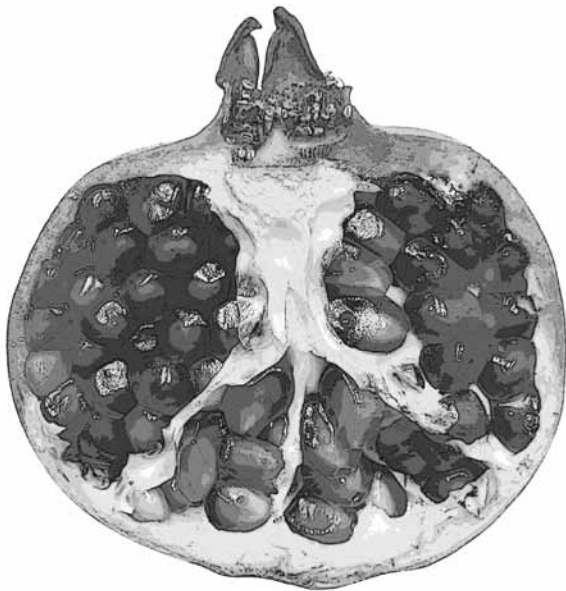
Mountain Front Market

Monday - Saturday
11 a.m. - 6 p.m.

(406) 466-2684

501 Main Ave. N., Choteau, MT
Owner: Jill Owen

eat well...eat organic



We specialize in products that are healthful, nutritious, great-tasting and friendly to the environment. That's why we support the Montana Organic Association.



real food market & deli

1096 Helena Avenue Helena, Montana • (406) 443-5150
Open Monday-Saturday 8-8; Sunday 9-7 • www.realfoodstore.com

Coexistence *continued from p. 10*

considerable trust was established between individuals. Agreement was reached in two areas for future state legislation.

1. The producer could request that MDA do the sampling if a producer was accused of stealing genetic material.
2. It was agreed that before judicial action could be taken, the parties were required to participate in a Montana based mediation process.

It wasn't easy to hold such a diverse group of producers together during a legislative session, but we managed to do it and the legislation passed overwhelmingly.

In the future we will be dealing with labeling issues on products containing or not containing genetically modified materials and we will be dealing with liability issues. It will be necessary for coexistence to work.

There is the potential for a Montana producer to promote a product produced and processed in Montana with a label certifying no presence or a very low presence of GMO material. A certification process within a Montana set standard would be a logical way to proceed.

We can now test for some substances in the parts per billion and even in the parts per trillion which makes certifying to zero contamination a bit impractical. The organic community will need to have some good discussions on standards that allow for a low level presence for genetically modified material. The E.U. is using .9% of non-approved GMOs as a standard.

Thus you can see that most of the legislation dealing with labeling will have to occur at the national level. Also, it appears that all of the legislation on liability issues that would require a level playing field between multinational seed dealers and producers of organic, conventional and genetically modified products will take place at the national level.



2123 VAUGHN ROAD · GREAT FALLS, MT 59404

800-548-8554 TOLL FREE

406-771-9229 · 406-455-1589 FAX

More Great Content on the Web

Visit MOA's website at www.montanaorganicassociation.org for extended content, including information on GMOs, financial assistance, Worker's Safety, the latest news affecting organics and more.

Love It or Hate It?

This is your newsletter, so let us know what you think of *Organic Matters*. Write us at PO Box 570, Eureka, MT 59917 or email a note to moa@montanaorganicassociation.org.

MOA Membership Benefits

MOA has restructured its membership levels and has eliminated the Living Lightly membership category. Here are the new membership levels (available when you sign up now or renew your current membership) and you'll find one to suit your needs.

Individual . . . \$30

Household . . . \$50 (includes 2 memberships)

Farm/Ranch/Business . . . \$75 (5% discount on newsletter ads and 40-word online directory listing with your logo and link to your website)

Organic Business . . . \$250 (10% discount on newsletter ads and 100-word online directory listing with your logo and link to your website)

Lifetime . . . \$750

Each membership level delivers a quarterly newsletter devoted to sharing the latest news and information about the association and the organic industry, discounts to MOA events and the annual conference, special mailings on legislative alerts and events, and the networking and educational opportunities presented by joining others who share interest and experience in the field of organics.

Other member benefits include eligibility for a Workman's Comp premium discount, safety training, and other services to assist you in your organic endeavors. The business level categories offer discounts on advertising in our print publications and an online directory listing on the MOA website. The Lifetime Membership gives you permanent access, listings, discounts and the satisfaction that you're supporting the farmers, ranchers, processors, distributors, retailers, students and researchers who make organic food available and accessible.

Use the sign up form on the right or visit our website at www.montanaorganicassociation.org/joinus.htm. Join today and support organics!

Calendar of Events

www.montanaorganicassociation.org/events.htm

23rd annual MOSES Organic Farming Conference

February 23-25, 2012 in La Crosse, Wisconsin
The MOSES Organic Farming Conference is the largest organic farming conference in the U.S. Organized by the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES), and held annually in La Crosse, WI, the OFC is an extraordinary, farmer-centered event. With over 65 informative workshops, 160 exhibitors, locally-sourced organic food, live entertainment and inspirational keynote speakers, the OFC is celebrated as the foremost educational and networking event in the organic farming community.

For more info, visit: <http://www.mosesorganic.org/conference.html> or call 715-778-5775.

NOP/NOSB Meetings

The Spring Board meeting will be May 21-24 in Old Town Albuquerque, NM.

The NOSB fall meeting will be October 16-19, 2012 at the Providence Biltmore, Providence, RI.

Please sign me up as a MOA Member!

Name: _____

Farm or Business: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Membership Levels: (effective May 1, 2011)

- Individual.....\$30
- Family.....\$50 (includes two memberships)
- Farm/Ranch/Business....\$75 (includes a 5% discount on newsletter ads and an online directory listing)
- Organic Business.....\$250 (includes a 10% discount on newsletter ads and an online directory listing)
- Lifetime.....\$750

Please fill out this form,
make checks payable to MOA and mail to:
MOA, PO Box 570, Eureka, MT 59917

Montana Organic Association

PO Box 570
Eureka MT 59917

(406) 788-7423
mtorganic@hotmail.com
www.montanaorganicassociation.org

MOA Board Members:
Daryl Lassila - Chair
Sam Schmidt - Vice-chair
Wes Henthorne - Treasurer
Tara Blyth - Secretary
Casey Bailey
Lou Ann Crowley
Wes Gibb
Chaz Holt
Rhad Keel
Jody Manuel
Judy Owsowitz



PRSRRT STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
MISSOULA MT
PERMIT #569

A View from the Chair

As we wrap up a successful 2011, we hope you enjoy the recap of our ninth annual conference in this issue of Organic Matters. We'd like to thank outgoing board member and former newsletter committee chair, Jim Lindquist, for years of tireless work and dedication to MOA. Jim's experience and sunny disposition have brightened our efforts over the years and his influence and enthusiasm has been seen in every issue of this newsletter during his tenure.

As we begin our tenth year of supporting organics, we shout out a warm welcome to the new board members and committee volunteers who have stepped up to make a difference.

MOA's purpose is to support those who bring organic food to the table. Education is a large part of that effort. If producers are being troubled, processors or retailers have questions, or consumers need information, MOA can help. All you have to do is ask. Visit our website at www.montanaorganicassociation.org or give us a call at (406) 452-0565.

This time of year there are many meetings, conventions and (my favorite) the farm equipment shows.

It is here that I can catch up with old friends, visit with the vendors and dream big. Maybe the dream will come true soon!

In the coming year, MOA's tenth, we'll continue to improve our communications with our members, host farm tours, plan our tenth conference for the fall, and consider another one-day seminar on small grains. Grain producers are a big portion of MOA memberships and Montana continues to produce the most organic wheat of any state.

Thanks to increasing awareness by the general public toward organics, sales are doing well. It is quite rewarding to me to spend time in the organic aisles making conversation and hearing the glowing remarks about organic. Always the last comment from the shopper is, "Thank you for growing organic."

Be Safe,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daryl Lassila'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Daryl Lassila, MOA Board Chairman