

## Organic Network Conference Call 3/2/06

*Participants: Jim Riddle, Helene Murray, Carmen Fernholz (host), Hans Kandel, Bud Markhart, Meg Moynihan, Pauline Nickel, Bill Wilcke, Paul Porter, John Beckwith and Matthew Harbur (scribe).*

Helene: asked to serve on search committee for dean of new college, name candidate by 7/1; opportunity for input and recommendations of persons; college will now consist of Agronomy, Natural Resources, and Human Ecology. Also:

- Steve Morris leaving as program coordinator for Green Lands / Blue Waters
- Environmental Partnership 2006 Legislative Night on 3/1, multiple legislators and representative for Pawlenty pledged to pass Clean Water Legacy.
- Seven representatives of Green Lands Blue Waters presented at meeting of American Academy for Advancement of Science meeting on how program might be implemented. All presentations will be available on [www.greenlandsbluwaters.org](http://www.greenlandsbluwaters.org).

Bill Wilcke: over 2000 attendees at Upper Midwest Organic and Grazing Conference. Next week will have SARE spring meeting to select proposals to fund from multiple programs.

Paul Porter: in mid-May will have conference at St. Benedicts to discuss campus sustainability.

Hans Kandel: will have March 16<sup>th</sup> annual Lake Agazziz meeting to discuss organic projects. Have had 75 persons attend in past. Hans is on SARE council and will be in Kansas City next week for meeting.

Bud Markhart: one request: international class that he teaches is comparing US and EU organics, will have trip to Europe and Iceland. Is there anyone who could present Farm Bill concisely to class? Is going to check with IATP to see if anyone there might be good to present. Local presenters preferred.

Meg Moynihan: student worker starting today, will help with organic directory; SARE has issued call for preproposals for professional development; preproposals due on 3/22? Also:

- Having conversations with SFA and WCROC to conduct organic short courses focused on dairy
- Natural Association of State Departments of Agriculture having show on organics in Chicago in May.
- RMA announced yesterday call for proposals for outreach activities. Upper Midwest Organic and Grazing Conference was great.
- North Dakota just issued first organic status report; included several things from Minnesota as examples. Interested in doing work with Minnesota.
- Wisconsin just hired organic and grazing specialist. Wisconsin also has small grants for grazing research.

Jim Riddle: Upper Midwest Organic and Grazing Conference had over 2200 attendees. Allowed 350 walk-ins to go to cooking demo. Standing room only at cooking demo – likely to become permanent feature. Sent press release on local foods forum and expo in Winona. Booth for MISA and SWROC was well attended. Also:

- Continuing to organize for IFOAM Livestock Conference in August. Campus amenities will be available to attendees.
- Invites 1-2 page proposals on speakers for conference – contact him for more information.
- Also talking to state departments of agriculture and businesses about sponsorship for conference. Looking for more farm and livestock operations for farm tours on 8/23 – operations within one-hour radius of southern Minneapolis.
- Agreed to speak at Univ. of St. Thomas spring symposium on organics. Working on logo design for organic ecology website.

Carmen Fernholz: working with Pauline, Meg and others to make more current the MOFIE project and will be spending more time at Lamberton to work on that. Also:

- Will speak with Paul Porter at Organic Crops Day at Le Center on 3/23. Also will speak at Waseca Organic Day in late March.
- Paul and Carmen have been invited to speak at conservation officer training program – will include session at Lamberton.

Pauline Nickel: connected with administrators about organic website to try to make new website a central location for information on organics at U of M. Will be very good resource that will be easy to maneuver. Will link directly to MISA site.

Matt Harbur: working on writing up manuscripts and developing prototype for organic risk management tool.

John Beckwith: Conservation Security Program signups are underway (Red Lake watershed only); not-for-profit training in Sioux Falls on 5/15-17 and 5/18-20 on NRCS programs – contact John for more information. Jim Riddle requested input on whether NRCS technical input service could be used to facilitate transition to organics.

Other Comments:

- Jim asked about Organic Network mission statement? Meg said that network description is in footer in email. Carmen emphasized importance of developing one voice to define research priorities to be funded in Minnesota.
- Meg reported that Farm Business Management course has been very well attended. Also have SARE funding to produce 20+ weekly spots on innovative farming practices used in Minnesota.
- Bud putting together flyers on Community Supported Agriculture in the state in cooperation with Land Stewardship Project. Will be getting out to churches in area to generate more interest in Community Supported Agriculture in general. Putting

together presentations on backyard organic gardening. Distribution cost is an issue, so has been working with existing church publications.

- Jim reported article in Star-Tribune article on prices of organic foods. Her editor was focused on idea that organic food was too expensive and why that was so. Jim felt that article neglected externalized costs of conventional agriculture.
- Carmen wondered if there would be use for a Food Your Way publication, or research on health benefits of organic vs. conventional. Jim Recommended “Good Growing: Why Organic Farming Works,” by Leslie Durham.
- Is there interest in getting nutritionists / food scientists involved with Organic Network?