

Organic Conference Call Notes for September 7, 2006

Host: Jim Riddle Scribe: Milt Haar, Participants: John Beckwith, DeEtta Bilek, Bud Markhart, Meg Moynihan, Helene Murray and Bill Wilcke

Round Robin

1. Bud

- His class trip to Iceland and Germany went well. Bud will present a seminar on the trip and will let us know when a date is set.
- This summer he has been conducting research with a CSA.
- The student run organic farm, Cornucopia, has been active. Students are connecting to organic agriculture.
- Bud found lots of interest in organic ag while working at the state fair. His comments led to a general discussion of the many ways organic agriculture was represented at the fair.

2. Meg

- Organic grower directory is finished and available online or hard copy. About 240 growers are listed. Growers who gave permission were included.
- Organic growers can sign up for farm business management program. 63 to 70 growers are in the program. Certified growers may apply, and cost shares of 80% for the first year and 70% for the second year are available.
- Minnesota Organic Conference is set for January 19 and 20th in St. Cloud, speakers are being confirmed and 'hold the date' cards should go out soon
- Precedent is set. MNDOA included an appendix to the public utilities commission mitigation plan for a proposed pipeline. The appendix addresses specific effects of the pipeline to organic farmland and growers.
- Meg recently spoke at a SARE conference and described the organic agriculture in MN. A highlight of her talk was this conference call.

3. Helene

- Helene will attend the Harvest festival in Duluth this weekend sponsored by the Lake Superior sustainable farming association
- Matt Harbur has accepted a position at Alfred University in New York. His new job begins Sept. 11th.

4. Bill

- The SARE office transfer from Nebraska is proceeding. The first staff member began last week and the second starts tomorrow.
- Reviewing pre-proposals for 2007 competitive grants

5. Milt

- SWROC hosts a day devoted to Canada thistle on Sept 12th. Registration closes tomorrow. See the SWROC website for details.
- On Sept 21st a meeting will take place at the SWROC discussing the Ellwell Agroecology farm.

6. DeEtta
 - Attended IFOAM conference
 - OCIA newsletter is out
7. John
 - Added value conference will be held January 26 and 27. The speaker list is being put together, and speaker suggestions are welcome.
 - Cost share programs are considering the use average costs instead of requiring receipts etc. and exact costs.
 - Grazing workshops will continue next year
 - Food for Folk project hasn't worked out. The NRCS is aware and investigating: can't say more at this time.
8. Jim
 - IFOAM conference was a smashing success, some 250 participants from 25 countries.
 - Thanks to all who helped
 - Press release on the conference at the organic ecology website www.organicecology.umn.edu. Proceeding available on CD or download from IFOAM website. Audio recordings in MP3 format are also available
 - Yesterday Jim spoke at Sustainable Farming association meeting about organic and grass-fed beef and dairy, after the meeting he was interviewed by channel 10 from Rochester. He didn't see the clip, but heard that it was a positive story.
 - Tomorrow he meets with Matt Harbur and growers to help develop a risk management tool for organic growers.
 - He will take an organic display to the SROC open house on September 14th
 - Working groups are being developed to help guide his and Carmen Fernholz's state-wide coordinator positions
 - Will attend NOSB meeting in Washington, D.C. October 17-19th

Next meeting on October 5th; Carmen will host and Meg will scribe

Discussion topic for next meeting will be the program for the organic conference. Input and ideas for workshops and would be very helpful.

Suggested topics for future conference calls included legislative issues and University research and outreach priorities.