

**Nevada Department of Agriculture  
Organic Advisory Council Meeting  
October 13, 2006**

Members Present: Marcia Litsinger, Bruce Quinlan, Sharon Davidson, David Hall,  
Virginia Johnson

Public Members: Steve Litsinger, Ray Johnson, Jim Smith, Doug Jackson, Bill Chounet,  
Rick Lattin, Karen Grillo (Nevada Association of Counties)

NDOA Staff: Don Henderson, Gary Cross, Ed Foster, Peggy McKie

Agenda Items:

1. Meeting called to order: 9:10 a.m.
2. Introductions
3. Approval of Minutes: Johnson asked for clarification of the term “certified seed”. Mr. Cross explained that it is the first step in the production of a certified seed line. He continued that “protecting the identity of the seed” is a term used to mean that the genetic identity of the seed has been protected, usually through planting distance between fields. Question also about the information that is available to the public with regard to the location of fields planted with GMO seed for the production of seed. Minutes approved as written.
4. Correspondences and Announcement:  
Patagonia is sponsoring a “guess the weight of the pumpkin” contest for a dollar a guess as a fund raiser for the Council.

Marcia Litsinger shared that Senator Reid’s office contacted her regarding funding for alternate energy development. The programs will be for organic and conventional farmers alike.

Nevada Agriculture Council is accepting proposals for grant requests for 2007 beginning November 6th. Ed Foster recommended that the Council submit a report describing how the funds they have received in the past have been used and attach this to any requests for additional funds submitted. The Ag Council gave funds to the Organic Council for the Nevada Organic Review in 2005 and 2006.

5. Public Participation. No public participation followed.
6. Guest speaker: Doug Jackson was introduced by Dave Hall.

Jackson has joined with Ponderosa Dairy to distribute “Biomass Organic Compost” with a focus on working with organic farms and farmers. A variety of other products that are OMRI approved are also available through Silverado Supply. Currently the compost is available only in bulk, but some of the other products are available in smaller containers. Mr. Jackson provided brochures on the different products that he carries. Mr. Jackson is also working with organic farmers to develop alternative markets for rotational crops.

## **Old Business**

### 7. NDOA Staff Reports

A. Fee increases: Gary Cross updated the Council on administrative changes that had to be made in the format of what was submitted to LCB; the intent of the changes and the fee structure has not changed. The new fee structure will be in effect for updates in March of 2007.

### B. Program Budget

Don Henderson, Director of the Department, clarified how the Department’s budget is established and the constraints that have been placed on budgets by the Governor. Department’s budget is based on 30% from general fund and 70% fee based. Base budgets are established by the Director, which includes enhancements for each program and the Department overall. He stated that the organic program is a priority for the Department.

He stated that the kinds of enhancements the Department requests are things like an updated phone system for Las Vegas office to increase efficiency of the office and their ability to respond to public needs. The Agriculture enforcement unit and the Virginia Range Estray Program were also selected as priorities for the 2007/2009 budget cycle.

Henderson also stated that Departments only get extra money through legislation or through the Governor’s office. Agricultural groups banding together is a more effective way to lobby for funds.

Ed Foster reminded the Council that up-coming changes in the make-up of the legislature will most likely *decrease* the number of long-time agriculture supporters. It is important to educate new legislators about agriculture in the state.

C. Council vacancy. Jim Smith applied for the open council position as “organic producer”. He stated that he is excited about what is happening in the organic industry in Nevada and wants to get more involved. Mr. Smith and his wife Tina own and operate Home Grown Nevada in Smith, Nevada and produce organic produce, cut flowers, and “grass-fed beef”. The Council voted and Jim Smith was selected for the vacant position by the Council. The Council requested that his name be forwarded to the Board of Agriculture for appointment at their next meeting in December 2006.

8. BDR 253. Virginia Johnson discussed the BDR that she and Marcia Litsinger, as the Budget and Funds Development Committee have developed with Senator McGinness for the amount of \$75,000. Karen Grillo stated that she was at the Council meeting that day at the request of Senator McGinness to discuss his concern that the groups combine their funding request as a single BDR requested by both Nevada Grown and the Organic Advisory Council. Virginia Johnson stated that this was the first she had heard about McGinness requesting that the groups combine their requests. Grillo stated that she is now working with McGinness to develop a bill that will provide dedicated funds of \$ 25,000 to the organic council and \$50,000 to Nevada Grown. Ray Johnson stated that because it was the organic council working directly with McGinness that developed the current BDR that any funds dedicated to the organic council should not be diminished even if the two groups join forces. Grillo stated that she and Rick Lattin would work with McGinness to further refine the bill. The Council disagreed and requested that the organic council be given a place in that discussion because the bill was developed using a budget that was developed and proposed by the Council and their understanding, based on their meetings with McGinness and the wording of the BDR had been agreed to by McGinness. Marcia Litsinger and Virginia Johnson stated that they will continue to work with McGinness on the BDR. In addition, the full amount agreed to with McGinness should remain as is, and completely dedicated to the Council as shown in the current BDR. Grillo proposed that she send to McGinness an email copied to Council representatives, and agreed to phone Marcia Litsinger who does not have access to email, and Nevada Grown to notify him that the two groups are willing to work together on the bill and plan to submit only one bill combining both parties' requests for funds. No action was taken on this item.

Adjourned at 12:00

Reconvened at 1:00 p.m.

9. Genetically modified crops in Nevada. Sharon Davidson explained that the committee wants to focus primarily on education of organic farmers to help them understand the issues better, creating literature for that purpose with additional information developed for use by school children. Discussed creating a list of public outreach functions at which display materials would be made available to the public. The Council recommended that the committee continue to meet to further develop their goals and collect more input from other council members. No action was taken.

10. Non-profit organization. Cross said that the Council would need to be a 501(c)(3) to accept donations or participate in fund raising activities. 501 (c)(3) requirements limit the scope of activities to religious, charitable or educational in nature. Ray Johnson read from IRS description of the qualifications and limitations of a 501(c)(3). Also includes how the by-laws must read in order to qualify for 501(c)(3) status. The 501(c)(3) can give and receive funds so long as the recipient's use of the funds fits the same scope as the 501(c)(3). Motion was made to turn issue back over to the committee to pursue the development of a 501(c)(3) with the sole purpose of education and that operates separately from the Organic Advisory Council. Motion was seconded and passed.

11. Department and NV Grown: McKie requested that council members send her links that would be of value to other growers/processors. Explained that updates to the program page are done twice a month; but if a topic is time-sensitive to let her know and it can be posted sooner. Recommend that Nevada Grown add a “certified organic logo” to their website that is a live link to the organic program website’s list of organic producers and handlers. No action was taken.

12. Nevada Organic Review. Funds have been secured from the Nevada Agriculture Council to publish the Nevada Organic Review for the next 2 issues. No action was taken.

### **New Business**

13. Statewide calendar of events is needed to help the Council plan to be able to participate in special events. Virginia requested that members let her or Peggy know by the first of the year those events that the Council may want to participate in for 2007. No action was taken.

14. Working and Action Committee for financial matters, other interim council business and/legislative activity. Such things would include watching out for grant money, liaison with legislators, etc. The Council determined that it isn’t necessary to form a committee but if something of interest surfaces to notify Virginia, Johnson Gary Cross or Peggy McKie. No action was taken.

15. Next meeting was scheduled for December 8<sup>th</sup> 9:00 a.m. The meeting will be a telephone conference call issued from the Nevada Department of Agriculture office in Reno.

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

### **Nevada Organic Advisory Council Members:**

**Virginia Johnson - Chairwoman** (Organic Producer representative)

Custom Gardens

(775) 577-2069

**Marcia Litsinger: Vice-chair** (Organic Producer representative)

Churchill Butte Horticulture

(775) 721-6068

**David Hall** (Conventional Agriculture representative)

Organic Dairy, Amargosa Valley

(775) 372-1621

**Bruce Quinlan** (Organic Industry representative)

Wild Oats Market, Inc.

Organic Retail/Wholesale, Reno

(775) 829-8666

**Sharon Davidson** (Organic Handler representative)

Davidson Teas

(775) 356-1690

**Position Vacant** (Organic Producer representative)

*Submitted by Peggy McKie, Nevada Department of Agriculture 10/25/2006*