

Minutes
Nevada Department of Agriculture Organic Advisory Council Meeting
31 May 2007

Nevada Department of Agriculture
350 Capitol Hill Avenue
Reno NV 89502

Members Present – Marcia Litsinger, Dave Hall, Sharon Davidson, Virginia Johnson, Bruce Quinlan, Jim Smith

Members of the Public: Ray Johnson, Steve Litsinger, Rick Lattin, Steve Slusser, Kerrie B, Leslie Allen, Genevieve Morgan

Department Staff: Ed Foster, Peggy McKie, Donna Rise, Steve Marty

1. Meeting called to Order @ 9:30 a.m.

2. Roll Call. All Council members were present.

(The next two items were taken out of order)

3. Minutes from last meeting were approved. (Motion DH, Second ML)

4. Introductions of public and Council members

5. Correspondences:

V. Johnson – Presented an email from Rex DuFour (ATTRA) thanking the Council for its invitation to attend meeting. He said due to previous commitments he cannot attend but would most likely not have attended anyway due to severe cuts in the ATTRA travel budget. He also forwarded links to more information regarding GMO/GE policy.

S. Davidson shared that ATTRA sent her a packet of ATTRA publications addressing GMO-related issues that she is making available to anyone who would like to read them.

V. Johnson explained that there is a spin off committee within the Council that has formed to address the GMO issue in Nevada. She introduced a brochure developed by Ecological Farming Association (EFA) that the Council would like add their name and contact information to and use for public education efforts. EFA agreed provided that the content of the brochure does not change and that EFA is given full credit for the brochure.

6. Public Participation

Rick Lattin reported on projects by Churchill County Economic Development Authority (CEDA) and Nevada Certified Farmers Market Association (NCFMA). NCFMA has signed a MOU with City of Reno to explore the development of a downtown farmers market focused on local farmers and year round sales. CEDA was awarded a grant that includes the organic Council as a cooperator. Rick was advised of the Organic Advisory Council Policy that any group wishing an endorsement or to list the OAC as a cooperator, is to submit the project or concept in writing with a request for support. Juliette Taylor is the project leader. Please call Juliette to provide ideas and input. CEDA is also working with USDA to develop grants for small farms, alternative livestock producers (grass-fed, natural). Johnson requested Rick provide the Council with a list of the

grants that were *requested* and those which *were approved* to be sent to her for distribution to Council members. Rick Agreed.

V. Johnson – In 2003 legislation was passed that may require a farmer to pay a state business license fee to sell their unprocessed farm products at farmer's markets, etc. The Department of Taxation and Revenue lists on their website is a list of exemptions that may apply to small businesses. Johnson stated that even if the small farm meets the requirements of the exemption the license must still be obtained first and a refund then requested. She remarked that getting reimbursed in a timely manner was unlikely.

Dave Hall related a story about a large dairy producer in CA who has had their certification revoked for not meeting pasture requirements. Dave explained how Ponderosa operates their dairy to be in compliance with the requirement for pasture and the efforts they are making to help transition conventional farms around the state to provide organic hay for the dairy.

V. Johnson requested that Council members be notified of the date for next state Board of Agriculture meeting, and that the Council be given an opportunity to be on the agenda.

7. Old and Ongoing Business (items taken out of order)

C. Update on SB 268: Still sitting in committee. Council and the public have until June 4th to continue to contact legislators. (No action was taken on this item)

B. Council Member Per Diem – P. McKie explained that the Department is not clear about the current status of all of the Council member's terms because of the break in meeting dates (2001 to 2003 no meetings were held), and it may be that some Council members need to be re-appointed because their terms ran out during the break in Council activities or because they had resigned and were not re-appointed when the Council resumed. She requested that all Council members who have not filled out employment applications do so right away to expedite reimbursement of expenses for the last two meetings and in the meantime the Department will research Board of Agriculture minutes to determine if members who have served on the Council for more than three years need to be reappointed, and if so, to get those member appointments on the next Board of Agriculture agenda. (No action was taken on this item)

D. Sharon Davidson talked about the "Friends of Nevada Organic". The purpose of the group is strictly educational. They have attained Nevada non-profit status and have developed by-laws. The incorporating Directors, Bruce Quinlan, Sharon Davidson, and Ray Johnson, are accepting resumes for two more directors for the board of trustees, and will take applications for new committee members.

8. New Business

A) Donna Rise, the "new" Director of Nevada Department of Agriculture introduced herself to the group. She stressed to the Council that it is important to determine a direction for the organic program. She also is supportive of adding livestock certification to the program to help grow the program and increase revenue flow. She has experience with overseeing Montana's organic program and realizes that it is a very time-intensive program that consumes staff time and funding. Virginia asked how Montana supports marketing in the state. Rise said there is a division within the Montana Department of Agriculture that supports marketing. She also said there is a need to start looking for more sources of revenue to help grow the program.

B) Bruce Quinlan reported on news from the retail sector. The merger between Wild Oats and Whole Foods is on hold for the time being. It is his opinion that Whole Foods is coming to town

regardless of whether the merger moves forward or not. Demand for organic is still growing; the more demand there is from the public for organic product, the more funding will be available. Bruce said he believes that education of Nevadans about agriculture in general, and organic farming in Nevada specifically is much needed. This led to discussion about the Council doing more outreach to other groups such as the Garlic and Onion Advisory Committee, the Nevada Farm Bureau, Nevada Rancher, etc. Ed Foster agreed to provide the Council with an email list of all Nevada publications to which the Council could send press releases.

C) Virginia explained that a Genetically Modified Organism "spin off" committee has formed to discuss this issue within the state of Nevada. Members include Marcia Litsinger, Sharon Davidson, Ray Johnson, and Bruce Quinlan. Sharon Davidson thanked Virginia for searching out information about GMOs and recent events related to them and forwarding the information to the committee members. A recent court decision will require Forage Genetics to disclose to APHIS the location and all other details of all RUR alfalfa fields in the 17 Western states. The Council requested that the Department disclose to them immediately the location of all RUR alfalfa fields in the state of Nevada. Steve Marty said that the Department has information only on those fields that have requested seed certification but was not confident that the Department can legally disclose the information. McKie suggested that Department staff meet with the attorney general's office to determine if there were contractual obligations that would prevent the state from releasing the information, and that if the council will be patient for 30 days the information is required to be made public in full. Ray Johnson supported that the Committee wait until APHIS posts the information. The Council members agreed.

Dave Hall suggested sending a letter to State Health Department requesting that a task force be developed to examine the GMO issue in Nevada. V. Johnson suggested that Council members as individuals fund contribute to the Friends of Organic to develop and distribute a summary of concerns about GMOs, including specific internet links for more information, and requesting that they join with Friends in the effort to prevent the continued development of GMOs in both Nevada and the U.S.

A motion was made to develop a letter based on the information that the committee has collected; that Dave Hall also sit on the committee; that the committee draft a letter expressing the Council's concerns about GMOs and asking for support of a non-GMO Nevada; determine who the letter will be distributed to; and the subcommittee bring the letter back to the Council for their approval. The motion was approved. (Motion DH, Seconded ML)

Next meeting: September 6th at 9:30 a.m.. Thursday or Friday is best. Location to be determined.

Meeting adjourned 1:30 p.m.