

**Minutes
Nevada Organic Advisory Council Meeting
5 October 2007**

Nevada Department of Agriculture
350 Capitol Hill Avenue
Reno, NV 89502

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order 1:40 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Council Members Present: S. Davidson, J. Smith, V. Johnson

Members of the Public: B. Quinlan, Marcia Litsinger, D. Hall, Ray Johnson, Steve Litsinger, Steve Slusser

NDOA staff: Steve Marty, Ed Foster, Peggy McKie

3. Introductions

4. Minutes from Previous Meeting

Jim Smith motioned to approve as is, seconded by Sharon Davidson. Minutes were approved. Chairman requested that in future the minutes indicate which Council member made a motion and who seconded the motion.

5. Correspondences and Announcements, Public Comments

Dave Hall from Ponderosa Dairy in Amargosa Valley discussed why one of the larger organic dairies in California has had their certification revoked by their certifier. The revocation cited inadequate pasture to meet organic standards. He described how Ponderosa Dairy is converting fields previously used for crop production to pasture for their organic cows. He said they are working closely with CCOF (the certifier of their organic herd) to bring their operation into complete compliance with the pasture requirements. Hall described how their cows are now monitored individually to track how much time they are spending on pasture.

V. Johnson requested more information from NDOA staff about a situation regarding a local cooperative selling organic produce and there being confusing signage at the point of sale; confusing because it wasn't clear which produce is organic and which is not, and it being unclear to buyers. McKie explained that she visited the cooperative's manager to talk about verifying the organic status of produce before it is purchased and sold as organic. McKie also sent a follow-up letter to the Cooperative, and copied that letter to Council members.

6. Appointment of New Council Members

McKie explained that at their last meeting the Board of Agriculture tabled the requested appointment of 3 new members to the Council. According to Board minutes more information is wanted about the Council itself, its function, and who the members are. The request for appointment will be resubmitted by NDOA Plant Industry staff to the Board at their December meeting with supportive documentation presented by McKie.

7. Public Participation

There was no public participation or comment.

8. Old and On-going Business

A) GMO Subcommittee report. Sharon Davidson explained that this subcommittee committee has drafted a letter to be sent to the Nevada State Health Division in Carson City, and copied to multiple organizations as well as individuals. The letter expresses the Council's concern with the utilization of GMO crops in the U.S., and Nevada in particular. The sub-committee will utilize, with permission, publications already available (Ecological Farming Association and the text of the judgment itself) to send along with the letter. Sharon Davison provided a copy of the letter to the Council for review and discussion. Council members asked that the letter include clarification specific to why GMOs are of concern to organic growers, and delete references to requiring public notification of the location of GMO fields. A motion was made by Jim Smith that the Council approve the letter in concept with changes as discussed with a final draft to be reviewed by all Council members prior to being released publicly. Seconded by Sharon Davidson. The motion passed.

B) Changes to Council By-laws. Motion made by Jim Smith to change references to "Administrator" to "Director" to reflect changes to the Department's status. Seconded by Sharon Davidson. The motion passed.

C) Friends of Nevada Organics. Ray Johnson reported that tax-exempt status is still in process, waiting for action by IRS.

D) Organic retailers report. Bruce Quinlan (Wild Oats) reported on the status of the Wild Oats/Whole Foods merger. He added that Whole Foods' policy is to be more committed to buying from local producers and also has programs for small encouraging/supporting small producers. Whole Foods has multiple regions and each region has it's own manager. Private label Wild Oats products will likely retain their current labeling. Whole Foods is more open to local farmers, encouraging face-to-face contacts with customers and farmers. Bruce offered to bring the new regional manager to the next Council meeting.

9. New Business

A) Workshop to develop Strategic Plan for Organic Council Activities 2008/2009 legislative appropriation funds.

I. The items on the budget were reviewed individually.

- a) Conferences/workshops – the object of the workshops is to grow the Nevada program, and keep 4 workshops if possible. Reduce amount to \$14,500.00
 - b) Regular Council meetings – leave as is at \$13,000.00
 - c) Nevada Organic Review (2years, 8 issues – published quarterly) – Cut to 4 issues and determine if it will be contracted out or use a combination of Council members and Department staff contributions, and reduce the amount to \$5,000.00
 - d) Treasure Map, Misc. Marketing, Promotional Materials, Media \$ 14,500.00
- 3) Misc. special events, such as meetings, printing, mailing \$3,000.00

The result of this workshop was to reduce the total Council budget for the next two years from \$72,300.00 down to \$ 50,000.00 to agree with the actual appropriation amount.

II. Discuss appointment of interim committee to work with NDOA staff, including procedures for Council access legislative funds. Volunteers for the committee are Virginia Johnson, Marcia Litsinger and Jim Smith.

B) Approve Budget workshop revised budget and appoint committees as needed to manage approved budget and interim Council business matters. A motion was made by Sharon Davidson

to approve the budget amount agreed to during the workshop for a total amount of \$50,000.00, and appoint Virginia Johnson, Marcia Litsinger and Jim Smith to the Budget Action Committee. Jim Smith seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

C) NDOA staff member Peggy McKie reported Steve Marty will be transitioning to Organic Program Manager as of November 1, 2007. Steve discussed one of the problems with having the program manager also do inspections, and said that to address this issue the Department is setting up a review committee within Plant Industry to review organic inspections and enforcement actions. The committee will consist of Steve Marty, Peggy McKie, Ed Foster

10. Next meeting: November 16, 2007 10:00 a.m.

11. Meeting adjourned at 5:20 pm

Submitted: P. McKie, NDOA
10/9/2007