

**Minutes
Nevada Organic Advisory Council Meeting
8 February 2008**

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

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order 1:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Council Members Present: J. Smith, B. Quinlan, M. Litsinger, S. Davidson

Members of the Public: Ray Johnson, Steve Litsinger, Rick Lattin, Clifford Shirk, Pauline Hamilton,

NDOA staff: Steve Marty, Ed Foster

3. Introductions

4. Approval of Agenda

The agenda for the February 8, 2008 OAC meeting was approved as offered.

5. Minutes from Previous Meeting

Sharon Davidson motioned to approve as offered, seconded by Bruce Quinlan. Minutes were approved by a vote of 4-0.

6. Public Participation

Two letters submitted for public comment were read aloud and copies were distributed to those in attendance. Both letters were in response to the Organic Advisory Council's request letter to the Nevada Division of Health for the creation of a public/private task force to further study genetically modified crops being grown in Nevada, and to research the potential health and environmental impacts to the State. The first letter was submitted by Mr. Mike Phillips of the Nevada Nile Ranch in Lovelock, NV. The second letter was submitted by the Nevada Farm Bureau. Both letters are attached. Rick Lattin suggested that it would be appropriate for the Organic Advisory Council to respond to each submission. Bruce Quinlan suggested that Mr. Mike Phillips and a representative from the Nevada Farm Bureau be invited to the next OAC meeting. The general consensus of the council was that interim chairman Marcia Litsinger would draft response letters to both parties in order to open positive dialogue. The response letters were to be sent to all members of the OAC for review.

7. Old Business

A) Nevada Small Farm Conference progress discussion and direction.

Marcia Litsinger stated that she had been in contact with Erica Behimer of the Lahontan Valley Environmental Alliance (LVEA), and that an OAC workshop was to tie into the Nevada Small Farm Conference in Fallon, NV, which is to be held from March 20-22, 2008. The conference will be held at the Western Nevada College campus. The OAC workshop will be held at Lattin Farms in Fallon, NV on March 22, 2008, and details were still being worked out for dates and times for the portion of the workshop to be held at the Western Nevada College. M. Litsinger noted the need for input regarding a name for the workshop as well as the creation of a mailing list. Pauline Hamilton offered to help create an event flyer. Confirmed speakers for the workshop include Fred Thomas of CCOF, speaking on CCOF's 'going organic'; Craig Witt, speaking on soil science; Mark

O'Farrell, speaking on weed management, or perhaps water issues; Bruce Quinlan, speaking on marketing, as well as bringing along a 'forager' for Whole Foods Inc.; Bill Mewalt; Jessica and Tim Cummings, speaking on transition methods and irrigation water shortages; Steve Marty, speaking on the Nevada Department of Agriculture certification program, as well as general information on organic production. Guest chefs Natalie Sellers from 4th Street bistro and Michelle D. from Absolutely Michelle's are slated to prepare an organic lunch. Jim Smith and Steve Litsinger suggested that Steve Marty's presentation should include more on the basics of organic production, the benefits of organic production in terms of stewardship and market value, the available grants and cost-share programs, and a quick overview of the certification process. The council agreed. Interim chairman Marcia Litsinger announced that the budget for the workshop was to be submitted to NDOA as soon as possible. No action was taken on this agenda item.

B) Nevada Gold Organic Treasure Map progress discussion and direction

Ray Johnson stated that former OAC chairman Virginia Johnson had not proceeded with any action regarding the Nevada Gold Organic Treasure Map. Ed Foster noted that a custom publishing company could be used to produce the map. Rick Lattin mentioned that the Nevada Grown group had done a somewhat similar publication, and that the cost was quite high. Marcia Litsinger noted that the OAC budget total for marketing related activities was \$14,500. M. Litsinger also noted that many organic growers do not allow the general public on their farms due to liability issues, and also mentioned that it may be wise to target a younger audience in schools. A children's publication from Eco Farm was made available. There was some discussion on the feasibility of generating a publication aimed at educating school children regarding organic production. A motion was made by Jim Smith to table the Nevada Gold Organic Treasure Map and seek input from all OAC members for a different marketing/educational tool. The motion was seconded by Sharon Davidson, and passed by a vote of 4-0.

C) Correspondence and Announcements

Rick Lattin noted that the new Nevada Grown website would be up in mid-March, and that it would essentially be a collaborative effort between Nevada Grown, the Organic Advisory Council, and the Nevada Certified Farmer's Market Association. Ed Foster asked about the potential to link to other sites such as the NDOA site, and Mr. Lattin stated that this would be a possibility.

D) Follow-up Reports

I. Discussion of Responses to the Nevada Organic Advisory Council letter and request for the creation of a GMO task force.

Sharon Davidson suggested that the council examine the future direction of the request for a GMO task force. Ray Johnson suggested that the potential for acceptance by the State Board of Agriculture was marginal, and that perhaps a better option would be for the OAC to seek the support of a legislator to sponsor a Bill Draft Request. Sharon Davidson mentioned that she had been in contact with Renata Brillinger of the Genetic Engineering Policy Project (GEPP), an agency involved in the creation of California's AB 541. It was agreed that S. Davidson would keep abreast of developments on AB 541 and GEPP activities and provide information to the OAC for the possible creation of a Bill Draft Request concerning GMO crops in Nevada, and Marcia Litsinger would contact David Bobzien regarding the potential Bill Draft Request.

8. New Business

A) Organic Advisory Council member vacancy recruitment procedures

Steve Marty stated that Jessica Cummings, organic marketing and sales associate for Peri and Sons Farms, had been in contact with NDOA regarding the OAC vacancy. Marcia Litsinger stated that Pauline Hamilton would possibly have an interest in becoming a council member. Jim Smith mentioned Steve Slusser as a possible candidate. Rick Lattin stated that he would not have the time to devote to the OAC. Cliff Shirk expressed interest, but time was also a limiting factor for him. A Motion was made by Bruce Quinlan to send out a recruitment letter for the OAC vacancy

and to attempt to have potential candidates attend the next OAC meeting. The motion was seconded by Marcia Litsinger, and passed by a vote of 4-0. During this portion of the meeting, the council decided to send out a 'thank you' plaque to former OAC chairman Virginia Johnson for her contributions to the OAC. The plaque is to be presented to Virginia at the March OAC workshop.

B) Nevada Organic Review newsletter responsibilities delegation

Steve Litsinger asked if Virginia Johnson had materials or templates related to the production of the Nevada Organic Review newsletter. Ray Johnson stated that he was unsure about the materials or templates, but stated that Virginia planned to assist the OAC in producing one more newsletter. Marcia Litsinger stated that the OAC should contact Virginia regarding a proposal and funding request for production of future newsletters. Marcia agreed to be the contact liaison.

C) Transitional organic certification discussion

Marcia Litsinger asked if it was possible to get a transitional organic certification program established through the Nevada Department of Agriculture. Steve Marty responded by saying that it would require revision of the relevant statutes and code due to the fact that transitional organic certification is not part of the National Organic Program. Steve went on to say that transitional certification was perhaps something that the Friends of Nevada Organic 501c group could possibly undertake. Bruce Quinlan mentioned that Wild Oats/Whole Foods no longer sells transitional products, and stated that he would look into the reasoning behind that. Rick Lattin suggested that if transitional certification is available elsewhere, then NDOA should make an effort to establish a transitional organic certification program. Steve and Marcia Litsinger agreed with Mr. Lattin's statement. Steve Marty stated that he would gather some additional information on the CCOF transitional certification program, and also distributed the CCOF contact number to the group.

9. Schedule Next Meeting

The next OAC council meeting was scheduled for April 11, 2008 at 1:00 p.m. at the Nevada Department of Agriculture, 350 Capitol Hill Ave Reno NV 89502.

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Steve J. Marty

From: Nevada Nile Ramch [nnrnlvk@gbis.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 06, 2008 4:16 PM
To: Steve J. Marty
Subject: Comment for Organic Group on Friday

Nevada Nile Ranch.
P.O. Box 1150
Lovelock, Nevada 89419
Mike Phillips

To Whom It May Concern:

We farm 6600 ac., of which 1552 ac. are round-up ready alfalfa. We are located in Lovelock, Nevada. Last year we produced 27,500 tons of baled alfalfa hay which is shipped to the dairy industry in California.

The re-regulations of glyphosate tolerant alfalfa have created a real problem in our farm plan for the next four (4) years. As you know, this perennial crop is planted and grown for four - six (4-6) years before rotation. After the decision to regulate round-up ready this summer, we had to go back in time and plant 900 ac of conventional seed for alfalfa hay production which was scheduled for round-up.

In our area we have a real problem with noxious weeds (ex. Russian Knapweed, tall white top) which can not be transported across state line in California where our market is located. In the past, we have had trucks rejected at state line due to noxious weeds. Round-up ready has been the answer to this problem for us in Nevada, not one rejected load.

Our quality with round-up ready alfalfa has jumped, our production has increased. In 2006 our farm yield for conventional alfalfa was 5.68 ton/ac., Round-up ready yield was 6.64 ton/ac. We believe this increase in yield is because other herbicides such as Gramoxene, Raptor, Pursuit, 2,4-DB stunt or burn down the plant.

Round-up is much more environmentally safe to wildlife and applicators than those other herbicides that are typically used.

We have had no problems with weeds becoming resistant to round-up or feral alfalfa plants on ditches or road ways. To prevent this potential problem, we follow the stewardship program that is required by all growers.

All neighbors within a three (3) mile radius of us are aware we are growing round-up ready alfalfa. We have not had any complaints; most neighbors have been very interested in planting round-up ready alfalfa after seeing the results we have had in the past years.

Before planting round-up ready alfalfa I went to our state dept. of Ag. and got a list of all certified organic growers in Nevada.

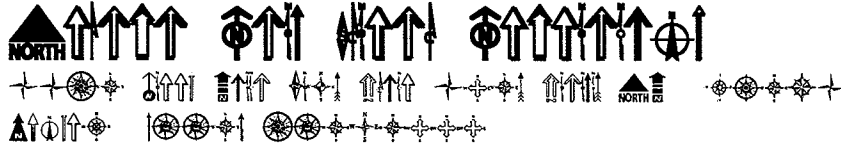
I believe round-up may not be for all growers but round-up ready was developed for growers that are in our situation. Round-up ready is another tool that can be used with less herbicides used, and much better results.

The economic impact for us is huge. With the yield increase, quality increase, cost of chemicals down, our benefit from round-up ready alfalfa is \$190.50 / ac.

We need round-up ready alfalfa to be deregulated so we can get back on tract as professional growers, don't take our choice away. This option has been scientifically proven safer on applicators and the environment.

With a common sense approach + practicality + stewardship = COEXISTANCE

Respectfully Submitted
Mike Phillips
Nevada Nile Ranch Inc.



February 6, 2008

Nevada Organic Advisory Council

Dear Council Members:

We are writing today to express our strongest concern and disappointment in the action taken by the Council to contact the Nevada Department of Health to propose the formation of a public/private task force to further study genetically engineered or genetically modified crops (GMO).

Nevada Farm Bureau has been a supporter of the Nevada Organic Advisory Council and as a result of our organizational policy we joined with your council in urging funding from the 2007 Nevada Legislature to benefit the Council's work. It has become obvious that our support and efforts to assist you may have been at the expense of the traditional agricultural industry.

We are deeply troubled by your council's unilateral action to seek the involvement by the Nevada Health Department to attack agricultural producers who may use GMO seeds, approved and authorized under federal procedures which permit their use.

In addition to our opposition (based on Farm Bureau established policy) to your council seeking Nevada-specific requirements for GMO crop production, we are also concerned that this action is outside of the scope of your authority.

Nevada state law states...

"3. The Advisory Council **may**:

(a) Advise the Director and the State Board of Agriculture concerning the provision of information and educational services to the public and to producers and handlers of organic agricultural products concerning the program for the certification of producers and handlers of organic agricultural products established by the Director pursuant to NRS 587.800, if such a program is established; and

(b) Provide information and educational services to the public and to producers and handlers of organic agricultural products.

(Added to NRS by 1997, 1635; A 1999, 3732 ; 2003, 399.)"

We do not believe that your objectives of anti-GMO production fit either an advisory role or a public education role.

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Instead of conferring with the Board of Agriculture (to whom you report as advisors) or discussing your plans/strategy with Nevada agricultural organizations (such as the Nevada Farm Bureau) – you advanced your political agenda and launched your campaign to pursue a “No-GMO” program, starting with the task force you are attempting to put together (also without any interaction with any other Nevada agricultural producer organization).

We greatly appreciate the Department of Health finding that your proposal is outside of their scope. We agree with this assessment and plan to put in motion our own campaign to return the Council to its purpose.

While we continue to support the ability of the Advisory Council to promote opportunities for organic agricultural production in Nevada, we believe it is unfortunate that this council believes it can best accomplish that responsibility by attempting to discredit other forms of agricultural production.

We regret that we cannot attend and participate in your February 8th meeting to discuss this topic with you, but would hope that there is some way that all of Nevada’s agricultural producers could look at sustainability without jeopardizing their fellow producers.

Sincerely,

Doug Busselman
Executive Vice President