

**Minutes**  
**Public Meeting of the Nevada Organic Advisory Council (NOAC)**  
**February 7, 2014**

Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA)  
405 South 21<sup>st</sup> Street  
Sparks, NV 89431

**1. Call to Order**

Mark O'Farrell, Acting Chairperson 1:05 p.m.

**2. Role Call**

Council Members: Lindsey Dixon, Mark O'Farrell, Nicole Sallaberry, Rob Holley, Kunall Patel

Members of the Public: Steve Slusser

NDA Staff: Dawn Rafferty, Steve Marty, Bob Conrad, Jeff Sutich, Ashley Jeppson

**3. Introductions**

**4. Approval of Agenda**

Motion made by Rob Holley to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Lindsey Dixon and passed by a vote of 4-0.

**5. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting**

Mark O'Farrell requested an update on the Agriculture Inspector position that was discussed during the previous meeting (April 5, 2013). Steve Marty indicated that the position update would be provided during the "Announcements" section of the agenda. Motion was made to approve previous meeting minutes.

**6. Public Participation**

None-Public Participation Closed

**7. Old Business**

A.) Correspondence & Announcements

*NDA Program Updates*

Bob Conrad, NDA Public Information Officer provided information on his role with NDA in promoting various agriculture programs and growers. Bob provided updates on events/opportunities that may be beneficial to organic growers and discussed the SNAP and current EBT incentives available for farmers at markets. An overview was provided on the BuyNevada Program, launched December 2013, and the purpose of the program- to encourage consumers to buy Nevada foods and connect producers with restaurants, catering companies, etc. Bob discussed the goal of Buy Nevada and NDA staff to help market Nevada growers/businesses and build connections that encourage the purchasing of Nevada made products.

Jeff Sutich, NDA Marketing Program Coordinator introduced himself and discussed his role in Global Trade and Economic Development. He provided an update on Western United States Agriculture Trade Association (WUSATA) reimbursement programs available for farmers that are interested in international markets and exporting. Information was provided on an upcoming organic focused trade show in Nuremburg, Germany, in addition to a current program that is available to provide reimbursements for growers that are able to attend. If organic growers are unable to attend the tradeshow, NDA can work with them to help market their products. Additional updates were provided on events that NDA will attend in order to market Buy Nevada members.

Discussion on the new NDA organic program position. Ashley Jeppson announced her new role in the organics program and how the position will be coupled with the GAP program and NDA grants. Dawn Rafferty provided addition information on Ashley's role in helping the organic program grow and that the position will eventually be dedicated to GAP and organic entirely. Further discussion on the overlap between the organic and GAP program in addition to funding sources for the new position.

Motion was made to close old business.

## **8. New Business**

A) NDA organic program update:

Steve Marty discussed NDA Organic Program updates. 42 current clients certified- some gained some lost, 3 pending applications- 2 of which are hydroponic. Clarification has been received from the Regional Accreditation Manager on certifying hydroponics operations. USDA had initially indicated that hydroponics should not fall in the organic program, however NDA is moving forward on the certification with a caveat that certification could eventually be revoked for the two hydroponic applicants. The issue with certifying hydroponic operations as organic is that they do not have soil in a hydroponic system which means there is no nutrient exchange and there is no soil fertility plan.

Steve provided updates on the USDA, National Organic Program mid-term audit. Mid-term audit is now scheduled for every 2.5 years. The NDA audit is anticipated for the last week of July, 2014. Steve believes that previous non-compliances have been addressed involving conflict of interest by documenting that the inspector and certifier are separate. Discussion was provided on how the new position will help resolve previous non-compliance and Ashley's current status in the organic training process. Ashley will be attending upcoming organic trainings and participating in organic inspections.

Steve provided an update on the Cost-Share Grant: the new farm bill does include provisions for the cost-share specifically for growers and handlers for FY 2015. Fees will be remaining the same.

Steve provided an update on a new guidance document available for brokers and transporters. Previously brokers and transporters of hay had to be certified. Now brokers need to be certified, however a pure transporter is still exempt from the certification. This new guidance document will help keep the integrity of the program without being burdensome.

Organic updates are due March 31, 2014 and will be sent in PDF. Need to have PDF Reader software to fill-in. The document currently cannot be saved after it is filled-in.

B) Discussion and action regarding OAC input on programmatic needs and direction of the NDA Organic Certification Program:

Discussion on establishing an organic livestock program. Steve Marty discussed that the livestock training was put on hold and questioned whether there is a need or demand for organic livestock certification in Nevada and whether the demand would justify the cost of NDA going through the certification process. Rob Holley raised the issue regarding how feasible it would be for operations, using public land for grazing (noxious weed issues and pesticides applied for control), to meet the certification requirements. Discussion on whether a survey had ever been sent to assess the interest in organic livestock certification. Steve indicated that there had been a survey sent out several years ago, however there wasn't much response. The council requested action for NDA marketing staff to send out a survey to assess the interest in organic livestock certification in order to receive a current assessment. Council members suggested utilizing individuals that are more familiar with compiling/issuing surveys and effective strategies for receiving more responses (NDA marketing staff).

Discussion and action regarding increasing and improving marketing efforts for the organic program and certified growers. New NDA marketing staff were identified as beneficial resources for performing marketing activities. In addition, the NDA statistician was identified as a potential resource for compiling organic production analytics in order to implement target marketing. Dawn Rafferty discussed the new program through the Secretary of State's office called Silver Flume that is available as a "one stop shop" for information that is beneficial to people wanting to start businesses in Nevada. Marketing needs identified include the following: consumers need to become more familiar with the benefits of USDA organic certification and recognize what organic certified foods have to offer; bring the consumer in touch with the organic structure; focus on the consumer and why they are willing to pay extra for organic products; promote people and resources that are available to help farmers become certified and market their products; and convince businesses to receive or change their certification through NDA.

Discussion and action on creating a sub-committee to work with NDA staff on organic program marketing. Ashley suggested a separate meeting or creation of a sub-committee to work with the NDA marketing staff in addressing the marketing requests provided by the council. Nicole asked whether non-member could be part of the committee and Steve indicated that the Bylaws don't suggest otherwise. Nicole then requested that Ashley be part of the sub-committee and Ashley accepted. Nevada Organics Council requests

action that NDA provide marketing assistance. Mark moved to create a sub-committee, with elected sub-committee chairman Nicole Sallaberry. Nicole will send emails to the entire council regarding marketing updates and public promotion. Motioned by Rob Holley. The motion was amended to say that non-members can be included-seconded by Lindsey Dixon. The Council designates a sub-committee to work with NDA marketing staff in marketing the organic program.

Sound and Sensible update provided by Steve- No formal guidance document from USDA on Sound and Sensible. No additional guidance docs from USDA this information may be clarified at the Accredited Certifiers Association training in February 2014.

#### C.) Election of Council Members

Discussion and action. Ashley Jeppson will be the new Secretary for the council, as appointed by the Director of NDA. Nicole Sallaberry nominated Lindsey Dixon as Chairman. Kunall Patel asked whether Lindsey was willing to be Chairman, she indicated yes with assistance on the Bylaws and meeting requirements. The council agreed, a motion was made by Mark O'Farrell for Lindsey Dixon to be the new chairman and was seconded by Kunall Patel. Lindsey was nominated as chairman 5-0. Motion was made by Mark O'Farrell to nominate Kunall Patel as Vice Chair. The motion was passed by a vote of 5-0. Discussion on next meeting. After the marketing sub-committee meets, the committee will be notified by Nicole with updates and the next council meeting will be scheduled.

#### **8. Adjourn**

Mark O'Farrell made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 3:45.