April District Meeting - April 10, 2013

Called to Order by Commissioner Pope

Motion to approve agenda made by Commissioner Ainsworth, Seconded by Commissioner Wheeler, Motion passed. Motion to approve Minutes made by Commissioner Ainsworth, Seconded by Commissioner Wheeler, Motion passed.

**New Business**

Move to reappoint Barbara Nichols to the budget committee. Motion by Commissioner Ainsworth, Seconded by Commissioner Wheeler, Motion passed.

Approval of Consent Calendar for future meetings – Motion by Commissioner Ainsworth with second by Commissioner Wheeler to approve calendar dates as listed:

 Wednesday, May 15, 2013- Budget Committee

 Wednesday, September 11, 2013 - District Meeting

 Wednesday, November 13, 2013 - District Meeting

Pamela provided an update on the technology in the room. The ceiling Panasonic projector is now installed, as is the new larger screen. She also explained how our Polycom system, via TV/camera works in providing a way to conduct meetings/educational programs with people across the state or the country. The system is on a cart and can be rolled into either the small or large conference room.

**Speaker Forum:**

**Chal Landgren, Christmas Tree Specialist**

Polk County is third in the state in Christmas Tree Sales. According to 2010 data, we grow about a million trees in Polk County. Oregon - Largest Producer of Christmas Trees in the United States.

Polk County has contributed much to the Christmas Tree Industry. Chal pointed out that the best of "Noble fir" exists up on Riley Peak, Fanno Peak, and Black Rock. In 1991, top 6 trees from Riley-Fanno were grafted on an almost three acre orchard in W. Polk Co. This was a volunteer effort. This orchard has been a regular producer of seeds. Seeds have become a source of revenue for the Pacific North West Christmas Tree Association seed and seedling sales. First production of noble tree seeds in the country. Ken Brown's farm in Fir Villa, has been a great contributer to collecting and grafting unique Christmas Trees.

Doing progeny tests with trees from Russia, Georgia and Turkey to see what might do well in our temperature, handling our root rot Washington State has been working on some trials to test needle loss. International effort - in 2010 collected cones and tree samples in Turkey. Working with Denmark, Pennsylvania, Pacific North West, New England, Michigan and North Carolina Each test site has 2 plots of 3,000 trees. Other projects Chal has been working on include Leader Length research.

A certification project - in conjunction with Christmas Tree Association. SERF has two purposes: Some buyers are asking if the trees are certified. It shows that good management practices. Recognition that they are doing a good job. Working to help growers prepare for their inspections.

**Amy Garrett, Small Farms Agent for Linn, Benton and Polk counties**

Serving Southern Willamette Valley

Purpose is to provide education and applied research for:

* Small acreage stewardship
* Commercial small farms
* Community Food systems

Key items in place for Branding the small farms programs:

\*website: <http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu>

\*Oregon Small Farm News - provides articles and news of interest

\*OSU Small Farms Conference - had 750 attend this year, held the first Saturday of March in Corvallis

Conducted small focus groups to determine the need of small farmers in Polk County. She has established a list serve to inform people of upcoming programs as a result of their desire to really stay connected.

Programs described a variety of small farm program that have been conducted to reach needs in the county or area, by her or her counterpart in the region including: Horses and Mud, Living on the Land, Well Water Nitrate Screening, Oregon Agritourism Summit, Willamette Women's Farm Network (WWFN), Beyond the Harvest Amy also shared the other Small Farms classes she has conducted or planned for this spring.

Amy is helping to create an online/class hybrid course for beginning farmers, called Growing Small Farms. This course will be completed this fall.

Commissioner Pope is interested in what metrics are in place to know how our Small Farm programs are meeting an educational need. Is there an economic investment and contribution that can be measured? How do we assess quality of life, foods systems, giving back to community? Amy will pursue answers.

**Bernadine Strik, Berry Crop Specialist**

55% Extension, 35% Research, 10% Teaching

Berries raised in Oregon generate a 204 million farm gate value. This greatly underestimates the value of the crop when you think about the food processing plants around the state as well, such as Midori Farms here in Polk County. She shared some of the rich history of the berry industry. There is an emotional tug to berries in our local area. Strawberries: 1950's 17,000 acres Today: 2,100acres

It is difficult for to compete against California in strawberries. Meyer Farms is one of the few goose berries producers in area. We have a great deal of blueberry production locally.

Bernadine also teaches 2-3 graduate and undergraduate Horticulture courses at OSU, which she sees as a critical role in preparing future industry contributors, researchers and/or educators in Horticulture. She also advises Graduate Students, currently she advises 6 students. There have been 15 students who have graduated under her advisement.

She also works with the commercial berry growers – statewide. For them she has: given presentations, lead workshops, produced production guides and enterprise budgets, hosted berry crop field days at the NWREC - highlight all of our work, provides Home Horticulture assistance and direct teaching as well.

She has produced numerous publications for the commercial berry grower on everything from management practices to cost analysis for each of the berry crops grown in Oregon.

Berry Crop Research:

* whole plant physiology - how the plant works
* fruit development and quality aspects
* nutrient uptake and partitioning, carbon sequestration
* develop economical production systems that increase yield and improve/maintain quality
* improve machine harvest efficiency and quality
* develop sustainable organic production systems
* work cooperatively to develop new commercial cultivars for the Pacific Northwest and work on minor crops
* address other issues as they come up

Berry Crop Research Leader at the NWREC

1. Research on high density planting and use of trellis, machine harvest - 8 million recovered for growers have rapidly been adopted into practice as a result of this research she conducted

2. Machine harvest machine adaptations - 1 million recovered

3. Trailing blackberry - Black Diamond, OSU variety released - 11 million in fruit sales in Oregon

Hardy Kiwi - 100 acres 5-10 million per acre...$2.00 per pound

Growers locally finding some success, Work on this has been done by her graduate students.

Organic blueberry research planting - In 2006, the blueberry commission gave 1/3 of their budget to Bernadine to do this forward thinking research endeavor. It led to the important discovery of the role that weed mat can have in increase yield production which benefited all growers.

Has sought and received funds from a variety of sources: Federal grants NIFA, Northwest Center for Small Fruits Research, OR blueberry commission. OR raspberry and blackberry commission, OR strawberry commission, Ag Research Foundation, Ag Experiment Station

Working also to develop an endowment for her position.

**Additional District Business:**

Quarterly Update and Financial Update provided by Derek Godwin.

The state budgets are not known yet. Our county service district revenue is expected to increase 1.5% from last year. We are hoping this increase will cover increased costs in rent and utilities. Compression is not an issue for Polk County. Hopefully the economy will improve and allow our revenue to increase.

The Board of Commissioners preliminarily approved the allocation of Economic development funds for the financial support of the North Willamette Research and Extension Center as opposed to using District funds.

Joint meeting between Fair Board, PECAN and OSU Extension - Jim Clawson

Meeting was held to resolve any misunderstandings of our operational issues as a Tax Service District.

The Tax Service District Board, made up of the county commissioners, allocates funds to the Fair Board for use and maintenance of Fairgrounds facilities, staff, and annual fair expenses related to Extension. In exchange for this allocation, the Fair Board agrees to allow Extension to use facilities at no additional cost. The Fair Board and Extension have an MOU that explains this agreement.

Ongoing communications between the organizations will be important to squash rumors, help everyone understand relationship, and keep our relationship strong.

PECAN update – Darrell Ward for Barbara Nichols

The PECAN Steering Committee has met 3 times since Febuary 6th to discuss priority and staffing issues as well as budget issues. Derek has received and utilized this input, as possible, in budget preparation. The next PECAN meeting for the entire PECAN membership is on April 16, 6:30pm.

Notes recorded by Pamela Rose