

Simply Sustainable

working to sustain western agriculture



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from Western SARE

October 2012

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"WATER: THE FOUNDATION OF AGRICULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY" CONFERENCE

by Al Kurki, PDP Program Associate
Western Region SARE Program

"When the well runs dry, we'll know the worth of water." This quote from Ben Franklin was one of the opening slides of rainwater harvest specialist Billy Kniffen's presentation at the Western SARE sponsored water conference held in Santa Fe, NM August 7th.

The value of water was on the minds of over 110 people who attended the event. How to maximize that value was spelled out in a number of ways:

* *Capture every drop you can.* Kniffen, Texas Agri-Life Extension, showed one practical example after another of harvesting rainwater for urban, household, wildlife and livestock uses. All rainfall is valuable, Kniffen said, and he showed ways that every home,



Bob Newhall and Brian Tuck at Conference

photo by Kelly Greenwald

business, institution and farm or ranch can make formerly wasted runoff a thing of the past. For more information on rainwater harvesting, go to: rainwaterharvesting.tamu.edu, arcsa.org or rainwaterharvesting.org.

* *Use every drop well,*

when you need to use it. Examples of in-field water storage and gravity drip irrigation systems, as well as drip irrigation emitters, were among the technologies presented at the conference. A helpful hint – don't use white

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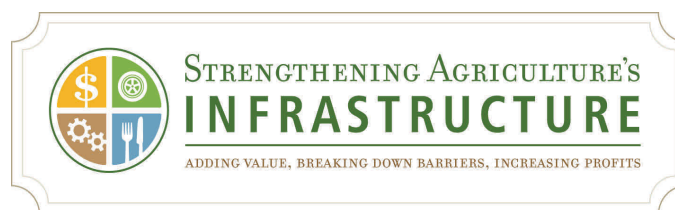
AMBITIOUS PROGRAM SET FOR AGRICULTURE INFRASTRUCTURE CONFERENCE

The conference planning committee has finalized the full agenda for Western SARE's significant conference: **Strengthening Agriculture's**

Infrastructure: Adding Value, Breaking Down Barriers, Increasing Profits with a diverse set of knowledgeable and dynamic speakers. These

speakers will address topics such as niche livestock and poultry processing, farm-to-institution, values-based marketing, accessing financial and technical resources, food development centers, serving tribal or very rural communities, distribution challenges and more. Please see the agenda and list of speakers on pages 6-7. The conference will

continued on page 5



THE MARVELOUS VISTAS OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

by V. Philip Rasmussen, Coordinator
Western Region SARE Program

The hint of fall is settling into the air of Logan, Utah - home of the Western SARE Host Institution. The aspen leaves are turning a golden yellow, and the Gamble (scrub) oaks are waving with their predictable mix of crimson colors. The change of seasons hints at the coming winter season of SARE Technical Review Panels. This is always followed by the final review and recommendations for funding by our Congressionally-mandated Administrative Council. The newest "season of SARE" has appeared as part of its predictable annual course.

In addition, the Western SARE staff and assigned presenters are in final preparations for the important **Strengthening Agriculture's Infrastructure Conference slated for December 3-5, 2012 in Portland, Ore.** This conference is destined to be one of the truly impactful events of the Western SARE program. As we look toward the 25th anniversary of the USDA-NIFA-SARE program, the thoughtful and meaningful dialog engendered by this conference will help to frame the next 25 years of SARE. I would heartily endorse your attendance at this singular event. The scores of speakers and panelists representing a plethora of topics and solutions will inform your mind and invigorate your resolve toward sustainability. Almost a quarter-century of Western SARE research and education project results have helped to form the subject matter of this conference (see pages 6-7 for agenda).

Certainly throughout our near quarter-century of SARE programs, we have had our eminent successes, and some surprising challenges. The Western SARE programs (and our funded researchers and



WESTERN SARE
COORDINATOR'S COLUMN

V. Philip Rasmussen, Ph.D.

educators) have survived numerous challenges, such as several years of delayed annual appropriations from Congress - and, early on, nearly a full year's delay in funding due to political disagreements that did not even relate to the SARE program. Nevertheless, the tide of increased interest and support for sustainability initiatives has continued, unabated, since 1988. The SARE program has remained committed to discovering research-based information and concomitantly moving this information outward to our clientele. The knowledge that the USDA-NIFA-SARE program represents is now extensive, indexed and continually available via our SARE website's research database.

The late Jenkins Lloyd Jones is often reported to have said:

"Anyone who imagines that bliss is normal is going to waste a lot of time running around shouting that he has been robbed. The fact is that most putts don't drop, most beef is tough, most children grow up to be just like people, most successful marriages require a high degree of mutual toleration, and most jobs are more often dull than otherwise. Life is just like an old time

rail journey ... delays, side-tracks, smoke, dust, cinders, and jolts, interspersed only occasionally by beautiful vistas and thrilling bursts of speed."

A key element of success in life is being thankful for the "ride." I, for one, have certainly enjoyed the SARE ride! It has been said among SARE supporters: "...sustainability is more of a journey than a destination." Our efforts to discover and assemble research-based results do, indeed, give us many pieces of the sustainability "puzzle" as our journey continues. Often, those pieces often reveal that the puzzle is more complex than previously defined. As a result, the "journey" continues. Yet, those beautiful "vistas" do periodically come into clearer view and are observable to any who pay attention to the varied "scenery" of research results.

As I think about the journey of SARE and the "vistas" of solid research results and measureable outcomes, I am reminded of the unselfish contributions of many individuals. Foremost of these are the many knowledgeable farmers and ranchers who have made countless contributions to the SARE knowledge base. I, at times, forget that hard work on the part of key leaders on the national scene helped engender the contributions of these wise farmers and ranchers. SARE's preeminent historian, Dr. Patrick Madden, painted a word picture of some of the "vistas amidst the cinders and smoke" within his SARE history (referenced in the previous issue of *Simply Sustainable*). For example, the inclusion of both farmers and ranchers in all levels of proposal review and oversight were ensured by none other than our current Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, Dr. Kathleen Merrigan. Dr. Madden writes:

continued on page 4

"I would heartily endorse your attendance at the [Strengthening Agriculture's Infrastructure Conference] event. The scores of speakers and panelists representing a plethora of topics and solutions will inform your mind and invigorate your resolve toward sustainability."

— V. Philip Rasmussen,
Western SARE
Coordinator

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: LOW WATER USE CROPS

At the recent Western SARE/New Mexico State University's conference, **Water: The Foundations of Agricultural Sustainability** (see front page), Carol Bishop and Staci Emm, Associate Professors, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, provided participants with a presentation entitled *Evaluating Alternative Low-Water-Use Crops*. This presentation is just one example of the success Bishop and Emm have had in reaching diverse audiences with their pertinent curriculum on low water use crops.

As in much of the region, water is becoming an increasingly scarce commodity in the Great Basin where Bishop and Emm work with producers and agriculture professionals. Farmers and ranchers in the region find it more difficult to remain economically viable with less water. The reduced availability of water is partially due to more water being diverted from agricultural use to residential and industrial uses.

Bishop and Emm successfully obtained Western SARE funding in 2009 to provide agriculture professionals with increased knowledge and skills regarding alternative low water use crops and the associated decision-making tools that have been developed in order to bring about the imple-

A WESTERN SARE PROJECT PROFILE

mentation of lower water use crops in the region (for full reports, search for project number EW09-007 at western-sare.org/projects). The team's reasoning is that practices adopted by the producers may be a more useful alternative to water management through policies, regulations and taxes, which are not always effective.

These practices could include reducing the amounts of water applied (deficit irrigation), changing the way the water is delivered, or switching to an alternative crop that uses less acre footage. Bishop and Emm focused on alternative crops as a way to both reduce the amount of irrigated water used and to provide a way for farmers and ranchers to remain economically viable in the areas with scarce water and social pressure to reduce use.

To provide ag professionals with more knowledge and skills, Bishop and Emm have published a curriculum based on input from a focus group and begun distribution, both in print and on CD. The curriculum has been distributed at the Small Farms Conference in Fallon, Nev.; the Indian Agricultural Conference in Reno, Nev.; the Nevada Cattlemen's, Cattlewomen's, Wool-growers and Nevada Land Action Association's 2011 joint annual convention in Minden, Ne.; and the Nevada Farm Bureau annual meeting in Fallon, Nev..

The curriculum is also distributed at workshops for agriculture professionals. At this time, Bishop and Emm have held workshops for 86 ag professionals in Utah, Nevada and Idaho. Participants in the workshops include NRCS personnel, Utah State University, University of

Idaho and UN extension educators, Farm Service Agency personnel, tribal personnel, among others. On the impacts of the workshops, Bishop and Emm state, "Of the 86 participants, 77 completed both pre- and post- evaluations. On a scale of 1 to 5, the average rating for curriculum content was 3.84. The average increase in knowledge gained over all curriculum subjects was 44 percent."

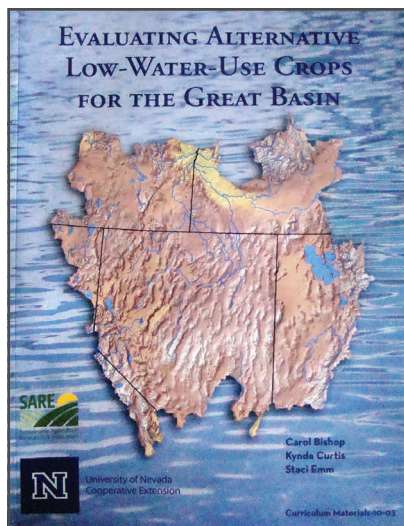
Of those who have completed a six-month post-workshop survey:

- 45% have introduced workshop curriculum and other SARE resources into producer programming
- 35% have worked one-on-one with producers to evaluate the economic feasibility of alternative low water use crops on their farm/ranch
- 30% assisted agricultural producers in implementing low water use crops on their farm/ranch
- 30% assisted producers with the measurement of changes in water use and resulting environmental improvements such as water and soil quality
- 35% assisted producers with the measurement of changes in profitability and economic sustainability of alternative crop use

Jim Freeburn, Western SARE PDP program regional training coordinator, said of the workshop, "The presentation was excellent, and I really appreciated the broad-based applicability of the low water use training. It is yet another example of a stellar Western SARE-PDP project that can be used in a variety of ecotypes to benefit sustainable agriculture." Al workshop participant wrote on the survey, "I can help implement growing crops using less water through pipes, sprinklers and drip, depending on the crop."

"I really appreciated the broad-based applicability of the low water use training. It is yet another example of a stellar Western SARE-PDP project that can be used in a variety of ecotypes to benefit sustainable agriculture."

— Jim Freeburn,
Western SARE PDP
Coordinator



Emm Bishop SARE Curriculum Cover

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: BUILDING A HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEM IN THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

The San Joaquin Valley of California is one of the most productive and diverse agricultural areas in the country. However, Daniel O'Connell of the Sequoia Riverlands Trust (SRT), along with local producers, gathered data that identified challenges in building a healthier regional food system. These challenges, similar to those many other regions face, included: lack of infrastructure to provide for adequate distribution channels, minimal awareness by consumers about where and how to access products in the region, land use decisions on the urban-rural edge that impacted farmers with pressures that drove up land and production

A WESTERN SARE PROJECT PROFILE

costs, the Valley's disconnect from broader, statewide food systems thought, policy changes and economic benefits from localized trends like value-added processing. The area experiences high rates of health problems and nutritional deficiencies. A primary concern of the group was how to promote the economic viability of small- and medium-scale farmers by connecting them with the substantial community of food insecure residents throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

SRT, in the Western SARE-

funded project SW10-801, *A San Joaquin Valley Quilt: Stitching Together a Region's Prosperity, Nutrition and Sustainability*, brought together approximately 50 farmers

and food system advocates to participate in a series of producer meetings and to engage in the creation of a strategic plan and action steps through the use of a cadre of five regional producers as "ambassadors" in conjunction with expert consultants. One objective was to "develop a strategy to move forward, addressing the issues that are constraining progress and providing a roadmap of actions that will create a more sustainable food system in the San Joaquin Valley." The project led to a strategic implementation plan that would invigorate producer involvement in their food shed and local food movements. In addition, action steps were developed from the project's data collection, literature review and producer feedback, which created a basis for continued engagement of participants, expansion of the coalition and leveraging additional funds to realize identified priorities.

One of the action steps prioritized by the participants was creation of a community or

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The project led to a strategic implementation plan that would invigorate producer involvement in their foodshed and local food movements. In addition, action steps were developed... which created a basis for continued engagement of participants, expansion of the coalition and leveraging additional funds to realize identified priorities.



San Joaquin Meeting

MARVELOUS VISTAS (continued)

... continued from page 2

"The importance of the role played by Senator Patrick Leahy and his staff, notably **Kathleen Merrigan**, in gaining Congressional approval of the enabling legislation and funding for the LISA (ed: now known as SARE) Program cannot be overestimated. Schaller has observed that **Merrigan 'continued to defend and promote the Program throughout the agony of the 1990 farm bill debate.'**" She also participated in meetings during the formative stages of the program, re-

peatedly emphasizing the intent of Congress, that farmers must be heavily involved in the Program" (bold-type added).

Dr. Merrigan has tentatively agreed to address, in some manner, the attendees of the Western SARE Agricultural Infrastructure Conference in December. I am sure that Dr. Merrigan will admit to the fact that SARE has endured "cinders and smoke" in its journey. Yet, I am also convinced that she will reveal many varied and astonishing "vistas" of sustainability. Our attendance will be rewarded by a broad view of SARE's sce-

nic "vistas." I am eagerly anticipating this panoramic glimpse of the SARE journey.

We are clearly indebted, not only to Dr. Merrigan, but to the hosts of farmers, ranchers and other professionals who have sacrificed to support the entire SARE program and its efforts to construct the marvelous "vistas" embedded in our journey to sustainability. December's SARE Strengthening Agriculture's Infrastructure Conference will help us celebrate the journey and give us a marvelous glimpse of Western SARE's measurable results.

AG INFRASTRUCTURE CONFERENCE *(continued)*

... continued from page 1

be held in Portland, Oregon December 3-5, 2012. Registration and hotel information can be found at westernsare.org/infrastructure.

To set the stage for the two days of learning and networking, Fred Kirschenmann, Distinguished Fellow at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, will address "Future Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Agriculture." Ken Meter, President of the Crossroads Resource Center, will present on "The Role of Local Food in Economic Recovery."

Other speakers represent businesses such as Del Monte

Foods, Organic Valley, Shepherd's Grain, Wheat Montana, Country Natural Beef, New Seasons Market, Charlie's Produce and more. Community processing centers, food development centers and marketing networks will be presenting models from their regions, and researchers will update conference participants on the latest learning on what does and does not work in building a stronger regional food system.

A top priority for the conference planning committee has been to ensure that producers' experiences and knowledge are fully integrated into the program; therefore, at least 35% of the speakers con-

firmed are farmers or ranchers. Brendon Rocky, Rocky Farms in Colorado, agreed to speak on Adding Value: Fruit and Vegetable Operations because "we have been very fortunate to have a tremendous support network around us. Many people have helped us on our journey, and this conference is an opportunity for us to help others by speaking about our personal experiences."

Western SARE prioritized hosting such a conference after, at seven different sub regional conferences, we heard from our region's farmers, ranchers, extension and ag agency personnel, agribusiness and NGO staff that a lack of and barriers to ade-



Theresa Marquez, Organic Valley

quate infrastructure was holding back the profitability of producers and the building of a strong local and regional farming economy.

Dr. Phil Rasmussen, Western SARE regional director states, "We are looking forward to learning from a large number of innovative agriculture leaders. We will learn from their successes and failures, regulatory or policy barriers they had to overcome, technical and financial resources they tapped into and what they might change if starting today. Attendees will return home inspired and with a multitude of new ideas and practices."

This educational and partnership-building conference will prepare western region agriculture for sustainably processing, marketing and distributing high quality food in systems that:

- Draw consumers closer to food producers;
- Increase economic viability of food producers of all sizes;
- Expand the marketplace for sustainably produced food;
- Increase community food security;
- Assure abundance in the face of increasing fossil fuel costs.

"We are looking forward to learning from a large number of innovative agriculture leaders. We will learn from their successes and failures, regulatory or policy barriers they had to overcome, technical and financial resources they tapped into and what they might change if starting today."

— V. Philip Rasmussen,
Western SARE
Coordinator



Gail Feenstra, UC SAREP



Stacy Davies, Country Natural Beef



STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURE'S INFRASTRUCTURE

ADDING VALUE, BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS, INCREASING PROFITS



Conference Agenda

December 3-5, 2012

Airport Embassy Suites, Portland, Oregon

Information & Registration: westernsare.org/infrastructure

December 3:

4:30: Registration opens
5:30: Reception with local foods, no host bar

December 4:

8:00: Welcome
8:15: Why Western SARE is Interested in Ag Infrastructure
8:45: *Fred Kirschenmann, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture: Future Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Agriculture*
9:45: Break to visit posters
10:30: *Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center: The Role of Local Food in Economic Recovery*
11:15: *Karl Kupers, Shepherd's Grain and Theresa Marquez, Organic Valley: Response to Keynote Presentations.*
12:00: Lunch and Keynote speaker - USDA-NIFA leader, TBA
1:30: Small Session A
3:00: Break, visit posters
3:30: Small Session B
5:00: Reception
6:00: Dinner
7:15-9:00: Food for Thought: moderated discussion sessions with speakers

December 5:

8:00: Setting the Stage: What was learned the day before
9:00: What is Needed to Meet Challenges
• *Gail Feenstra, UC SAREP*
• *Steve Balling, Del Monte*
• *Stacy Davies, Country Natural Beef*
10:30: Break

11:00: Small Session C

12:30: Lunch and Keynote speaker - *Lisa Sedlar, New Seasons Market, Portland*
2:00: Closing Session: What did we learn / Next steps / Closing remarks
3:30: Adjourn

Track 1: What is Needed for Future Growth in Regional Processing:

- Niche Livestock Processing
- Community-level Poultry Processing

Track 2: Adding value:

- Mixed Livestock and Crop Operations
- Fruit and Vegetable Operations
- Oilseeds as Food and Fuel

Track 3: Successful Models:

- Linking farms and markets through creation of a recognizable label
- Distribution for Specialty or Local Markets
- Direct to Retail and Restaurants
- Farm to Institution Sales
- Serving the Unique Needs of Remote or Tribal Communities

Track 4: Community and Public Support:

- Support for producers and entrepreneurs by Food Development Centers
- Investing in Communities with Private and Public Financing
- Putting USDA programs to work with technical and financial resources

Conference Break-Out Sessions

SESSION A: Dec. 4, 1:30 pm	SESSION B: Dec. 4, 3:30 pm	SESSION C: Dec. 5, 11:00 am
<p>What is needed for future growth in regional processing: Niche Livestock Processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Lauren Gwin, <i>Oregon State University</i> Bruce Dunlop, <i>Lopez Island Farm</i> Joel Huesby, <i>Thundering Hooves</i> Mike Kloft, <i>Lonely Lane Farms</i> Darin Saul, <i>University of Idaho</i> 	<p>What is needed for future growth in regional processing: Niche Livestock Processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Lauren Gwin, <i>Oregon State University</i> Bruce Dunlop, <i>Lopez Island Farm</i> Joel Huesby, <i>Thundering Hooves</i> Mike Kloft, <i>Lonely Lane Farms</i> Darin Saul, <i>University of Idaho</i> 	<p>What is needed for future growth in regional processing: Community-Level Poultry Processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Jim Freeburn, <i>Western SARE</i> Janie Burns, <i>Homegrown Poultry</i> Jan Tusick, <i>Mission Mountain Food Enterprise</i>
<p>Adding Value: Mixed livestock and crop operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Larry Cundall, <i>Cundall Ranch</i> Jeanne Carver, <i>Imperial Stock Ranch</i> Dawn Thilmany, <i>Homestead Beef, Colorado State University</i> Mike Ridenour, <i>Meadow Maid Foods</i> 	<p>Adding Value: Fruit & vegetables operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Cindy Lair, <i>Colorado Department of Conservation</i> Margaret Campos, <i>Comida de Campos</i> Larry Thompson, <i>Thompson Farms</i> Brendon Rockey, <i>Rockey Farms</i> Keri Wilson, <i>Wilson Banner Ranch</i> 	<p>Adding Value: Oilseeds as food and fuel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Al Kurki, <i>Western SARE/NCAT</i> Andrew Long & Taylor Lyon, <i>Montana State University</i> Kent Wasson, <i>Peaks & Prairies</i> Bret Hess, <i>University of Wyoming</i> Manny Encinias, <i>New Mexico State University</i>
<p>Successful Models: Creating a values-based brand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Kent Wasson, <i>Peaks & Prairies</i> Karl Kupers, <i>Shepherd's Grain</i> Stacy Davies, <i>Country Natural Beef</i> Bo Maurer, <i>Wheat Montana</i> Theresa Marquez, <i>Organic Valley</i> 	<p>Successful Models: Making distribution work for specialty or local markets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Keith DeHaan, <i>Food and Livestock Planning, Inc.</i> Lynea Newcomer, <i>Idaho Bounty</i> Diane Dempster, <i>Charlie's Produce</i> Amanda Osborne, <i>FoodHub/ECOTRUST</i> 	<p>Successful Models: Direct to retail and restaurants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Karl Kupers, <i>Shepherd's Grain</i> Gail Feenstra, <i>UC SAREP/ASI</i> Lisa Sedlar, <i>New Seasons Market</i> Piper Davis, <i>Grand Central Bakery</i>
<p>Successful Models: Farm-to-Institution sales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Jessica Goldberger, <i>Washington State University</i> Don Bustos, <i>Santa Cruz Farm</i> Jim Dyer, <i>Southwest Marketing Network</i> Clark Seavert, <i>Portland Metro Foodshed</i> 	<p>Community and Public Support: Support for producers & entrepreneurs by Food Development Centers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Rick Gibson, <i>University of Arizona Extension</i> Jan Tusick, <i>Mission Mountain Food Enterprise, MT Food Dev't Center</i> Pati Martinson and Terri Badhand, <i>Taos Food Center</i> 	<p>Community and Public Support: Investing in communities with public and private financing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Brian Tuck Glenda Humiston, <i>CA Rural Development, USDA</i> Jerry DeWitt, <i>Slo-Money</i> Larry Yee, <i>Food Commons</i>
<p>Community and Public Support: Putting USDA programs to work with technical and financial resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Rob Hedberg, <i>USDA-NIFA-SARE</i> Glenda Humiston, <i>CA Rural Development, USDA</i> Others TBA 	<p>Adding Value: Mixed livestock and crop operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Larry Cundall, <i>Cundall Ranch</i> Jeanne Carver, <i>Imperial Stock Ranch</i> Dawn Thilmany, <i>Homestead Beef, Colorado State University</i> Mike Ridenour, <i>Meadow Maid Foods</i> 	<p>Adding Value: Fruit & vegetable operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Cindy Lair, <i>Colorado Dept. of Conservation</i> Margaret Campos, <i>Comida de Campos</i> Brendon Rockey, <i>Rockey Farms</i> Larry Thompson, <i>Thompson Farms</i> Keri Wilson, <i>Wilson Banner Ranch</i>
<p>What is needed for future growth in regional processing: Community-Level Poultry Processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Bruce Peterson, <i>NRCS</i> Janie Burns, <i>Homegrown Poultry</i> Jan Tusick, <i>Mission Mountain Food Enterprise</i> 	<p>Successful Models: Farm-to-Institution sales</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Jessica Goldberger, <i>Washington State University</i> Don Bustos, <i>Santa Cruz Farm</i> Jim Dyer, <i>Southwest Marketing Network</i> Clark Seavert, <i>Portland Metro Foodshed</i> 	<p>Successful Models: Serving the unique needs of remote or tribal communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderator: Chuck Boerner, <i>Ono Farms</i> Theresa Showa, <i>Ganado Family Farms, Navajo Nation</i> Mike Ridenour, <i>Meadow Maid Foods</i> Valerie Segrest & Elizabeth Campbell, <i>Traditional Plants & Foods Program, Northwest Indian College</i> Nathan Mudd, <i>Alaska Meat Company</i>



LONG-TIME ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL MEMBER KARL KUPERS DEPARTS

The Administrative Council and staff experienced a poignant ending to the summer meeting when recognizing the departure of long-time council member Karl Kupers. Kupers' leadership and positive attitude were never taken for granted in the 10 years he served on the Council. He joined the Council in 2002 and was named chair in October 2006. Demonstrating his



Karl Kupers

commitment to Western SARE, Kupers agreed to stay on the Council and Executive Committee an extra two years due to another Executive Committee member's resignation.

Kupers has been an excellent spokesman for Western SARE, speaking at events and meeting with decision-makers about the

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SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY (*continued*)

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regional food system assessment. This assessment will be needed as the potential for developing an aggregation and distribution center comes under consideration. The project team states that "such an assessment often involves participatory, action research that builds potential implementing coalitions while examining the

economic feasibility and infrastructure that currently is available to address the systemic problems in the food system."

The specific actionable items that were recommended include:

- Form a Food Policy Council
- Conduct a Regional Food Assessment
- Develop a Marketing and Strategic Plan
- Build an Aggregation and

Distribution Center

- Articulate a Development Strategy

To read full project reports, search by the project number SW10-801 on sare.org/projects. A copy of the project's **Strategic Implementation Plan** and **Summary of Proceedings, Collected Data and Conclusions** can be downloaded from the final report entry.

WATER CONFERENCE (*continued*)

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tanks or buckets for above-ground water storage; they are breeding grounds for algae growth. Use blue, black or brown ones.

The event went much further, delving into topics like higher value, less thirsty crops for the Great Basin. California orchardists can now ensure that their crops get only the water they need, when they need it, by using "pressure bomb" measuring devices, coupled with regulated deficit irrigation and partial root zone drying practices.

* *Make the water work at least twice.* Why not make electricity from flowing irrigation water? That's the question Elephant Butte Irrigation District is not only asking, but

attempting to answer by installing low head hydro electric turbines on some New Mexico irrigation canals. The irrigation water generates power, supports crop production and recharges downstream surface water sources.

In a year of nearly unprecedented drought and wild fires throughout the West, the audience was reminded of the context within which water's value is becoming more obvious. It was pointed out that there are many uses of water and many users. NMSU ag economist Brian Hurd pointed out that major Southwest cities have cut per capita water use in the past few decades, but that increasing population and climate change will make broad stakeholder discussions

and actions on water use all the more important in the years to come.

"What this conference did was to show that there are lower cost, low tech, practical ways of helping water users proactively make better use of this always precious, and - at times - underappreciated resource," said Jim Freeburn, Western SARE PDP coordinator. "Like our soil, and the people who work it to produce our food, smart water use is another dimension of USDA-SARE's commitment to research and education on sustainable agriculture."

The full agenda, press articles, videos and the full presentations can be found at: westernsare.org/Conferences/Water-Conference.

A GLIMPSE OF NEW MEXICO AGRICULTURE

All 18 Western SARE PDP coordinators took time away from heavy workloads to tour Santa Fe-area farms and ranches after the water conference (see first page). On August 8, New Mexico SARE coordinator Stephanie Walker and her colleagues at New Mexico State University hosted the coordinators, Western SARE staff and guests on a full day of tours highlighting New Mexico agriculture near Santa Fe.

At the first stop, Alfredo Roybal described the history and philosophy of his family-owned and operated Rancho Las Lagunas in Nambé. Roybal raises grass-fed beef and alfalfa, selling his products directly to the public. The family started the ranch in 1946, and the founders, Pablo and Ruby Roybal, were strong believers in producing natural and healthy products. Although the operation started as a dairy, that portion of the business was closed in 2001. During his presentation, Roybal mentioned changes in regulations and water availability as limiting factors toward a profitable dairy operation. Because of water's importance, Roybal is very involved in the acequia system and works for the irrigation district. In addition to water challenges, Roybal believes a local slaughtering plant is needed in order to be more profitable. The lack of such a plant is one reason he

markets directly to the local public.

The next stop was at Camino de Paz Farm near Santa Cruz. The farm is located on a Montessori School, with the belief that "math, science, reading, history, arts and crafts come alive as these skills are used daily in a real, practical way." Greg Nussbaum, farm director, and current students showed the group the vegetable gardens and greenhouses which produce lettuces, leafy greens, tomatoes, beans, squash, corn, cucumbers, beets, turnips, carrots, radishes, onions and garlic. The farm uses biodynamic practices. The farm also includes animals. Chickens and turkeys are raised in mesh pens which are moved by the students around the farm. The students also work with goats and sheep for raw milk, meat, yogurt and cheese. The students work in one chore group for eight weeks, such as milking, fencing, horticulture and more. They then move to another group. The school staff comments that the capacity for work by young adults is very



Allan Sabaldica with Sandoval's SARE Project Information

high. The produce, meat and products are sold at the farmers market and through a CSA.

At Don Bustos' Santa Cruz Farm and Greenhouses in Espanola, his farm manager described the farm's combination of traditional agricultural practices with modern technology. Santa Cruz Farm grows berries, asparagus, chilies, squashes and more on the 3.5 acre certified organic farm. Even more produce is grown in hoop houses. This allows the farm to produce more than 76 different varieties 12 months out of the year in a challenging climate. The produce is sold at farmers markets, through a CSA and wholesale accounts, including a regional school district. The farm has been part of the Bustos family since the late 1600s. Water is supplied by an acequia – the traditional water system based on the premise that everyone is equal and should receive a fair share of water to grow crops, water livestock and drink.

At the Sustainable Agriculture Science Center at Alcalde, tour participants were treated to a traditional chile roast while learning about chile research trials. Another treat for everyone was a stop at the



Chile Roast at Alcalde

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COUNCIL LEARNS ABOUT COLORADO WATER AND AG PRESERVATION CHALLENGES

At the summer Administrative Council meeting in late July, the overarching themes by invited speakers were water shortages and expanding urban development. Cindy Lair, Western SARE Administrative Council chair and program manager for the Colorado State Conservation Board, hosted council members, staff and guests in Loveland, Colo. with an instructive set of speakers and farm tours.

Speakers who addressed the gathering included John Salazar, Commissioner of the Colorado State Department of Agriculture (and former congressional representative); John Stulp, Special Assistant to the Governor on Water Policy; and Tim Macklin, NRCS liaison to the Western Growers Association. All three dynamic presenters increased the audience's understanding of Colorado agriculture, especially in regard to state water law and its impacts on producers during a time of drought, the growth of urban and suburban developments and the challenges that poses for agriculture and the importance of agriculture to the state. Over

"[The tours included] a good mix of the complex issues facing sustainable agriculture. We face these issues whenever we review proposals. Hearing from those on the ground helps us in our reviews."

— Peg Perreault,
Western SARE
Administrative Council



Strohauer Farms



Van Thuyne Farm

dinner, Dr. John Brett of the University of Colorado presented his research on the potential presented by urban agriculture.

With the stage set by the speakers, the council members and staff then spent a full day touring a local feeding operation and two farms. Brett

Ulrich, JBS Five Rivers Ranch Cattle Feeding, presented on the changes the business has made toward sustainability. The site was completely reconstructed, in consultation with Temple Grandin. Grandin is known for her insight into animal behavior and low-stress handling. Water is used more efficiently since the reconstruction, and 100 percent of runoff is captured and accounted for. JBS Five Rivers also stresses their use of sustainable nutrition; using steam flakers which potentially could provide 12-15% better utilization of corn.

Corn was also the focus at Strohauer Farms, the next stop. Strohauer Farms is a third generation family farm with 3,000 acres of corn, wheat and vegetables. The farm has been significantly impacted by water shortages, with a large drop in the production of corn this year. The farm lost water due to the laws and methods in which Colorado prioritizes those who receive

New Chair's Term Begins

At the Administrative Council's summer meeting, Don Bustos' two-year term as chair ended and Cindy Lair began her two-year term. Lair represents

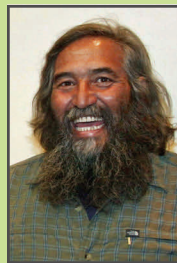


Cindy Lair

the Western Association of State Directors of Agriculture and is the program manager for the Colorado

State Conservation Board, a division of the Colorado Department of Agriculture. She joined the Council in 2006.

Don Bustos, Farmer/Rancher Representative to the Council, will remain on the Executive Committee for an additional two years as past chair.



Don Bustos

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AC MEMBER KUPERS DEPARTS *(continued)*

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impact Western SARE has had on farmers, ranchers and sustainable agriculture. He never has lost sight that Western SARE research should be farmer-driven and visionary. Everyone will remember Karl's constant reminder to "think outside the box." He helped lead the expansion of the farmer/rancher grant program, and His parting words were to remind the AC and staff that "sustainability is marketable now, much more than 10 years ago. Your work today is important because you have a forum to go forward on." Kupers has been a leader in making that change possible.

Kupers is the co-founder of Shepherd's Grain and a former eastern Washington wheat and alternative crops producer. In 1996, with the help of a Western SARE grant and technical advisor Diana Roberts, an extension educator with Washington State University, Kupers' K&J Farms Inc. began making the transition to a direct-seed (no-till), annual-crop and an intense rotation system. The new system has reduced wind and water erosion and

improved soil tilth, production and weed control. Kupers told the Council that receiving the farmer/rancher grant was "the tipping point" and had a "huge

impact on him personally and professionally."

See below for one Council member's recollection of working with Kupers.

Working with Karl Kupers

by Chuck Boerner
ONO Organic Farms, and
Administrative Council Member

As humans develop their passions into successful careers, they think about making a difference and inspiring others. Providing inspiration to other people is like giving a plant that already has the right amount of sun and water and a good dose of fertilizer - the plant jumps!

Well, Karl Kupers made me jump. He, along with his wife Lexi, inspired me to follow through with my innovative ideas to grow and market tropical fruit, coffee and cocoa. His enthusiasm, availability and pioneering approaches to everyday problems allowed him to become a mentor for me and my business passions.

Karl's leadership of Western SARE is never ending. We will feel it and talk about it for many years to come. His posi-

tive attitude about sustainable agriculture and his innovative ways of thinking out of the box will remain forever in the minds of and foster passion in the entire Administrative Council and staff, along with everyone he came in contact with during his tenure with SARE.

Karl is a leader who is not afraid to lead. His booming voice and laughter could be heard throughout meeting rooms, and he would notoriously never occupy the same seat for the duration of the meal, ensuring he spoke with everyone. His experience, leadership, innovative ideas and inner strength are the qualities that make SARE not only great, but by far the best agricultural organization of which I have ever had the privilege to be a member.

Aloha to you, Karl, until we meet again. Thank you for making a difference.



NEW MEXICO AGRICULTURE *(continued)*

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Black Mesa Winery. The winery provided tastings of seven wines made from grapes grown in Velarde, in between Taos and Santa Fe. The winery uses green methods such as composting their vines, using drip irrigation and the using foliar sprays with vitamins and minerals, not growth fertilizers.

Western SARE grantee Loretta Sandoval held the participants' interest with descriptions of her research and conservation efforts. Her organic farm, Zulu's Petals in the Embudo Valley, is very diverse and sticks to a strict rotation schedule. She has benefitted

from the EQIP program for water infrastructure and hoop houses, and a specialty crop grant is funding a small grapes trial which she believes will also benefit larger growers. Sandoval's Western SARE-funded project focuses on the conservation and cultivation of landrace chile peppers and traditional foods. She produces the landrace peppers (descended from the Spanish and Portuguese peppers taken through traditional trading routes), heirloom tomatoes that are cold-resistant and heirloom corn. She is one of only four people with that corn seed, and as it is produced

she will distribute it back to the Hopi.

Next year's PDP meeting and set of tours will be held near Winters, California.

For more information on the farms and ranches:

- Rancho Las Lagunas: rancho laslagunasinc.com
- Camino de Paz: caminodepax.net
- Santa Cruz Farm: sare.org/projects, search for project number FW05-011
- Alcalde Center: alcaldesc.nmsu.edu
- Black Mesa Winery: blackmesawinery.com
- Zulu's Petals Organic Farm: zuluspetalsfarm.com



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COUNCIL LEARNS CO CHALLENGES *(continued)*

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water during a severe drought.

At the Jules van Thuyne Farm, Ron Stewart described the Boulder County Open Space program. This program started in 1993 with a \$0.25 cent sales tax to purchase open space. Eighty to ninety farmers lease land every year from the program (including van Thuyne). The program allows a way for beginning farmers to get started in an area with high land prices. Van Thuyne also saw the benefit, stating that the program allowed him to stay in the region and expand his operations. Due to the fact that regional taxpayers believe that they have a right to speak out about agricultural practices on this land, it is crucial that the urban and suburban communities are well-educated about

what the farmers do and how they do it. The county hosts five to six consumer tours per summer, and this has paid dividends in how the public understands agriculture.

At the end of the meeting, council member Peg Perreault declared that the meeting and tours included "a good mix of the complex issues facing sustainable agriculture. We face these issues whenever we

review proposals. Hearing from those on the ground helps us in our reviews." Kent Wasson of the Council added that from the tour he was able to "see the local jobs and infrastructure that is supported by agriculture."

Western SARE Calls for Proposals

Western SARE's 2013 Calls for Proposals have been released. PDFs of the calls can be downloaded from <https://wsaregrants.usu.edu/grants/>. Hard copies may be requested from the Utah office by calling (435) 797-2257.

Deadlines are:

- Professional Development Program: October 31, 2012, 12 pm MST
- Farmer/Rancher: December 5, 2012, 1 pm MST
- Professional + Producer: December 5, 2012, 1 pm MST