



# Organic Matters

## MOA's 2009 Conference Review

by Jim Lindquist / Photos by Susan Waters

Once again, MOA has brought together most of the best of Montana's organic producers, processors, researchers, consumers and many other folks interested in organic agriculture. This year's 7th annual MOA Conference, "Organics: Breaking New Ground," was held in Great Falls, Montana, November 12-14, 2009.

For the second year in a row, the first day of the Conference provided the attendees with an entire day of Organic University. Experienced organic farmers, certifying agents and inspectors helped new and transitioning organic farmers with their fundamental knowledge, start-up and paperwork.

Friday began with a couple wrenches thrown into things when two of our guest speakers were not able to make it to the Conference. Jeff Jacobsen, Dean of MSU's College of Agriculture, was unable to attend but communicated with us by way of a speakerphone from Bozeman. He answered questions and talked to us about the organic programs at MSU. Mary Stein and Pat Hatfield, also from MSU, outlined the new Sustainable Food and Bioenergy Systems degree program and discussed the connection between food consumption and food production. Also discussed were the proposed animal production curriculum and the on-farm internship at MSU's Towne's Harvest Garden, which provides produce to the local food bank and farmer's market.

I attended Charley Orchard's breakout session on Land Monitoring and Grazing Management. He passed on lots of good ideas to achieve better pasture/range management. "The profit is the land," is a saying that his grandfather passed on to him, which makes a lot of sense no matter what type of agriculture you're in.

In between the breakout sessions, we were able to visit with the many vendors, friends and neighbors and get some wholesome snacks. After lunch, we received positive messages from the offices of Senators Tester and Baucus and Representative Rehberg.



The Seed Sessions were amongst many well-attended presentations

The second scheduling challenge of the day was the late cancellation of our keynote speaker, Paul Hepperly from the Rodale Institute. With very short notice, MOA Board Member Jeff Schahczenski jumped in and gave us a good look at climate change and how organic farming may be affected.

At Friday night's dinner, Ron deYong of the Montana Department of Agriculture spoke of the importance of crop rotation, carbon sequestering, research and having a Montana food system. Next, was the annual presentation of MOA Awards. Jim Barngrover received the MOA Lifetime Achievement Award and Jon and Amy Kvaalen received the MOA Leadership in Organics Award. (Read more about these Awards on p. 8.)

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Montana Organic Association is a 501(c)6 non-profit organization dedicated to advocating and promoting organic agriculture for the highest good of the people, the environment and the State economy.

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*Organic Matters* occasionally includes guest articles and opinions. While we review these for relevance to our mission, the opinions in these articles may not reflect the opinions or policy of the Montana Organic Association.

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Chef Sedgie demonstrates great organic cooking using local, organic ingredients



The MOA Conferences are always opportunities to meet and eat

### *Conference Review continued from p. 1*

Saturday, after a great breakfast, the Conference's Chef Sedgie (who, by the way, provided delicious organic meals throughout the Conference) held a cooking class for some of the attendees (see *To Your Health* on p. 10), while others went on a tour of Montana Millings new facility (see Montana Milling article following). After the cooking class and tour, we had a couple more breakout sessions, including a panel of organic farmers sharing their experiences of "Breaking New Ground" while transforming CRP grassland to organic crop production.

Later that day, guest speaker Sandra Hare gave a very enthusiastic talk on "Don't Give Up the Farm." It all centered around communication with your family on the management of your farm, including the importance of having respect and understanding for each other. Good communications are essential when we need to get along with family members in a business situation.

The MOA member meeting covered MOA's most important work during 2009, including making a lot of new connections and opening new doors when working with other organizations and the legislature.



Sandra Hare was one of many guest speakers at the Conference

It's hard to report so briefly on such a full Conference, and many more great sessions took place that were not reported on here.

It was all good—informative presentations, healthy and delicious food, great people, vendors with helpful wares, silent auction goodies, and so much more. Our host, the Holiday Inn, did a great job in helping us create a comfortable venue. Their employees were always helpful and I think they had fun too.

We send a great big "Thank You!" to the vendors, sponsors, advertisers, volunteers and all of you who attended. It took all of us to make this Conference a success.

*Editor's note: For a listing of the 2009 Conference sessions, speakers and their bios, visit: [www.montanaorganicassociation.org/conference2009.htm](http://www.montanaorganicassociation.org/conference2009.htm)*

## Montana Milling Hosts Tour

by Susan Waters

Montana Milling opened the doors of its new facility and hosted a tour for MOA Conference participants. The new multigrain processing plant is located just 2 miles north of Great Falls. The large facility consists of 90,000 bushels of grain elevation, a 4 million bushel annual processing facility and enough warehouse space to store 40 full truckloads of finished products. The design of the plant allows for quick turnarounds when processing different grains or oilseeds. State of the art equipment, along with computer automation, ensures both food and employee safety.

The facility is truly multigrain friendly, as grains and seeds come in different sizes, shapes and densities. Although wheat and barley used to be the norm, now a day of processing flaxseed, millet, milo, soybean or corn production is very common. The versatile new facility will provide a more diverse market for Montana producers.

# Comments Sought on Environmental Impact Statement for GMO Alfalfa

by Kiki Hubbard

On December 16, 2009, USDA released a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) on the impacts of Roundup Ready (RR) alfalfa (genetically engineered for resistance to glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup herbicide). Despite concluding that RR alfalfa genes will transfer to non-RR alfalfa, USDA proposed to release RR alfalfa to the open market. USDA stated, "granting nonregulated status to glyphosate-tolerant (GT) alfalfa...will not result in significant impacts to the human environment." USDA also opened a 60-day period for the public to comment on the EIS.

**The deadline for written and electronic comments is received by February 16, 2010. Fill out the enclosed comment cards in center of newsletter, cut into two cards, include both cards in an envelope and mail to:**

**Docket No. APHIS – 2007 – 0044  
Regulatory Analysis and Development  
PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8  
4700 River Road Unit 118  
Riverdale, MD 20737 – 1238**

**Or, you can write your own comments and mail to the same address. Be sure to include two cards in a single envelope. Remember, the deadline for all comments is received by the USDA by February 16, 2010.** Comments are also being received through public meetings in Nevada, Nebraska, and Maryland.

Many organizations, including the Montana Organic Association, are concerned about the release of RR alfalfa. They say the EIS understates the impacts of cross contamination, which will impact the ability of farmers and ranchers to grow organic alfalfa and to access organic feed for livestock. It will impact the rights of consumers to purchase food that they know was grown without genetic contamination. Ole Norgaard, Chair of MOA, expressed his concern over contamination of organic and non-GMO crops and foods and is encouraging all members of MOA to send their comments to USDA.

## **What can we do as producers, handlers, and buyers of organic food?**

It is critical that USDA receives your comments. You can sign and send the enclosed card, modify it, or send your own comments. Be sure to include your name and address and send two copies of your written comments so that they are received by the deadline. To submit comments electronically, go to the following website:

<http://www.regulations.gov/search/Regs/home.html#submitComment?R=0900006480a6b7a1>

Tell USDA that the EIS dismisses the adverse economic effects that contamination by RR alfalfa will have on organic alfalfa seed and hay growers, producers of organic livestock (e.g., organic dairy, beef, etc.), and exporters of alfalfa to sensitive markets. Tell them if you consume organic food, and your preferences regarding genetic contamination in food.

**Our voices must be heard.  
Fill out the enclosed comment cards and  
mail in early enough to be received by  
the USDA by February 16, 2010.**

The strongest public comments will include examples and data of how RR alfalfa threatens organic farming operations. In addition to your opinion, try to provide studies and other data regarding how contamination occurs (and examples of it already occurring). If you are a producer, demonstrate how contamination economically impacts your own farming operation or company, such as evidence that your markets will reject contaminated products.

To find electronic links for submitting comments to USDA and to view the draft EIS, visit MOA's website: [www.montanaorganicassociation.org](http://www.montanaorganicassociation.org).

You can review the EIS here:  
[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/downloads/alfalfa/gealfalfa\\_deis.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/downloads/alfalfa/gealfalfa_deis.pdf)

Supplemental documents can be found here:  
[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/alfalfa\\_documents.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/biotechnology/alfalfa_documents.shtml)

## **Background Information**

Alfalfa is an important feed for livestock, especially dairy cows, and is grown on more than 20 million acres across the U.S. (including two million acres in Montana). In June 2005, the USDA announced its approval of RR alfalfa. RR alfalfa is genetically engineered so that it can be sprayed with Roundup to control weeds. It poses unique economic and environmental risks to organic hay and livestock producers.

In February 2006, a coalition of alfalfa producers and food and farm organizations filed a lawsuit against USDA calling the department's approval of RR alfalfa

*continued on p. 4*



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*Comments Sought continued from p. 3*

a threat to farmers' livelihoods and a risk to the environment. It was the first lawsuit to be filed in response to the approval of a genetically engineered crop.

A year later, the court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and ordered USDA to rescind its approval of RR alfalfa and perform a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This precedent-setting court decision found that USDA failed to address concerns that RR alfalfa will contaminate conventional (non-genetically engineered) and organic alfalfa. The court issued a permanent injunction, barring any further planting of RR alfalfa, at least until an EIS was prepared. A court has never before vacated a USDA decision to approve a genetically engineered crop.

Roundup Ready alfalfa recently set another legal precedent. The U.S. Supreme Court announced in January 2010 that it had granted Monsanto's petition for review of the federal court order that halted planting RR alfalfa while the EIS was being completed. This is first case related to the safety of genetically engineered crops to reach the high court. MOA will provide updates in future articles on the case, named *Monsanto v. Geertson Seed Farms*.

The USDA National Organic Program does not allow the use of agricultural biotechnology in certified organic farming systems. An expectation exists among buyers and consumers, as well as producers, that organic foods are free from genetic cross contamination. In fact, some markets do not allow such contamination. So, cross-pollination of RR alfalfa with organic crops could harm organic alfalfa and livestock producers.

The lawsuit that found USDA's approval of RR alfalfa illegally leveled the playing field, and said that a crop variety can't be grown at the expense of significantly impacting another. In other words, if transgenic gene flow affects organic farmers' ability to grow organic alfalfa free of transgenic traits, then the impacts must seriously be considered.

No law or regulation requires farmers who plant Roundup Ready crops to implement practices that prevent cross-pollination with neighbors' crops. And farmers can't control the weather or movement of pollinators. They cannot always avoid hay stands going to bloom and producing viable pollen. Instead, the burden of protecting alfalfa plants and sensitive markets from transgenic traits, such as planting buffer areas, is completely transferred to the producer of non-Roundup Ready alfalfa.

*continued on p. 5*

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To learn more about the market and environmental implications of Roundup Ready alfalfa, read Western Organization of Resource Council's Guide to Genetically Modified Alfalfa at:  
<http://worc.org/GM-Alfalfa/>

*Kiki Hubbard is a food and agriculture project consultant. She is the author of the Western Organization of Resource Councils' A Guide to Genetically Modified Alfalfa.*

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world...indeed, it is the only thing that ever has!*

*~Margaret Meade*

## EQIP Money Available

by Jeff Schahczenski, NCAT

The 2010 fiscal year sign-up for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) Organic Initiative is open and the deadline for application is March 12, 2010. This Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) program provides up to \$20,000 per year for no more than \$80,000 over a 6-year period to assist farmers and ranchers to transition to or improve the conservation benefits from organic agriculture production. Total funding available for farmers and ranchers in Montana is expected to be around \$1.5 million dollars.

Last year, over one million dollars was awarded to farmers and ranchers for the adoption of conservation practices that helped with the transition or expansion of organic production of crops and livestock. Also this year, Montana NRCS is part of a national initiative to assist with the cost of building a hoop house or high tunnel for extending the season for the production of crops. Application of hoop house support can be applied for through this EQIP organic initiative. Cost shares are generally around 75% of the cost of implementing the practice and if you are a beginning farmer (farming 10 years or less) the cost share can be as high as 90% of the cost of implementing. Contact your local NRCS office for more details. Also, the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), through its ATTRA project, can assist with additional information about this program by calling 1-800-346-9140.

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## On The Farm

by Jon Kvaalen

It wasn't the snow or the frozen ground that stopped our grass seeding project in December, it was the -15 temperature's effect on the old hoses on the air drill. Let me go back. New grass waterways and grass seeding on a couple of weedy areas have been on my mind for years now. Someone commented, "you always have a good excuse," but to me they weren't excuses, they were delays. Ground preparation and organizing the project took time, lots of time...years. Most of the waterway preparation started years ago by tearing up the old grass waterways that had silted in to the point that there were two gullies, one on either side of the grass. After breaking the grass, there were still two paths for water on either side of a rich hump of soil. That hump, high in organic matter, actually did a better job of absorbing heavy rain than the old waterway had been doing. Normal field tillage over several years and some S, as in serpentine, swerve, and special tillage has smoothed out the bad spots. The stars seemed to align this fall. My priorities were winter annual and perennial weed control. A week of 20 degree weather in October stopped the winter annual sprout and by early December I had gone over all the fields I wanted to plant to crops in 2010. The areas for grass planting got special attention to make a smooth weed-free seedbed. I wish the seedbed had been firm on top too, but dry weather and all the messing around meant the soil was loose on the top inch or so. Since we have been using front caster toolbars for the last several years, all our tillage is 2 inches or less. I experimented with deep tillage on Creeping Jenny over the years and it never seemed to do any good. I believe Canada Thistle can be hurt with some deeper fall tillage, but if the soil is loamy it seems to get too loose to raise anything anyway. After an unsuccessful search for organic grass seed, I purchased Fairway Crested Wheat grass for the waterways and a "wildlife" mix of Tall Wheat grass, Pubescent Wheat grass, Alfalfa and Sweet-clover for the rest. I got all the waterways seeded and then it snowed an inch or two. Aww, heck, that won't bother anything, so I planted 10 acres of brome for my brother-in-law and loaded the mix into the air drill. I had been replacing 1 inch plastic tubes as they broke in the spring of 2009, so it was no surprise to duct tape a few in the snow. For grass seeding, I wasn't too concerned with a few broken hoses anyway, especially if they were still over the row, but that last day it was -15 and the old hoses couldn't hack it. I noticed pieces of hose on the ground after 6 or 8 passes and jumped out with my trusty duct tape inside my coveralls under my armpit for warmth. What I found was a dozen or so broken little tubes and two of the eight big tubes broken also where they must flex when turning. So there it sits, needing repair and another try. I'm really glad I got the waterways seeded, FINALLY! We will finish up when possible sometime between now and April. Of course there are always more waterways to do in the next year...sss.

*Jon Kvaalen is this year's recipient of the MOA Leadership in Organics Award, along with wife, Amy. This is the first of four installments for Organic Matters.*

# NOSB Update

by Barry Flamm

Folks, do you realize that 2010 is the 20th anniversary of OFPA (Organic Food Production Act), which is the present foundation of our organic programs? Organics progress has been a struggle, which many of you bear scars from, but also the pride of some mighty achievements.

The NOSB members and the National Organic Program Staff will be meeting the second week in February to address critical issues and develop strategic plans. This is a particularly important event with a new Program Director, Miles McEvoy, expanding staff and budget and five new NOSB members.

The regular spring NOSB Board meeting will be held April 26-29 in Davis, California, where public comments will be received on Committee recommendations and the full Board will vote to approve. The Committee recommendations are to be posted on the NOSB website and [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) on March 1.

April 12 is the closing date for submitting comments, which will be posted for all to see, but later comments are not necessarily ignored. The best option is to attend the meeting. Another option is to have a proxy present your comments. The NOSB website and [regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) outline the commenting procedures, but I would be happy to help in decoding the stuff.

At the last Board meeting, the Livestock Committee recommendation on Animal Welfare, with some modifications based on public comments, was approved. Most notably, the numbers in the stocking table were removed entirely. The committee is in the process of developing new numbers and I fervently hope that Montana poultry and livestock producers will contribute their knowledge as to what would be acceptable. As with all the approved Board recommendations, you may find Livestock Welfare by going to the NOSB website and clicking on "recommendations."

The "greenhouse" proposal at the last meeting was a discussion paper to obtain public opinion before presenting a formal recommendation to the full Board. The Crops Committee intends to present a recommendation at the April meeting. I have made sure that MOA's comments have come to the attention of the committee and I will work to insure its full consideration. It would also be a good idea to submit formal comments on the posted recommendation.

There will be revised proposals for handling inerts and nano technology, plus a long list of materials due to sunset in 2012 plus recommendations on newly petitioned materials.

The future of organics looks bright. Backed by studies, we now know organic food is more nutritious, safer, free of harmful chemicals, better for the environment and can reduce the level of CO2 in the atmosphere. So I say thanks to all of you!



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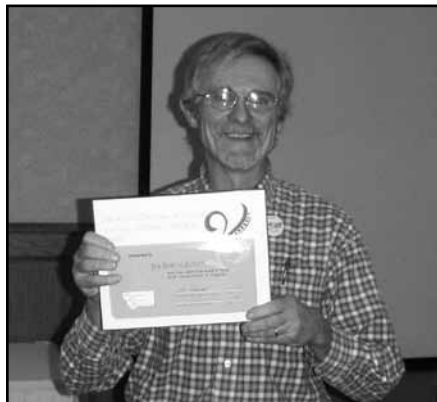
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## 2009 MOA Awards

Contributed by David Oien and Margaret Scoles

During the Awards ceremony at the 2009 MOA Conference, the 2009 Lifetime of Service Award was presented to organic friend and farmer, Jim Barn-



grover. Among his most notable accomplishments since the 1970's are early partner at Lifeline Produce, co-founder of Timeless Seeds, founding member of AERO and the Organic Certification Organization

of Montana, founder of Barnstormer's, lobbyist in the Montana legislature, co-author and lobbyist for Montana's Organic Definition Act, Farm Manager for Montana Prison in Deerlodge, active member of the Helena's Community Garden project and all-around penultimate gardener.

Jon and Amy Kvaalen of Lambert were selected as the recipients of the Leadership in Organics Award. They



operate one of the largest organic farms in Montana—more than 6000 cultivated acres and about another 10,000 acres of grass. Over the years, they have produced cattle and a wide variety of crops. Jon served on Montana's Organic Certification Advisory Committee, which developed the state organic certification program. Jon and Amy have led by example in proving that organic farming is not only possible, but can be both sustainable and profitable over the long run.

A special thanks goes out to the Awards Committee for the seemingly impossible task of screening so many highly accomplished candidates for this year's Awards. They were truly honored to select the winners from such a dedicated and talented pool of individuals.

Please sign me up as a MOA Member!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Certification Cost Share

by Doug Crabtree, MDA

The Organic Certification Cost Share program was authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill. Funds are provided by the USDA and administered by state departments of agriculture. The purpose of the Cost Share program is to encourage farmers, ranchers and food handling operations to become certified and participate in the market for organic food products. It is particularly beneficial for smaller operations, for whom certification costs may be a significant deterrent to seeking certification.

The Montana Department of Agriculture distributed over \$148,000 in cost share reimbursements to certified organic farms and handling operations in Montana. A total of 151 operations received reimbursement for 2008 and/or 2009 certification costs.

The department is also administering the Organic Certification Cost Share program in 2010. All certified organic producers and handlers in Montana will be eligible for a reimbursement of 75% of their certification costs incurred between October 1, 2009 and September 30, 2010. The total reimbursement for a single certification may not exceed \$750. But, an operation certified as both a producer and a handler may receive up to \$1,500. For more information, contact Doug Crabtree at (406) 444-9421.

## New MOA Board Members

Mark Bruckner was raised on a grain farm near Malta, Montana. After a twenty year career as a pharmacist he returned to farming. Mark began farming organically in 1999. He produces organic rye and spring wheat on a 3,400 acre organic farm near Malta.

Daryl Lassila began farming with his Dad 22 years ago and began transitioning to organic in 2003. He worked for the MT Farmers Union for nine years and now runs the family farm, Plains Grains, near Great Falls and grows wheat, barley, peas and flax. He and his wife Linda have two children.

MOA wishes to thank Dee Turner, who stepped down from the Board in 2010, for all the tireless work she's done for MOA and for organics in Montana.



Mark Bruckner



Daryl Lassila



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**Winter** is a great time to sip a delicious hot drink and get creative in a warm kitchen.

Chef Sedgie, our MOA Conference Chef, uses marinades for meats and vegetables, along with fresh herbs and small grains to create memorable meals.

Try some of these herb, nut, and cheese pestos to flavor leftover grains. You can also use these pestos hot over pasta, or make chilled salads with the introductions of cherry tomatoes and other in-season greens with a slightly thinned pesto dressing.

#### To Make Pesto follow these steps:

1. In a food processor, finely chop 1/2 clove garlic
2. Add 1/2 cup nuts and grind
3. Add 2 cups of herb and process with 1/4 cup of olive oil
4. Add 1/2 cup of cheese, process to combine
5. Add salt and pepper to taste

#### Three Variations for Pesto:

1. Cilantro, almonds, garlic (no cheese)
2. Parsley, walnuts, parmesan cheese
3. Basil, pine nuts, parmesan cheese

#### Hot Apple Cider with Cinnamon and Cloves

- 4 cups organic apple cider
- 2 herbal cinnamon tea bags
- 6 whole cloves

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan and heat to slow simmer for 5 minutes. Strain, pour in mugs and garnish with cinnamon sticks.

## New Organic Matters Ad Rates

Effective January 1, 2010

Ad prices and dimensions (black and white only):

- 1 page ad --- \$110 (Size: 7-1/2W x 10H")
- 3/4 page ad --- \$90 (Size: 7-1/2W x 6-1/2H")
- 1/2 page ad --- \$65 (Size: 7-1/2W x 5H") -OR- (3-1/2" W x 10"H)

1/4 page ad -- \$40 (Size: 3-1/2W x 4-1/2"H)

Business card ad --- \$30 (Size: 3-1/2W x 2H")

Classified ad --- \$8/column inch or 40 cents/word

\*\*\*If you are a Farm/ranch Business level member, you will receive a 5% discount on your ad, or an Organic Business, a 10% discount on your ad.

## To Your Health

by Sharon Lindquist

As members of MOA, my husband Jim and I look forward to attending the annual Conference and seeing folks we haven't seen in awhile, and we talk about farming and ranching and learn new things from guest speakers and vendors. We also look forward to the food! The Conference Food Committee is committed to providing attendees with delicious meals from locally grown organic food. A feat to be sure when the conference is usually held in November or December and fresh vegetables are sometimes difficult to come by. The Food Committee is made up of magicians, because

each year we feast on wonderfully prepared dishes.

The Food Committee must also work with the hotel's chef and



again, preparing menus can be a challenge. This year we were privileged to work with award winning Chef Sedgie, who welcomed the opportunity to work with fresh organic foods. He was also a guest presenter at the conference, giving a demonstration using organic eggs and remarking that fresh organic foods are harder and more flavorful. Chef Sedgie also commented that cooking, like art, takes devotion. Preparing food can be imaginative when the cook experiments with ingredients and also pleasing to the eye when artfully presented. Chef Sedgie is an advocate of giving leftovers a new life by adding a few new ingredients in creative ways.

The Department of Agriculture reports that an average household creates approximately 1.3 lbs of daily food waste. The discarded items take up landfill space and create methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide. There are a few mindful tips to reduce waste and love your leftovers. Reorganize your refrigerator, putting leftovers in clear containers in front, because knowing what you have is the first step in planning for reuse. Think small when it comes to portion sizes because you can always get seconds. Declare one dinner a week as a use-it-up meal. Plan your meal around those food items about to go bad—omelets, soups, casseroles, and smoothies are forgiving dishes. Shop more often to replenish produce and buy local so that you are buying perishables that last longer. Cheers to your health!

## Good Times at Good Earth Market

by Jim Lindquist

The Good Earth Market in Billings puts on three "Local Farmer Promotion Days" throughout the year. Perry McNeese, the general manager, invites local farmers and producers to display their wares and visit with the consumers about their crops, products and farming methods. It's an opportunity for consumers to meet the people who are producing their food and learn about their farming methods along with ways to prepare products for the table. The Montana Organic Association was fortunate to be there with our



tri-board display to promote MOA and the benefits of organic agriculture. We had the opportunity to talk to lots of interested shoppers and farmers. Quite a few of the farmers were certified organic. There was a good representation of organic foods—from apples, beef, and coffee to goat cheese and body/aromatherapy products. All the farmers and producers had samples of their wares for the public to try. As a bonus, we were serenaded by a couple of fine musicians. The Good Earth Market will have its next promotion day on February 20.

## Calendar of Events

[www.montanaorganicassociation.org/events.htm](http://www.montanaorganicassociation.org/events.htm)

### AATRA Events

#### Northern Plains Sustainable Ag Society Conference

February 9-11, 2010, Watertown, SD

#### Georgia Organics Annual Conference

February 19-20, 2010, Athens, Ga.

#### The State of Organic Seed Symposium

Feb. 25-27, 2010, La Crosse, Wis.

For more information, visit <http://attra.ncat.org/calendar/index.php>

### Good Earth Market, Billings Events

#### Local Farmer Appreciation Day

February 20, 2010

#### Earth Day Promotional Day

April 22, 2010

For more information, call (406) 259-2622



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## A View from the Chair

by Ole Norgaard

The New Year of 2010 arrived as fast as 2009 disappeared from our rearview mirrors. Time seems to have sped up and is going faster and faster, or maybe it's just our way of life that speeds things up. Today, we are able to do so many more things through high tech communications, juggle more balls at the same time, know what's happening on the other side of the planet and still live our daily lives in a meaningful way. The meaningful road of our lives becomes more complex or simple depending on our understanding of how our actions affect the interconnectivity of us all. With this understanding also comes responsibility, and sometimes it becomes time to let one's voice be heard. One of those times is now.

As you read the enclosed article, *Comments Sought on Environmental Impact Statement for GMO Alfalfa*, there are issues at hand that can impact our lives as organic farmers, as well as our consumers' lives, in a negative way unless we make our collective voices heard. The USDA's Draft Environmental Impact Statement on RR Alfalfa grossly underestimates the significance of the impacts of contamination on organics, natural and other GMO-free markets. I encourage all members of MOA to "speak out" by sending in their comments to the USDA on these issues. **Please read the article on page 3 and follow the instructions on how to send in the enclosed comment cards, or your own spe-**

**cific comments, to be received by the USDA by February 16, 2010. This is the most effective way to be heard.**

On another note, The MOA Board met in the middle of January, both to look back at what was accomplished in 2009 and to look ahead through 2010 to find the right ways to serve our diverse membership in a meaningful way. We are currently working on planning Farm Tours, exploring different formats for the Conference event and improving our communications and legislative influence. We will keep working on and maintaining our positive relations with the Universities. We will also be sitting in on meetings with other farm organizations about farmer protection issues.

All of this work is being done by volunteer Board Members on a very slim operations budget. To aid our financial situation, it has been necessary to raise the membership dues slightly for 2010. Take a look at the new membership levels on page 8 and if you can help, donations are always greatly appreciated. Our intent is to keep improving the organization and the effectiveness of our work.

As 2010 unfolds, let's keep living our lives in a meaningful way—for ourselves, our families and communities, and the generations to come.