

Montana Organic Association

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1, No. 1

May, 2004

A Birth Announcement

Over a period of two years, the idea of starting a statewide organic association for Montana was brewing. The conception took place in Great Falls on Dec 5, 2003, when the first Montana organic conference and trade show was held. The participants of that conference strongly supported the formation of an organization to continue holding educational events like the one they were enjoying, and to bring the organic folks in the state together to form one voice and make their presence known. Now with this, our first newsletter, we are announcing that the new organization is born.

A steering committee of dedicated folks has been hard at work since the conference to articulate the Mission, Purpose and Objectives and to develop the materials needed to incorporate as a non-profit association.

MISSION STATEMENT:

The mission of the Montana Organic Association is to advocate and promote organic agriculture, for the highest good of the people, the environment, and the state's economy.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Montana Organic Association is to provide education, information, support, assistance, promotion and representation for organic producers, processors, handlers, retailers, consumers, researchers, agricultural service providers and other interested parties.

Objectives for the first year:

- * Promote and showcase Montana organic products, educate attendees regarding organic agriculture and connect all members of the state organic community by organizing an annual meeting, conference and trade show.
- * Organize tours of organic farms, ranches, horticulture/gardening operations, food processors and retailers.
- * Publish a directory of Montana grown and processed organic foods to facilitate closer connections between organic producers and consumers.
- * Represent the needs, opinions and positions of the organic agricultural community before the Montana congressional delegation, the state legislature, state and federal government agencies, non-governmental organizations, the media, the state university system, and other private entities.
- * Develop and maintain a website, publish a newsletter and maintain a listserv as tools to disseminate information on organic agriculture and promote Montana's organic products.
- * Promote the trade of Montana organic products to the food, fiber, and feed industries. Assist with alternative marketing strategies.
- * Assist and encourage the transition to organic production by farmers, ranchers and horticulturist/gardeners.
- * Conduct educational workshops on Montana organic agriculture for schools and consumers groups.
- * Develop relationships with other agricultural, consumer and environmental groups to further promote organic agriculture.
- * Promote and advertise the health, environmental, economic and social benefits of sustainable grown and humanely raised organic foods.

Objectives for year 2 and later:

- * Create mentoring groups of experienced organic farmers, ranchers, horticulturists, gardeners, food processors and retailers to help educate and encourage new entrants into each area of organic agriculture.
- * Set up and maintain a clearinghouse of information and links to resources on organic production methods, marketing and government farm programs to assist and advise members of the organic community.
- * Establish a network of service providers that contribute consulting time to the members of the organization.

- * Advise agricultural researchers on organic research needs and research design. Support organic on-farm and on-ranch research efforts. Encourage the establishment of organic farm/ranch research stations.
- * Establish a professionally staffed organic agriculture advisory center to further the purposes of the association through direct consulting with producers on organic production methods and marketing assistance, as well as educating consumers and the public at large as to the benefits of organic agriculture.

MONTANA ORGANIC ASSOCIATION
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Membership Dues:

Individual	\$25
household/business	\$35
supporting	\$60
contributing	\$120
life	\$500
living lightly	\$15

Make checks payable to, and send to:

Montana Organic Association
432 N. Last Chance Gulch
Helena, Mt. 59601

(one member = one vote)

Advertising Rates:

full page	\$100
3/4page	\$85
half page	\$60
1/4 page.....	\$35
business card size	\$25

Deadline to submit advertising for the next issue is the end of each quarter.....so the end of March, June, Sept., Dec.
(please submit to the coordinator)
(advertising must be consistent with MOA mission & purpose)

This NEWSLETTER is the quarterly publication of the Montana Organic Association, a non-profit organization. Readers are encouraged to submit articles, ideas, and original artwork. MOA reserves the right to edit submissions.

The History of MOA

by Jon Kvaalen and Jill Davies

The Montana Organic Association has its roots in discussions held after OCIA and OCAM meetings across the state. OCIA indicated to chapters in the 1990's that activities outside of certification and crop improvement would create a conflict of interest with certification activities of the organization. OCAM always had two purposes, certification and advocacy. The creation of the Montana Department of Agriculture - Organic Certification Program led some producers away from direct affiliation with the certification chapters and a void was felt in communication and interaction between producers. A group of Montanans attending the annual Northern Plains Sustainable Ag Society (NPSAS) conference in Dakota was envious of and encouraged by the wonderful sense of community and setting for education and trade that the NPSAS conference offered. The field was ripe with desire for an organization that would bring organic folk from across the state together.

Jill Davies got the ball rolling in early '03 by gathering statements of need at the OCAM annual meeting, and an AERO Ag Task force meeting, listing them and posting them on the Montana-organics listserv. (contact Jon Kvaalen for how to get on the listserv) Many messages about forming an organization were then exchanged on the listserv and later Margaret Scoles from the SE corner of the state met with Jill from the NW corner to start planning a gathering of the state-wide organic community. AERO and IOIA became the co-sponsors of the coming conference and Jill became the coordinator. With the help of many volunteers, and in record planning time, the conference was held in Great Falls at the Ursuline Centre in early December 2003. If you did not attend the "MOO" (called Montana Organic Organization at that time) conference in Great Falls you missed a great get-together. The speakers were top notch and showed the commitment to organic and sustainable farming that many researchers and Ag professionals have these days. Organic food from Montana was served and new friends were met, old friends caught up with. Two sessions were held to create a permanent Montana organization that would carry on the work. Those attending the sessions outlined important goals for the organization and selected a steering committee to set up the organization.

The 7 member steering committee assisted by 6 sharp advisors started their work in January 2004 by weekly conference call. The goals that were outlined at the MOO conference were coalesced into a mission statement and list of objectives. Articles of incorporation and bylaws were written with great care and a name was selected: "Montana Organic Association". It took many hours on long conference calls over many weeks to accomplish these tasks. Everyone was very patient with one another and persevering. In late April 2004 the steering committee completed this work and became the acting board of directors for MOA until the annual meeting next winter. We are now incorporated as a non-profit corporation with the state and are in the process of applying for our 501(c)3 tax-exempt status with the IRS. If you would like to read the Articles and By-Laws, just ask and we will send you a copy.

Decision making for the MOA Acting Board of Directors - by Averil Heath

When making decisions the Board of Directors will first attempt to reach consensus. This is important because those who do not agree with a proposal usually have some important reasons for disagreement. The extra effort made to incorporate their point of view into the decision is worth it because the result is usually a more sound decision. The final decision will be made by a three quarters majority vote.

NAME FOR THIS NEWSLETTER - - We have not decided upon a name for the MOA newsletter. Suggestions are: Organic Time, Growing Organic, Mt. Organic News, Organic Frontier, Grains & Greens, Grains & Greens & Grazers (or Cowpies, 'smile'). You are invited to make suggestions and if your suggested name is chosen, you will receive a free one year membership to MOA. We also need a logo.

Watch - in future issues - there will be articles on Agroecology - - from Helen Atthowe,
AND - on the new, helpful-to-organics farm bill programs - - from Jeff Schahczenski.

Note: The new Conservation Security Program (CSP) is now active and will be implemented this fiscal year for growers in the Lower Yellowstone watershed of Montana only. "The authorization legislation for the CSP was intended for ALL ELIGIBLE farmers and ranchers nationwide. This minimal implementation of what is supposed to be a truly national program is disappointing and contrary to the intent of the law. We likely will be sending out further next steps regarding moving this program to the full national entitlement basis it deserves." - - Jeff Schahczenski, W-SAWG

Contact Jeff for further information or visit: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/watersheds04.html>

A TRIBUTE TO BARRY R. FLAMM

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MOA Board member, AERO Board member, Pioneering Organic Cherry Orchard Farmer

Barry Flamm was born with a heart full of love for the earth that gave sustained direction for his entire life, and he followed it. He was an anomaly to his family and to most of his contemporaries. Yet he was able to work within his society, ascending within federal agencies all the way to the top of decision-making power, always striving to bring about change.

He grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio along the banks of the Ohio River, which was an open sewer during the 40's and early 50's and the air was thick with emissions from wartime factories. While living in the West, Barry learned that smog really wasn't black. Maybe that is why he was the founder and first president of the Colorado Conservation Council, while at Colorado State University. During high school a teacher who was a naturalist caught his interest and took him on nature walks and helped him search for a college that would meet his desire to study ecology and how to keep the world a cleaner place, before the concepts of ecosystem or biodiversity were even in use. They found one program, at Colorado State University in Fort Collins that offered a semblance of forest ecology studies (B.S. obtained in forest management, 1956). This led him into working for the Forest Service in various positions around Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming and Idaho.

For just two years, ('66 - '67) he was the Forest Supervisor of the Shoshone National Forest in Cody, Wyoming, where he instituted first-ever watershed and wildlife monitoring programs and then he was off into foreign service. For USAID he went to Vietnam ('67 - '69) where he assisted the Government of South Vietnam in developing a forest inventory system to provide data for forest planning and management. He moved all over Vietnam studying the forest and the impacts of Agent Orange during some of the hottest fighting and was in many life-threatening situations. His report about military use of Agent Orange, saying it will have serious ecological ramifications and urging longer-term ecosystem studies, was seen as a threat to US policy. No one even knew about the dangers of dioxins at that time. The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) also raised concerns and Congress passed a bill to do further studies. This is where Barry got his first big lesson in politics, for the result of Congress's action was to use "scientific" information (via the National Academy of Sciences, no less) to debunk Barry's ideas, and Barry was told to "lay off".

Barry then went to Washington and started moving up in the ranks of the Forest Service (FS). Starting as Chief of the Division of Fire Control (1969-1970) he started formulating national policies. Then as Assistant to Deputy Chief - Environmental Coordinator (1970-1974) he was the coordinator for the FS's environmental compliance. In this capacity he developed and implemented the FS's first National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures and policies, and developed a system to ensure field compliance with environmental laws. During this time he also went to night school and received his Masters Degree in Public Administration from The American University, Washington, D.C. (1973).

In 1974, already working in the White House under Nixon, Barry became a senior staff member for President Carter's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), which was mandated by the new NEPA. His duties involved development and review of environmental legislation and other policy initiatives, agency program review, and NEPA oversight for the Departments of Agriculture and Interior, the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Panama Canal Company. Barry says under Carter he had helpful people to work with and he was able to get a lot accomplished.

In 1977 he became the founding Director of the Office of Environmental Quality (OEQ) which had USDA-wide responsibility to initiate, coordinate, and monitor all department policies and programs related to the protection of environmental quality and natural and cultural resources. He developed policy guidelines for environmental assessments, and evaluated data and information for decision-making. Major efforts were devoted to USDA compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

A lot of Barry's work during these years in Washington revolved around regulating and restricting the rampant use of pesticides. For instance, the FS was using 2-4,5T (a component of Agent Orange) in the forests of the Pacific NW. Barry established procedures that made the FS attempt to justify this use. It was a campaign of fierce battles. Flamm received much flak. Always his recommendations were bucking the system, trying to move it forward. And always, he dealt with colleagues in the agencies who were not willing or able to buck the system.

In 1980 Ronald Reagan was elected President and he quickly abolished the OEQ. Articles in the *Washington Post* announced: "Reagan slams Flamm". Barry was unable to continue his progressive work in Washington so he went back into foreign service as a consultant and researcher, continued working toward a PhD, taught courses in botany, plant taxonomy, and ecology (University of Maryland, 1982-1984) and also lectured in various venues and wrote on environmental problems.

His first foreign service after 1980 was in South America where he collected and evaluated data on tropical deforestation in the Amazon, monitoring ecosystem change (with the World Wildlife Fund), and in Costa Rica where he gathered information on selected rain forest canopy trees to provide a means for understanding limiting factors for their survival, supported in part by the Jesse Noyes Foundation. He also advised on needed legislative and policy changes in Central and South America countries (1981-1984), and he wrote: "Tropical Biology, an Ecological Approach" for the University of Costa Rica/Organization for Tropical Studies, Costa Rica, 1983.

In 1986 as part of a delegation to the People's Republic of China, he provided advice and lectured on conservation of biological diversity and forest management, discussed information and monitoring needs for successful conservation programs, and met with government, professional, and academic people across China.

From 1985 to 1991 he was the Chief Forester for The Wilderness Society, and was responsible for the development of their forest policy initiatives. He worked closely with high-level government officials and with Congress, and frequently presented expert testimony before Congressional committees. He directed development of a successful pioneering program to obtain, evaluate and manage critical data on threatened ecosystems with the aid of GIS, GPS, and remote sensing technology. This provided timely and reliable information for conservation action programs and policy making. It also provided the means for effective monitoring of ecosystem health.

Finally, in 1991, 39 years after graduating from high school, he obtained his PhD from George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, Department of Biology. Dissertation topic: Silvicultural effects on Biological Diversity on the George Washington National Forest.

By this time he was looking for a piece of land to settle into with the desire to do some organic farming. In 1992 he bought 15 acres on Finley Point, Flathead Lake that had 8 acres of orchard, mostly cherry trees. Cherries are particularly difficult to grow organically, given the prevalence of the fruit fly. Always ready to take the bull by the horns, Barry started transitioning to organic methods immediately and became the only certified organic cherry producer in the state. But it wasn't easy. He and wife Enkhtuya tried many things, did constant monitoring and did all the pruning, spraying, and sorting of fruit, only hiring out the picking. They worked with biological controls (nematodes and parasitic wasps), pyrethrum compounds, Neem, and a new bacterial spray which helped a lot, getting assistance from AERO's Farm Improvement Club Project. They did succeed to produce some great bug-free, organic crops. This year they sold the orchard and went into - ahem, "retirement" (?)

Meanwhile, Barry was still doing consulting work abroad with trips to Nepal ('91-'92), back to China ('93), and on to Mongolia ('95-'96 and '98-'99), supported by USAID programs at first, and then by the UN Development Program and the World Bank. Always in these countries he advised and recommended new national policies and legislative changes geared toward conservation of biological diversity and ecosystem protection.

Never one to let the dust settle, Barry also did many things for his local community around Flathead Lake. As president of the Flathead Lakers, a non-profit organization dedicated to conserving the Flathead Lake ecosystem and watershed, he planned and directed the Flathead Lake Critical Lands Project, (1999-2000). This was to identify places where the health of the lake was at risk and to develop strategies to correct them. The project brought together many divergent entities into a working council and resulted in some conservations easements and restoration work. He also was a director of the Finley Point Home Owners Association, which was active in keeping Lake County planning on track and even made innovative improvements in the zoning plans. He also helped set up Montana's new State Organic Certification Program by serving as a board member of the Montana Organic Advisory Committee.

In no way does this article cover all that Barry has done. There is a long list of other appointments, positions, and experiences, as well as honors and awards in his bios that are not mentioned here. We are privileged to know Barry and to be able to work with him at AERO and MOA. When Barry says he can provide expert advice and assistance in applying ecological solutions to problems for achieving sustainable systems, our ears and hearts will be listening.

- - Jill Davies

The new owners of Barry's orchard are Lise Rousseau and Albert Silva, moving here from Colorado, and new to agriculture. They will be hoping to continue the organic certification of the orchard (with a little help from their friends) and are happy to be new members of MOA.

National Organic Program (NOP) and NOSB Update

by Margaret Scoles and Doug Crabtree

Doug Crabtree and Margaret Scoles recently attended a National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) public comment session on April 30, the annual meeting of the National Association of State Organic Programs (NASOP) on May 1 and two training and information sessions for Accredited Certifying Agents and State organic programs hosted by NOP staff, all in Chicago.

Tremendous uproar ensued in the organic community following the April 13 release of three Guidance Statements and a Compliance and Enforcement Directive by the National Organic Program (NOP). Significant negative press followed the NOSB meeting. Public outcry, intense political pressure, massive media coverage (much of it exaggerated or simply inaccurate) got results. On May 26, Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman, announced that she would direct the AMS to rescind all of the directives and to work with the NOSB and the organic industry to reach the best solutions to issues that have been raised. Many players in the organic community declared 'victory'. **But what really changed?...** Probably not much. The guidance/directives were the USDA's best legal interpretation of what the rules say. These legal interpretations still have as much weight as before they were 'rescinded'.

NOP staff announced in Chicago that the four Guidance Statements were Directives with the full force of law, mandatory for accredited certifiers, and effective immediately. They were presented as clarification of existing law, not as rule changes requiring opportunity for public input. The organic community's frustration was evident during the public comment session, which was mostly negative, directed at the NOP, and focused on the Guidance Statements. The NOSB issued the following statement; "The NOSB expresses its strong opposition to and concern with the National Organic Programs issuance of significant policy directive without consultation with or advance notice to the NOSB". NOSB's mandate in OFPA is 'to assist in the development of standards for substances to be used in organic production and advise the Secretary.... Several commenters spoke to their concerns about the NOP's process and the apparent circumvention of the NOSB with these directives.

Public comment and follow-up press centered largely on objections to the reversal of the previous scope policy, which had allowed the certification of aquaculture, pet foods, herbal supplements, and personal care products. Significant comment also challenged a perceived 'watering down of the organic standards' and catering to large-scale factory livestock production with the more lenient interpretations of regs on antibiotics in dairy calves and fishmeal as a feed supplement. The apparent allowance of fishmeal without regard for potential contaminants (such as PCBs or mercury), synthetic preservatives (such as ethoxyquin), or what type of animals it was fed to (would a cow choose to eat a fish?) was troubling to many.

Guidance Statements and Directives: What they are and how they should be used:

Guidance statements and Directives issued by the NOP are formal, public responses to common questions directed to the USDA requesting clarification of certain aspects of the National Organic Standards. The NOP develops Guidance Statements through extensive consultation with the USDA Office of General Counsel. Guidance statements represent the USDA's best interpretation of the standards and are indicative of the most likely determination to be reached by administrative law judges when ruling on appeals brought to the NOP involving certifier decisions on the particular issue covered by the Guidance Statement.

Guidance Statements and Directives: What they actually said:

I. Guidance: National Organic Program Scope

This Guidance Statement clarified the applicability of the NOP to "non-traditional" products in three categories. Products in all categories are currently certified by USDA-accredited certifiers. The previous guidance indicated that any certified product bearing the USDA organic seal had to be produced and handled according to the NOP standards.

1. Non-Agricultural Products: Personal care products; Body care products; Cosmetics; Dietary supplements; Over-the-counter medicines; Health aids; Fertilizers; Soil amendments; Manure. This directive clarified that USDA has no regulatory authority over non-agricultural products, so, their production and handling may not be certified under the NOP. These products may not display the USDA organic seal. Producers or handlers of these products bearing USDA organic labels have until October 21, 2005 to use existing packaging and label supplies. These products may display non-NOP organic labels.

2. Products not covered by the existing standards: Fish; Seafood; Pet foods. The Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) provides the USDA with the authority to regulate these products; however, current standards do not specifically address them. The USDA, in consultation with the organic industry, intends to develop standards.

3. Products (and production systems) that may need additional standards: Mushrooms; Apiculture (honey); Greenhouses; Hydroponic agriculture. Additional rule making is likely still needed to adequately address these products in the standards.

II. Guidance: Livestock Health Care and the Origin of Dairy Livestock

This issue involved how the use of antibiotics impacts the organic status of livestock and products derived from livestock. The standards are ambiguous with regard to dairy animals and milk production. On one hand, section 205.238(c)(1) states that a producer may not "Sell, label, or represent as organic any animal or edible product derived from any animal treated with antibiotics..." On the other hand, 205.236(a)(2) states that "Milk or milk products must be from animals that have been under continuous organic management beginning no later than 1 year prior to the production of the

milk or milk products that are to be sold, labeled, or represented as organic..." The NOP, with this guidance statement, chose the more liberal of these two conflicting standards. Much recent press stated erroneously that the NOP decided to allow antibiotics in dairy cows. Instead, it said that the treated animal itself or meat from the treated animal can never be sold, labeled or represented as "organic", but that milk can be sold, labeled or represented as "organic" after dairy animals are managed organically continuously for 12 months. This guidance indicated anything that happens before the transition period is essentially "erased" with regard to production of organic milk. Not considering milk to be an "edible product derived from the animal" does appear to stretch logic, but it is consistent with the conversion for dairy animals. As long as conversion is allowed, there is no way to restrict management of the dairy animals prior to conversion. It's the regulation itself that is inconsistent.

III. Guidance: Livestock Feed as a Protein Supplement in Livestock Feeds

The standards allow for the use of nonsynthetic substances as feed supplements for organic livestock. Fishmeal fits the definition of nonsynthetic (natural), as a substance derived from animal matter. So, fishmeal may be fed to organic livestock as long as it fits the definition of natural and its use is consistent with the definition of a feed supplement. The use of feed supplements is still limited to amounts needed for adequate nutrition and health maintenance for the species at its specific stage of life.

The NOP was recognizing that the seemingly odd practice of feeding fishmeal to organic livestock is consistent

with the standards. To address concerns about possible contaminants in fishmeal being introduced to the diet of organic livestock, the regulation could be amended to prohibit feed supplements altogether, protein supplements in particular or supplements that contain specific contaminants.

IV. Compliance and Enforcement Directive: Pesticide Use

This Directive clarified how certifiers are to enforce the standard prohibiting the use of pesticides that contain list 3 inerts in organic production. The EPA classifies inert ingredients contained in pesticides into four categories. List 3's are "Inerts of unknown toxicity", which have not been evaluated, while list 4's are "Minimal risk inert ingredients." Only list 4 inerts are allowed in pesticides to be used in organic production. Manufacturers are not required to disclose either what the inert ingredients are, or what EPA category (list) they fall under, so pesticide labels do not provide the information needed to determine if a product is allowed. It is difficult for certifiers and often impossible for producers to determine the status of inerts. The Directive allowed for a bit of leniency for growers who inadvertently or unknowingly use a pesticide with an approved active ingredient, but that contains a list 3 inert. The Directive did NOT, as some reports suggest, allow the use of unapproved active ingredients. It did not even allow the use of list 3 inerts, once the certifier determines that a product contains one. Rescinding this directive could be interpreted to mean that the use of a pesticide containing a list 3 inert requires the certifier to deny, suspend or revoke the producer's certification and/or disqualify the treated land from being certified for 3 years.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ **NEWS BRIEFS** ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

MONSANTO PULLS PLUG ON EMBATTLED BIOTECH WHEAT

WASHINGTON, May 10, 2004 — Monsanto announced today that it is pulling the plug on genetically engineered wheat after seven years of development and failed efforts to win over farmers and the international wheat market. The company made the announcement even as its application for commercialization remains pending, signifying that stiff opposition to the biotech food crop from U.S. farmers and international markets could not be overcome. However, there will be no relaxation for activists until Monsanto's application for deregulation is withdrawn. For more information visit: www.worc.org or www.centerforfoodsafety.org

NOSB - There are 5 positions open for nomination to the National Organic Standards Board. The NOSB is a 15-member board responsible for developing and recommending to the Secretary of Ag. a proposed National List of Approved and Prohibited Substances. The NOSB also advises the Secretary on all other aspects of the National Organic Program (NOP). A strong NOSB is vital to the proper functioning of the NOP. We need to encourage informed citizens to participate on the NOSB. Positions open are: 2 producers; 1 handler; 1 environmentalist; and 1 retailer. Applications must be submitted to the NOP by June 14, 2004. Terms are for 5 years. To serve on the NOSB, an individual must be either an owner or operator of an organic production operation, an owner or operator of an organic handling operation, an individual who owns or operates a retail establishment with significant trade in organic products, or an individual with expertise in areas of environmental protection and resource conservation, and should solicit letters of support on their behalf. More information can be found at www.ams.usda.gov/nop/TodaysNews.html, and contact Jill for some tips for submitting a compelling nomination packet.

FOOD SAFETY IS APPARENTLY ILLEGAL

Creekstone Farms Premium Beef LLC recently announced it would voluntarily test all of its cattle for Mad Cow Disease as a courtesy to its customers and to re-open foreign markets, especially Japan. But the USDA responded last week, saying it won't allow Creekstone to test all of its cattle. Bill Hawks, the USDA secretary for marketing, said the tests aren't necessary and "would have implied a consumer safety aspect that is not scientifically warranted." Creekstone's chief executive officer, Jon Stewart, disagrees and is ready to take legal action against the USDA, saying the company has every right to test their cattle if that's what their domestic and foreign customers are demanding. <http://www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/fight041404.cfm>

THE LAW THAT NEVER BECAME A LAW

With the discovery of the first case of Mad Cow Disease in the U.S., nations all over the world stopped importing American beef, consumers feared for their safety, and the U.S. government fell under intense scrutiny for its lack of related regulatory oversight. By mid-January the USDA attempted to appease consumers and the press by announcing new rules that would reduce the potential spread of the fatal disease. Interestingly enough, those rules have still not been implemented. In order for the rules to become enforced, they must be published in the Federal Register, and provide a comment period. The process is ongoing. www.organicconsumers.org

Food >From The Hood: This is the ultimate success story concerning youth and market gardening. It began in 1992 after the riots in South Central Los Angeles, CA. By graduation each student gardener at Creshaw High [50% dropout rate] has \$2,000 to \$5,000 in the bank for college. The six students, who started it with teacher Tammy Bird, worked every day after school tackling the six-foot weeds in an abandoned lot. Other kids mocked the student's efforts. "You're in that farm program." one sneered. But as their crop ripened, the students became hooked on their green oasis. Their ranks swelled to 30! Food From The Hood is still growing--and the jokes are few. There has not been a single dropout among the youth gardeners.

ANNUAL MEETINGS: past, present and future

by Judy Owsowitz

Our last (and first) annual meeting was an undeniable success. We learned a lot from the speakers, had some fun, made some great connections between growers and processors, had some fun! Not to mention a wonderful crew in the kitchen at a ridiculously late hour that also had some fun! Thanks to all of you that helped to make it possible.

So, we're going to do it again this winter. Your input is needed as to what meets the group's meeting needs. We are looking for a venue, and ask that everyone keep their eyes open for the right place. Requirements include; accommodations for up to 300 people, meeting space for up to 300 people and 5 or 6 break-out rooms for 50 or so, plenty of display space for vendors, and a staff willing to work with us on our all-Montana organic menu.

We also are interested in ideas of hot topics you want to discuss/learn about, and thoughts on some titillating speakers. Please, jump in and get involved. I know that winter seems far away, but we all know that we don't know what happens to the summer. And it is time to be making these plans right now, so if you have any ideas, lets get them out there to start growing. Or if you just want to get involved in the fun of the annual meeting, please contact Judy at 862-6362, or terrapin@aboutmontana.net, or 6505 Farm to Market Rd., Whitefish, 59937. We need to get our annual meeting committee kicked into gear now !!!

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