

# Simply Sustainable

quarterly newsletter  
from Western SARE

working to sustain western agriculture

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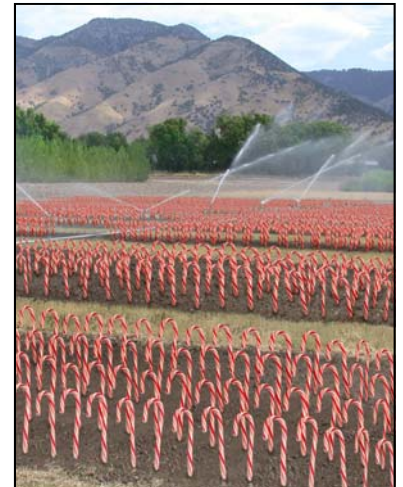
<http://wsare.usu.edu>



## Happy Holidays! from Western SARE

Holiday greetings from the staff of the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program. We wish you rich soil, plentiful water, a bountiful harvest and a community enriched with friendship and joy in the coming year!

- V. Philip Rasmussen, Coordinator
- Bob Newhall, Deputy Coordinator
- Kristi Jensen, Contracts and Grants Manager
- Jan Francisco, Staff Assistant
- Jolyn Keck, Staff Assistant
- Ron Daines, Communication Specialist
- Erik Lindstrom, Deidra Hartwell, and Amy Larsen, Student Interns
- Jim Freeburn, PDP Coordinator
- Al Kurki, PDP Associate Coordinator
- Joleen Pantier, PDP Contracts and Grants Manager



WSARE: leading the development of sustainably grown candy canes in the West.

## GAUGING THE IMPACT OF SARE'S BIG GRANTS

The energy generated during a September 2005 meeting in Salt Lake City propelled participants into a get-it-done urgency to evaluate the impact of SARE's big-dollar research projects. Representatives from SARE's national office and its four regions attended the meeting, convened to chart strategies for the evaluation.

The Western SARE staff took the message to heart, and it has since taken several giant steps along the evaluation pathway.

The regional staff crafted and embarked on an online survey of the principal investigators of all SARE Research and Education grants funded since the SARE program began in 1988. The survey, being conducted under the guidance of PDP Assistant Train-



The 2001-funded R&E project of Louise Jackson, UC Davis professor, showed that flexible management and careful planning helped large-scale California vegetable producers convert to organic production.

ing Coordinator Al Kurki of Montana with support from SARE staff, has been sent to the principal investigators, and response to date has been excellent. An additional survey is now in the mail to farmer and rancher cooperators on those grants. Re-

minder postcards will be mailed to PIs after the holidays.

Survey results should be in hand early by early 2007, at which time the Social and Economic Sciences Research

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*Women received 27% of all Western SARE Research and Education grants, and 25% of the grant dollars, while 13% of Farmer/Rancher grants were awarded to principal investigators with an ethnic background.*

*...continued from page 1*

Center at Washington State University, contracted under a competitive Western SARE grant to conduct the survey, will begin crunching the data. Look for results in our next newsletter in March.

As a complementary project, Rachel Horlacher, a USU graduate student studying sustainable agriculture, has been conducting a search of publication citations from Western SARE R&E projects. Horlacher employed both the Google Scholar and Science Citation Index to conduct the search, then made several correlations, including between citations and year, money spent per citation, journal impact and the number of different disciplines involved in a project.

The premise is that if the project results are widely known in the scientific world, they are likely reaching producers through extension: the

more citations, the more impact on the scientific community and, thus, the producers. However, Horlacher points out, just because an R&E project has few citations does not mean it has failed to directly impact producers through field days or other venues.

Horlacher, whose project will lead to a masters degree, emphasizes that this citation piece of the evaluation puzzle must be taken into context with the R&E evaluation survey results to identify how Western SARE's Research and Education grants are ultimately impacting farmers and ranchers in the Western region.

In a third Western SARE evaluation effort, which mirrors work done recently by National SARE, Deputy Coordinator Bob Newhall harnessed the aid of three undergraduate students to assess all of

the online final Research and Education reports posted from the time the SARE program began in 1988 through 2003, 223 grants in all. The "Internal Evaluation Sheet for Final R&E projects" poses a variety of questions to assess a project's impacts, including whether it achieved its objectives and provided useful knowledge relevant to sustainable agriculture and various potential user groups. The students rated each of more than a dozen such questions on a sliding scale of one to five.

SARE student intern Deidra Hartwell is now in the process of compiling the data into a database developed by another student intern, Erik Lindstrom. It is anticipated that the results will be available by the Administrative Council meeting in late February.

## SERVING THE UNDERSERVED

A critical element of the evaluation picture is checking to see where SARE grants go. Dan Judd, an evaluation specialist working with Western SARE at USU, is gauging the demographics and geography of Western SARE grant recipients. The goal is to provide the Administrative Council with population-based recommendations for selected groups, namely women, Native Americans, Hispanics, Asians and Islanders. Judd's evaluation effort, titled "Mining for Uncut Gems," is also looking at grant distribution in underserved locations, such as Alaska, Nevada and the Pacific Islands as well as grants to nonprofit organizations or businesses that focus on sustainable ag production or marketing.

Findings in the initial stage show, for example, that

women received 26% of the grants and grant dollars for Research and Education grants and 27% of the grants and 25% of the grant dollars for Farmer/Rancher grants. Thirty R&E grants, or 13% of the total, were awarded to principal investigators with an ethnic background.

The second phase of the project looked at gender, location and ethnicity of grants awarded compared with the West's population. The findings for both R&E and FRG grants show certain areas, like California, and certain ethnicities, especially Hispanics, are underserved, while others, including Guam and Alaska receive a fair number of grants relative to their populations.

An important finding of Judd's research focuses on



Michelle Hébert, Alaska state SARE coordinator, checks plants at Rosie Creek Farm, site of a SARE Farmer/Rancher grant near Fairbanks.

organizations funded. It shows that land-grant universities, nonprofit organizations and Native American organizations were funded in direct proportion to the applications submitted.

These initial findings will be refined and presented as a final report to the Administrative Council in February 2007.

## WESTERN SARE HITS THE ROAD

Regional staff, AC members and grant recipients have been invited to make presentations at several upcoming outreach events.

Looking a bit like a petunia in a potato patch, Western SARE has been invited to discuss organic agriculture at the [Far West Agribusiness Association's 2007 Fertilizer and Chemical Conference](#) Jan. 8-10.

"This is the first time that SARE and has been requested to be at the table at this important meeting," says Regional Coordinator Phil Rasmussen. "It's a singular achievement that we've been invited. What was once called mainstream is finally reaching out to us."

Bob Newhall, Deputy Coordinator, adds that the invitation is confirmation that sustainability has found its way into the natural flow of the agricultural mainstream. Rasmussen will be joined at the presentation, titled *Organics 101*, by Western SARE Administrative Council organic farmer representative Richard Parrot, who farms just a few miles north of Jackpot, Nev., site of the conference.

After the meeting, Rasmussen will travel to Kennewick, Wash., where he will speak at the annual [Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Conference](#), Jan. 10-12.

Thanks to the efforts of Al Kurki, Western SARE will be well represented Jan. 24-27 at one of the largest farm conferences held in the West. [Eco-Farm](#), held at the Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove, Calif., draws more than 1,500 producers and ag support people each year.

On Thursday afternoon, Jan. 25, Western SARE will conduct an hour-and-a-half workshop at Eco-Farm titled "Tools for Farm Change and Growth: Western SARE Farmer / Rancher Grants." Former Administrative Council member

Sandy Halstead of EPA in Washington State is scheduled to moderate a panel of four Western SARE Farmer/Rancher grant recipients, who will discuss the projects they conducted with their FRG grants:

- Henning Sehmsdorf of S&S Homestead Farm on Lopez Island, Wash., has been involved in three FRG grants, one to test the efficacy of organic barley for his livestock and the others to promote educational programs in sustainable agriculture.

- Annie Main, who with her husband farms 20 acres near the Capay Valley 40 miles northwest of Sacramento, will talk about her FRG grant to host and educate elementary age school children at Good Humus Farm.



Annie Main

- Jeannie Carver of the Imperial Livestock Co. near Maupin, Ore., will be joined by her husband, Dan, to discuss their FRG-funded market development project for handcrafted all-natural beef, lamb and wool fashions produced using sustainable practices.

- Helge Hellberg, executive director of Marin Organic, a cooperative of more than 20 organic growers headquartered in Pt. Reyes, Calif., will discuss how the cooperative used two FRG grants to encourage grower participation and marketing efforts at Marin Organic.

These 2007 outreach activities come on the heels of several successful outreach efforts in 2006, among them:

- May 2006, Park City, Utah, National [Ag and Natural Resources Extension Program](#) meeting. Phil Rasmussen

spoke on SARE evaluation activities; Bob Newhall and Ron Daines presented posters on the Professional + Producer and Farmer/Rancher grant programs; and Jim Freeburn presented a poster on the new Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Center at the University of Wyoming Torrington Research and Education Center.

- August 2006, Sacramento, Calif. EPA-sponsored conference, "[The Future of Agriculture: Science, Stewardship and Sustainability](#)." Ras-



Phil Rasmussen

mussen gave the keynote wrap-up speech, "[Measuring the Impacts of an Experiment in Sustainability](#)," focusing on self-evaluation of Western SARE.

- November 2006, Indianapolis, Ind., [American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of American and Soil Science Society of America](#). Rasmussen presented a poster and spoke on "[Measuring the Impacts of an Experiment in Sustainability](#)." In addition, Rasmussen has been named to the societies' [Committee on Organic and Sustainable Agriculture](#).

- December 2006, Socorro, NM, [Workshop in Sustainable Agriculture](#), "Multiple Approaches to Improve Water Use Efficiency of Our Cropping Systems." Stephanie Walker, New Mexico state coordinator for Western SARE, organized and chaired the workshop, and Jim Freeburn, PDP Coordinator, spoke on the subject, "Water - The Foundation of Agricultural Sustainability."

*Western SARE will be well represented at the Eco-Farm conference, Jan. 24-27 at the Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove, Calif., with a panel featuring four Farmer/Rancher grant recipients*

## SUB-REGIONAL CONFERENCE INTEREST COMING IN STRONG

If early response is any indicator, the West will host several sub-regional conferences around the region in 2007 and 2008. A request for applications was released in October at the behest of the Western SARE Administrative Council, which formulated the regional conference strategy at its spring 2006 meeting in Salt Lake City.

As of early December, feelers for hosting sub-regional conferences had been fielded from Oregon, the Pacific Northwest, the High Plains,

the Intermountain West and the Pacific Islands. Final applications are due Dec. 20 and the conferences must be completed no later than June 2008.

The purposes are to help stakeholders identify and prioritize unmet and emerging research and education needs in sustainable food, fiber and energy systems and to increase stakeholder and policymaker awareness of the accomplishments of Western SARE's programs and projects. In addition, stakeholder

input will be used to develop plans to achieve greater integration among Western SARE's Research and Education, Professional Development Program and Farmer/Rancher grant programs.

"The idea is to develop 20-20 vision," says Regional Coordinator Rasmussen. "We want to look back at our successes and look forward to strategies for the future, especially those we may have overlooked."

*"The idea of (sub-regional conferences) is to develop 20-20 vision. We want to look back at our successes and look forward to strategies for the future, especially those we may have overlooked."*

*-Phil Rasmussen,  
Western SARE  
Coordinator*

## HEATING UP THE FOCUS ON ENERGY

Emphasizing its commitment to sustainable alternative energy promotion, the Western region is a co-sponsor of the "Harvesting Clean Energy" conference Jan. 28-30 in Boise. The conference is billed as the premier event for agriculture and energy innovators exploring opportunities and building partnerships for clean energy production in the rural Northwest. It will cover wind power, biofuels, biopower and on-farm renewable energy.

Also featured will be the emerging opportunity for car-

bon sequestration and credits. It is worthy of note that Western SARE Administrative Council Chair Karl Kupers of Harrington, Wash., is one of the nation's innovators in carbon sequestration. Kupers was the first farmer to receive the U.S. Department of Energy's offset payments for carbon sequestration.

"SARE is working to partner with other entities on sustainable energy production," said Coordinator Phil Rasmussen. "When alternative energy sources are considered, it's important that the sustain-

ability of impacts are considered."



Karl Kupers

## GRANT REVIEWS ON TAP IN JANUARY

The new cycle of Western SARE grants will begin in January when review teams assemble in Salt Lake City to assess applications in four categories.

- The final applications for 30 Research and Education grants will be reviewed Jan. 15-17. The applications were pared from nearly 100 submitted under the 2006 Re-

quest for Applications.

- Simultaneous with the R&E review, the Professional Development Program will review 21 grant applications. This year's applications are well represented from throughout the region, including the Pacific Islands.

- Farmer/Rancher grant and Professional + Producer grant applications, due in the

SARE office Dec. 6, will be reviewed Jan. 29-31, with applications in each of the two categories reviewed separately for the first time.

The Western SARE Administrative Council will make its final sections of applications to fund during its budget meeting Feb. 26 through March 1 in Salt Lake City.

## IT WAS A BREEZE... WELL, MOSTLY

The Western Region conducted a fine test in September of a new low-cost Internet teleconferencing and video-conferencing linking system called Macromedia BREEZE. The system allows participants to tie into a conference by simply logging onto a special website and entering a password. The BREEZE window on participants' computer screens displays sections for PowerPoint slides, statistics, notes, online chats and video or still photos of participants.

The test case, conducted from the Embassy Suites in Salt Lake City, involved the technical review of 2007 R&E pre-applications. Conferencing hardware included headsets that allow hearing and talking without microphone feedback and cameras that allow participants to post video or photos. In addition to staff and three reviewers stationed in Salt Lake (Mark

Frasier, Richard Parrott and Bob Heil), participant reviewers included AC members Mike Harrington from Fort Collins, Colo., Deborah Young from Tucson, Ariz., Jill Auburn from Washington, DC, Dan Long from Pendleton, Ore., Gus Hughbanks from Spokane, Wash., Stacie Clary from Santa Cruz, Calif., and Rick Melnicoe from Davis, Calif., as well as Gerald Rouse of NRCS and former AC member Sandy Halstead of EPA, both in Washington State.

The review ran from 10 to noon and, after a short lunch break, finished up around 2. Except for a few minor glitches, the participants said the BREEZE experience was better than expected, although it would not substitute for face-to-face interaction needed at events like Administrative Council meetings. Most impressive, perhaps,



Western SARE ran the BREEZE system from command central at the Embassy Suites in Salt Lake City.

was the cost savings. After the initial expense for camera and headset (less than \$100), use of the technology is free, saving considerable expense on travel, food and lodging.

BREEZE was also used successfully during a Western SARE regional staff meeting held in October, which included remote staff members in Wyoming, Montana and Logan.

*After the initial expense for camera and headset (about \$100), the use of the BREEZE teleconferencing technology is free, saving considerable expense on travel, food and lodging.*

## FIVE APPOINTED TO FILL AC SLOTS

Five new members were appointed to the Western SARE Administrative Council in 2006 to replace members rotating off the council. (To see full profiles of these new members as well as the entire AC, visit Western SARE's website at <http://wsare.usu.edu>.)

In March, **Richard Parrott**, an organic producer who operates just outside Twin Falls, Idaho, joined the AC as a producer representative. Parrott's family farms 500 furrow-irrigated acres, 2,000 acres of dryland improved pasture and a 2-acre market vegetable garden, growing 15 crops, 100 head of mother cows and 50 head of fat hogs.

In late summer, two Coloradans were named to the AC. **Cindy Lair**, program manager for the Colorado State Conser-

vation Board, a division of the Colorado Department of Agriculture, was named as the representative for the Western Association of State Directors of Agriculture. **Peg Perreault**, project officer for EPA's Colorado and Wyoming pesticide programs and the regional coordinator for the Strategic Agricultural Initiative Program, Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program and the Pesticide Applicator Certification and Training Program, will serve as the EPA representative.

The newest AC members, appointed in November, are farmers **Don Bustos** of New Mexico and **Chuck Boerner** of Hawaii. Bustos, an organic producer from Espanola, operates a small-scale 4.5-acre

farm in northern New Mexico focusing on efficient irrigation and cold frames that help extend the growing season. Boerner operates Ono Farms, located near Hana, Maui, on the slopes of Haleakala, specializing in organic farming of coffee, chocolate and tropical and exotic fruit and vegetables.



New AC Member Don Bustos inspects the strawberries on his Espanola, NM, organic farm.

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## SARE CELEBRATES 20 YEARS IN 2008

Mark your calendar for March 25-27, 2008, to help celebrate SARE's 20th anniversary with a national conference and networking event in Kansas City, MO. During the conference, SARE and its many partners will focus on forging an agriculture that is profitable, environmentally sound and good for people

and communities. Participants will:

- Celebrate successes experienced by SARE and its partners in the sustainable agriculture community
- Foster productive dialog among producers, agricultural educators and agency representatives.

- Distill, clarify and communicate SARE's guiding values and vision

The conference will be the 6th in SARE's biennial series. More information on the schedule and registration will be posted on SARE's website, [www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org), as the conference draws near.



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