

MONTANA ORGANIC COMMODITY ADVISORY COUNCIL
Business Meeting — May 5, 2003
Helena, Montana

CONFERENCE CALL ATTENDEES:

Council Members

- Judy Owsowitz, Producer
- John Hoffland, Consumer
- Nancy Matheson, Producer
- Mikel Lund, Producer
- Bob Boettcher, Producer
- Ralph Peck, MDA Director

MDA Staff Members

- Greg Ames, ASD Administrator
- Doug Crabtree, Organic Certification Program Manager
- Debbie Stone, FSB Administrative Assistant
- Steve Baril, FSB Chief

Director Peck called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

Director Peck presented the following information:

- Revenue projections for this year are –\$38,498.00
- Holding funds from the federal grant for programs that need the funding
- Will give the program a grant to get out of the negative
- Need every customer in order to generate more funds
- Must rollback expenses

Discussion:

Doug:

- The program has turned away a dozen interested customers due to Administrative Rule I, subsection (5) which states:
(5) “Montana-based” means that at least 25% of the land area or square footage of facilities of an operation is physically located within the state’s borders.

Some customers had land located in Canada, North Dakota, and Wyoming (a state that does not have a state certifier).

Ralph:

- Wyoming may be an opportunity to make-up revenues (\$15,000 to \$20,000 is needed) because they have no certifiers in the state.

Judy:

- Need to be flexible; however, would like to see a percentage of something (taxes, land, etc.) based in Montana

Nancy:

- Can you make them use only the USDA Seal and only Montanans can use the State of Montana Organic Seal?

Doug:

- Seal must be available to everyone; we cannot restrict the use of the seal
- Most producers just want a good certifier and Montana is turning them away

Judy:

- We want to give the impression that Montana has clean water and air, etc., therefore, we have a really good product
- Potential customers located in the Bitterroot are not certifying with the MDA

Doug:

- A lot of small operations we are getting; we are missing a lot of the larger producers because:
 - we are new and unproved
 - their current certifier crosses borders

Nancy:

- Find no reason not to extend the certification borders

Judy:

- Would be disappointed in extending the certification borders but not opposed to doing so

Bob Boettcher:

- Do not think too many producers would be upset with extending the certification borders; there will always be a few disgruntled operations who oppose

Mikel:

- What would be wrong if Montana became the largest certifier in the area?

Nancy and Judy:

- It risks the image of clean water and air.

Judy:

- Are there any other options?

Doug:

- Most applicants fall in the less than \$20,000 category, which means no assessment fees are collected. We need producers who make more money.
- Expenses were higher than expected with inspector contracts

Judy:

- What if an operation calls from Florida wanting to certify with the MDA?

Doug:

- Our USDA accreditation allows us to certify in Montana, adjoining states and Canadian provinces only.

Ralph:

- Can we eliminate the rule and once the program is up and running we can revisit the rule?

Doug:

- Yes.

A motion was made by Judy Owsowitz to remove subsection (5) from Rule I.

Bob Boettcher seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Ralph:

- We don't want to lose the trust of anyone; we need to notify the public of the rule change.
- There will be a press release to inform the public
- We will send a direct mailing to all state constituents

Ralph's closing comments:

- Thanked everyone for their hard work and dedication.

Judy Owsowitz made a motion to adjourn.

Bob Boettcher seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.