

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Diane Dempster, Tilth Producers Board President

Wow, April already. The winter months have gone very fast. Tilth Producers has been busy getting underway with our 2011 programs.



BOARD RETREAT

Many thanks to Karen Luetjen, who volunteered her time and talent to lead us through the process of creating five year goals and an annual work plan. Our five year goals are to grow farmers and farm businesses; facilitate the transfer of farming knowledge from one generation to the next; to advocate for sustainable and organic agricultural policy; to expand the health and productivity of Tilth Producers; and to increase program access so all can participate.

As the Tilth Producers organization grows, the board is making revisions to its working structure by transferring more responsibility to staff and clarifying board committees' workload. Nancy and Kelsey are responsible for programs related to membership, the website and the directory as well as all their other duties with the conference, farm walks, and keeping the office running. We have great faith in their abilities and are excited about improving our service to members with increased staff support.

2011 PROGRAMS

Thanks to all who completed a recent membership survey and for your great ideas for new services. We learned that most of you joined Tilth Producers for the networking and educational opportunities and to support organic farmers. Sixty percent of you are between 45 and 65 years old, followed by 21% between 25-35, with a noticeable gap between 35-45—all the more important to glean what we can from our experienced farm members.

Look for a new 2011-2012 Directory in May, the new Member of the Month page on our website, and new networking events around the state later in the season. Member farmers can email internship listings to organic@tilthproducers.org. Website improvements to come include past audio archive, journals, and increased content to support farm businesses. Most exciting, in response to our members' interest in policy, we will be hiring an intern to coordinate our advocacy on behalf of organic farmers.

Tilth Producers and WSU Small Farms Program will partner to offer ten Farm Walks all over the state this season. See the early season schedule on page 24. The annual conference is set for November 11-13 at the Yakima Convention Center. Keynote speaker Miguel Altieri, Professor of Agroecology at the University of California, Berkeley, will address how to design resilient, biologically diverse and socially equitable farms and food systems. We're also planning multiple Friday symposium tracks including an organic dryland wheat symposium. More to be announced soon.

Washington Organic Week is scheduled for September 13-19th this year. We will ask organic restaurants to host Forks Up for

Farmers dinners, plan an organic cocktail contest and work with retailers and others to encourage consumers to choose Washington organic food.

NOSB COMES TO SEATTLE!

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) will be meeting in Seattle April 26 to the 29th. This is a great opportunity to testify and let the Board members hear from you. See page 25 for full details. They will also take written testimony if can't make the trip to the big city. Tilth Producers is planning a reception on Wednesday April 27th at the Palace Ballroom. You're invited!

The 2012 Congress will be writing a new Farm Bill. We need everyone to stay engaged and help us move sustainable agriculture, genetic engineering and climate change issues forward.

JOURNAL

A huge thank you to Kate Halstead for doing a great job as the journal editor for the past six years, and best wishes to her as she moves on in her work with WSU Snohomish County Extension and her own Rocky Prairie Herb Gardens. Kate's editing talents may not have been obvious, because you didn't see what she had to start with, but what you did see is a lively, informative journal. Thank you, Kate, for sharing your talents and your dedication to Tilth Producers. The Journal committee is looking for a new editor, and always welcomes articles for upcoming issues. We appreciate the support of our advertisers and the work of Betsie DeWreede, our ad sales manager.

NOMINATIONS

Finding new people to serve on the Board of Directors for Tilth Producers is a year-round activity, and your suggestions for interested candidates are always welcome. In the coming months we will be taking a fresh look at how we find new board members and what we ask of them when they get here. We will also look at ways to develop leadership within Tilth Producers.

BUDGET

Expenses were less than expected in 2010, but thanks to record numbers attending and sponsoring the Conference, we ended the year in the black by \$40,000— incredible since we thought we would be almost \$70,000 in the hole! Thank you all to those who contributed, it made all the difference. We send a special thank you to Sandy Bradley, who helped with the silent auction and donated multiple stays in her vacation house in Mexico as a fundraiser for Tilth Producers.

GOOD GROWING!

We have an exciting year ahead and hope the weather will cooperate! In policy work and farming, if it doesn't sprout the first time, we just re-plant. Last year was a tough growing year, and the GE alfalfa issue is a discouraging setback. On the other hand, people are more concerned than ever about where their food comes from and sales of organic food are up. Let's take spring to heart, start planting and engage in the issues that affect us all. ✕