

Agritourism Advisory Council
Thursday, March 7, 2019
9:00 a.m.
Kansas Dept of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism
1020 S Kansas Ave., Suite 200
Topeka, KS
Meeting Notes

Jay Schwinn welcomed everyone to the meeting. Before introductions he explained if others had seen or read the last meetings minutes they would know with him at the table as the chairman there was a change that he wanted to explain. He has resigned his position as chairperson because he was no longer involved in agritourism in Kansas, however, since the last meeting, Walters Farm & Pumpkin Patch reached out to him about a management position with their agritourism business which he accepted, so he is happy to be able to be back in the industry in Kansas. Sue thanked Michael Hersey for his willingness to cover the chairman's position and his graciousness to step back to the Vice Chair position.

Attendees:

Jay Schwinn – Walters Farm, Burns
Shane Meuschke - Meuschke Farms LLC, Lawrence
Janelle Dobbins – KS Dept of Agriculture, Manhattan
Nancy Brown – KS Farm Bureau, Manhattan
Debbie Mize – Whispering Elm Farm, Paola
Michael Hersey – Casa Somerset and Organic Farm, Paola
Sharon & Brian Heimes – Manna Meadows Alpacas, Bonner Springs
Shelley Andrews – Keene Rd. Country Estate w/Rustic Barns, Maple Hill
Gary LaGrange – thesavefarm.org, Manhattan
Becky & Carroll Walters – Walters Farm & Pumpkin Patch, Burns
Zac Yarnall – Cardinal Creek Farm, Leon
Ken DeVan – Oregon Trail Farm, Leavenworth/Farmer Veteran Coalition
Sue Stringer – KDWPT – Agritourism Mgr, Topeka
[Via Conference Call](#)
Stan & Denise Wood – Hidden Valley Wilderness, Easton
Christy – White Tail Run Vineyard & Winery, Edgerton
Susan Rommelfanger – Rommey Farms, Cassoday
Jacob Stenger – Eagle Ridge Ranch, Milford

Gary L. LaGrange with SAVE [thesavefarm.org](https://www.goldenprairiehoney.com/) presented about the Service Member Agriculture Vocation Education (SAVE) Corporation. (A pdf of his presentation is attached). This organization provides a pathway to farming for veterans and transitioning service members. SAVE is working with Kansas State University to create a model for all Land Grant Universities, VA and Military services. They have an apiary and produce honey marketed as Golden Prairie Honey Farms at their website along with bee keeping supplies and hives built by veterans in the farms woodworking shop:

<https://www.goldenprairiehoney.com/>

Their current farm is near Riley, KS and they have partnership with The Nature Conservancy for land. They raise row crops and livestock, and they also have a wood working shop where they build cattle sheds and bee hives. The program works to place veterans on farms to learn the trade with the hopes that one day they can own that farm or another farm. Veterans can be placed on Kansas farms or other farms nationwide based on the location and type of operation a veteran is interested in. There is no

accreditation need to be a farm mentor. If they have mentor farms available, they will put the information out to a large group of mentors. There have been military veterans in this program that have retired and purchased Kansas farms. For additional information to get started in this program or to have Gary speak about the program to a group, please reach out to Gary at 785-537-7493, 785-554-6799 cell or www.thesavefarm.org. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/www.thesavefarm.org>

Ken Delvan with Oregon Trail Farm, Leavenworth was also present and is an agritourism business that has participated in the SAVE program as well as the Farmer Veteran Coalition of Kansas which is a similar program to SAVE. They both stressed to not look at this program as a “free labor” opportunity, but as an opportunity to train a veteran in the farm/agritourism business. The host farm is offered a stipend, as well as the veteran along with additional benefits. The Farmer Veteran Coalition of Kansas’ Facebook page is: <https://www.facebook.com/FarmerVeteranCoalitionofKansas>

Mike Hursey asked about the sustainability of the farming operation at Riley in regard to the use of chemicals and how that fits in with their bee program. Gary stated that to partner with the land of the Nature Conservancy, the follow sustainable practices on their farm, however, it is not a requirement for farms for veteran placement. It is good for the veterans to know various farming practices.

Debbie Mize stated she knows of several farmers that practice the use of non-chemical farming, that have a desire to “redeem” their land.

Mike stated the Kansas City urban food providers/restaurants are looking for microgreens and other products to serve in their restaurants that come from sustainable farming (organic) practices as that is what their consumers want. The supply does not meet the demand. Jacob Stenger asked how far from the KC Metro area are their buyers willing to travel to find these organic products.

NAFDMA North America Farmers Direct Marketing Conference update – Jay Schwinn gave an update from the NAFDMA Conference held Feb 1-6, based in Noblesville, Indiana. Attendees had the option to tour Fair Oaks Farms and Huber Orchard Winery & Vineyards on the first couple of tour days, followed by two full days of education and optional wrap-up day of touring farms. Jay reported Fair Oaks was a non-traditional agritourism business though it is one. Fair Oaks produces most of the milk for Kroger stores, they also have biodigesters and power their farm equipment and semis that haul their milk and have gas stations selling their biofuels. There are 12 dairies and a large hog operation as well as educational buildings, a rope course, do farm tours, make cheeses and ice cream they sell from a retail store. Fairfield by Marriott has even built a barn looking hotel connecting to the farm site. NAFDMA members got a full behind the scenes tour of this operation. This is a sustainable business model with 50% of their operation funded by donations as they operate as a 501c3. You may find out more about Fair Oaks at: <https://fofarms.com>.

Hubers Orchard is a family farm, winery, vineyard, distillery and bakery with a retail store. They have a complex for corporate events and weddings. <https://www.huberwinery.com>.

NAFDMA 2020 will be in the Carolina’s in late January or early February for which plans have already begun. NAFDMA will also host a Summer Bus Tour of some Minnesota agritourism businesses and an ALR (Advanced Learning Retreat) in Nebraska at the Vala’s Pumpkin Patch, Gretna, NE with the first day on the Vala’s last day of the season, October 31, 2019

Kansas Farm Bureau - Nancy Brown stated Farm Bureau continues to be supportive of farms and agritourism businesses in the state. If anyone is having any issues, please reach out to Farm Bureau for assistance and they will do what they can to help you out. There is The Farm Bureau District Meetings are happening across the state now. Nancy urges you to get involved in your local meetings.

KS Dept of Agriculture/From the Land of Kansas – Janelle Dobbins shared the following information:

- 2018 Holiday Gift Box program (that promotes many From the Land of Kansas products) sold 754 boxes with 40% shipping outside of KS. Already working on 2019 planning
- It is annual membership renewal time for From the Land of Kansas so if you have not renewed, give us a call or drop us an email fromthelandofkansas@ks.gov
- Hosted Farmers Market Workshops with KSRE across the state in Olathe, Parsons, Dodge City, Wichita, Hays, and Manhattan with 284 total attendees
- We are not having an annual conference this year but will be doing webinars and Zoom sessions on different topics throughout the year
- We are planning to have Governor Wine & Beer event in early May – stay tuned for the exact date
- If you grow specialty crops, there is a new Kansas Specialty Crop Growers Association. Go to <https://www.kscga.org/> to learn more and join.
- KDA (thru a grant) is sponsoring Jon Schallert “Transform Your Business into A Consumer Destination” in Hays on March 20. We still have spots open, but you must register by March 15. For questions – call 785-564-6757. To register: <https://fs22.formsite.com/KansasDeptAg/Schallert19/index.html>
- Planning a Taste of Kansas event in August in SE Kansas. We were in WaKeeney last year so stay tuned for the date and exact location in SE KS this year. Will update at the June meeting
- Big Kansas Road Show hosted by Kansas Sampler Foundation is happening May 2-5 in Cheyenne, Sherman & Wallace counties. There are From the Land of Kansas members who will be hosting tours, etc. so go check it all out. <http://kansassampler.org/bigkansasroadtrip/index.php>

Kansas Agritourism update - Sue has registered eight new agritourism businesses and 13 renewal businesses since the December 2018 meeting.

Sue told of two bills in the Kansas Legislature this session with Kansas Agritourism businesses involvement.

- HB No. 2167 An act concerning wildlife, relating to the transferability of deer permits.
- HB No. 2223 An act concerning alcoholic beverages, relating to producer licenses, amending K.S.A. 2018 Supp. 41-355 and repealing the existing sections.

The Kansas SBA will offer a Boots to Business Ag Seminar – April 17th possibly in Manhattan, this is a seminar that is not just limited to Veterans. It is about how to help develop your small ag business plan. The Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) is hosting it

Michael Hursey shared the following information -The Growing Growers in Kansas City has a farm mentorship program. Check out their website: <http://www.growinggrowers.org/mentor-farmer-program.html>.

Michael Faust, a local Kansas City Chef has purchased food direct from 23 local farmers over \$372,000 of product for his restaurant in the past year.

Miami Co Farm Tour is Mother's Day weekend, May 11-12, 2019.

The KC Food Hub is looking for local foods to have available. The Food Hub is very intentional about giving the farmer their fair price. Contact Brandi at KC Food Circle, email: brandi@kcfoodcircle.org

Sharon & Brian Heimes – Manna Meadows Alpacas, Bonner Springs shared information about their business. They have 43 alpacas, shear their herd and send the fiber for processing and it is returned to them for retail use. They have a farm store, do around 150 tours annually, birthday parties, wedding shoots, considering opening a Bed & Breakfast at their location.

Debbie Mize stated there is a place on the Visit KC website for filmmaking. She suggested the agritourism businesses get logged in as possible sites for filmmaker who are looking for agritourism businesses and traditional farms to do filming at.

Tentative Agritourism Advisory Council Meeting dates for 2019

June 6, 2019

*Date change due to travel to KS State Fair – August 29, 2019

December 5, 2019

Added information provided by Jessica Bowser with USDA Rural Development below



USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)

The REAP program provides guaranteed loan financing and grant funding to agricultural producers and rural small businesses to purchase or install renewable energy systems or make energy efficiency improvements.

An eligible project must be located in a city or town with a population less than 50,000.

What funding is available:

- Grants, for up to 25% of total eligible project costs.
- Loan guarantees on loans up to 75% of total eligible project cost.
- Combined grant and loan guarantee funding up to 75% of total eligible project costs.

Deadline: April 1, 2019

Energy Efficient Projects

Funds may be used for the purchase, installation and construction of energy efficiency improvements such as: HVAC systems, insulation, lighting, cooling or refrigeration units, doors and windows, and replacement of energy-inefficient equipment.

Renewable Energy Projects

Funds may be used for the purchase, installation and construction of renewable energy systems, such as: solar generation, geothermal, wind generation, biomass, hydrogen and hydropower.



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For additional information on the REAP program, visit: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy-efficiency/ks>

USDA Rural Business Development Grants

This program provides grants for rural projects that finance and facilitate the development of small and emerging rural businesses, help fund distance learning networks, and help fund employment-related adult education programs.

Application Deadline: **March 29, 2019**

Application Link: https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/KS_FY19_RBDG_ApplicationTemplate.doc

USDA Rural Business Development Grants can be used to:

- identify, train and provide technical assistance to rural entrepreneurs;
- conduct local community or multi-county economic development planning;
- identify and analyze business opportunities that will use local rural materials or human resources;
- establish centers for training, technology and trade for rural businesses;
- development of real estate for uses that will assist small and emerging businesses;
- establishment of a revolving loan program for intermediaries that provide financial assistance to small and emerging businesses; and
- to support rural distance learning programs that provide educational or job training.

This program is available to rural public entities including, but not limited to: towns, communities, state agencies, authorities, nonprofit corporations, institutions of higher education, Federally-recognized Tribes and rural cooperatives.

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