

Connections

Northwest Cooperative Development Center

Fostering community economic development through the cooperative business model



Winter 2007

Communities Build Ownership in BioEnergy

Biodiesel and ethanol production facilities are rapidly emerging. The time is ripe for Northwest communities to capture value in the budding bio-energy economy.

High fuel cost and improved public perception have created otherwise unrealized opportunities. A promise for a more decentralized, nationally secure energy economy changes how our entire energy system is imagined.

There will be increasing need for feedstock production, processing and distribution. These are goods and services which co-ops are well suited to meet.

Ownership Matters

As a locally-owned enterprise, co-ops have greater economic impact in rural economies. Co-ops retain value, ownership, control and economic surplus within the community.

Center Takes Action

The Center will be *maintaining and promoting the co-op business model in the NW as the renewable energy industry propels from infancy towards maturity.*

With support from USDA, Rural Development and the Bullitt Foundation the Center is assessing the existing and emerging co-op opportunities.

We are identifying challenges and finding solutions. This is a sector-wide initiative to ensure communities and farmer-groups have the greatest chances for success in the industry.

You Can:

- o Examine your community for bio-energy opportunities
- o Share co-op ideas with your community
- o Contact us for co-op start up info

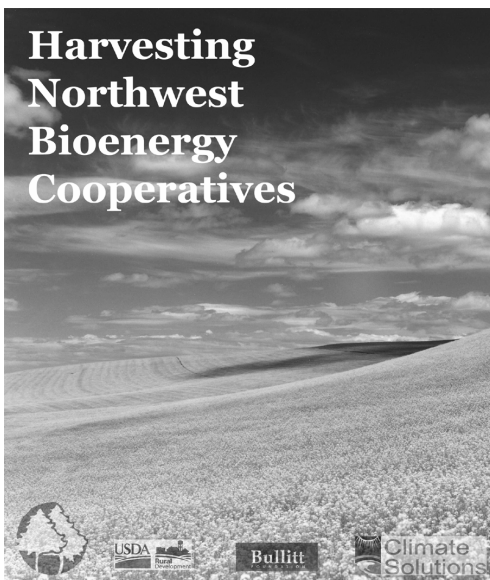
Inside:

Olympia Engages 2
Its "Foodshed"

Co-op Home Care 3
for Success

Okanogan Ag 3
Producers

Harvesting Northwest Bioenergy Cooperatives



We're Seeking Co-op Development Proposals

The Center is accepting proposals for our development services as part of our planning and application to the USDA's Rural Co-op Development Grant. The Center annually solicits proposals to be included in our work plan of co-op development projects.

We want to hear about your project by **April 8!** If you are part of a group seeking to form a co-op or if your cooperative seeks any of the following activities:

- o business and strategic planning
- o co-op education
- o feasibility studies
- o Trainings (board, member, leadership, etc.)

Projects must provide at least 25% match of the total project cost and preference will be given to projects with more. Pending an Aug. USDA approval of proposal, work would begin Oct. 1st

Please contact Diane Gasaway for more details: 360.943.4241 or nwcdc@nwcdc.coop



NWDC is a 501(c)3 providing development services for co-ops. Founded in 1979, the Center serves WA, OR, ID, AK and HI

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Olympia Tackles Local Production

“Buy local” has become a rallying cry, and nowhere is it heard more clearly than with food.

For some, localism stems from desire to connect with the producers of our food and to support a local economy. Others are concerned about food safety, loss of farmland and limited oil supplies.

A major obstacle to buying local is a lack of wholesale outlets that

“A major obstacle to buying local is a lack of wholesale outlets”

provide a path from farmers to retailers.

Most local produce is purchased at farmers’ markets. This can be a satisfying event in its own right, but it is an inefficient way to build a local economy. It must be possible for retailers to easily purchase local goods from many producers without routing them through distant warehouses.

Some retailers, especially food co-ops, do buy direct from local producers; many more would like to, but are unwilling to set up multiple accounts with local producers.

Across the country, several projects have tackled this problem in a variety of ways. The Oklahoma Food Co-op has created an online shopping system that connects producers and consumers statewide. The Tuscarora Organic Growers Cooperative has set up a full-scale produce warehouse, from which it services

markets throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. Many communities like Sandpoint, ID have created business incubators with commercial kitchens.

On Jan. 7th, nearly 30 concerned citizens met in Tumwater, WA to discuss these and other models for how the South Sound area

can foster the development of a more independent

food system.

The “Foodshed Project” was launched in collaboration with the Center and the Olympia Food Co-op.

Several meeting attendees volunteered to join a steering committee to explore the project. This committee is exploring funding,

and will be developing a survey to gauge interest among local producers and consumers. Another public meeting is planned later this winter.



Photo courtesy of Land Stewardship Project

For more information, please contact Andrew McLeod: 360.943.4241 or andrew@nwcdc.coop



Co-op Home Care for Success

Let's face it: we're all getting older. By the year 2030, 20% of Americans will be over 65.

Seniors prefer to stay at home versus moving to a nursing home or assisted living center.

Having help with daily activities like bathing, house keeping, and meals, enables seniors to stay home at a fraction of a nursing home's cost.

Quality care depends on a long-term relationships between care providers and those receiving care.

In '05, the fastest-growing occupation was home care aides. However, these jobs are low-paying, benefit-less, part-time and injury-prone. No wonder the turnover rate is high.

In Wisconsin, they were looking for a better way. Margaret Bau, a USDA Cooperative Development



Specialist, was brought in to help establish a home care worker co-op.

Cooperative Care was established in '01 and have since grown to 95 members serving over 120 people in rural Wisconsin. Building upon the success and lessons learned, Circle of Care, began operations last year and now has 38 members.

Why They've Succeeded

The co-op model empowers caregivers to take leadership positions. Margaret Bau says, "Normally, home health care people are at the bottom of the pecking order: doctors at the top, then nurses, then home health care. This system turns the hierarchy on its head."

The co-op allows a marginalized, yet in demand, labor force to receive higher wages, and more control over their industry and

business.

In these co-ops, care providers earn \$2 - \$4 per hour more than other local agencies and have access to benefits.

Members are finding greater satisfaction in their jobs by being appreciated, respected and recognized. Members have input into how the agency is run, and the chance to influence the hours and days they were scheduled to work. Practically no turnover in the co-ops is a large measure of success.

In Lakes Co., OR. the Center is supporting the conception of a similar model. The Center seeks to build a positive future for seniors and those who care for them.



Photo courtesy of Circle of Care Co-op

Okanogan Ag Producers Create Success Through Cooperation

In today's Ag environment of economic decline, community members and farmers in Okanogan Co. WA came together to explore the feasibility of a roadside stand along interstate highway 97.

The Center assisted researching potential locations, competition and costs. They included and informed the community of their hopes to build a locally-based, direct-marketing venture.

The market stand proved to be a marginally viable venture. However, their cooperative efforts caught the eye of another regional

organization. Farming and the Environment, a Seattle based nonprofit, was looking to demonstrate that regional producer marketing and distribution alliances can help keep farming profitable.

The newly formed Okanogan Producers Marketing Association recognized the direct marketing opportunity and agreed to participate in the pilot project.

They report a member who may have literally "lost the farm" has been able to survive. The co-op has helped them access direct markets where they are now re-

ceiving approximately 4 times the previous commodity price of \$.30 per pound.

According to their agent, Tom Cloud, an unexpected "big optimistic plus" is the increasing demand for Okanogan-grown produce. Originally 6 of the 8 member farms were fruit orchardists, and the problem of filling produce needs arose. To address this issue, three of the orchardists are now planting row crops as well.

Now there's more opportunity for young farmers to enter the age-old and growing occupation: **Farming!**



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Thanks to all the co-ops, organizations and people who donated to the United Cooperative Appeal campaign!

Center's Services:

- Organizational Development
- Feasibility and Market Studies
- Co-op Board Trainings
- Strategic Planning Facilitation
- Fundraising and Grant Writing
- Democratic Governance Training



Inside:

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