

Western SARE Stakeholder Subregional Conferences

In 2006, the Administrative Council of the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program released the first of several targeted requests for applications for interested parties to conduct “Subregional Showcase Conferences.”



The Purpose

As Western SARE anticipates the beginning of its third decade, it aims to reflect on what it has accomplished and what challenges it should be addressing in the future. One of SARE’s strengths has been its commitment to involve farmers, ranchers and a broad cross-section of other stakeholders, such as extension, nongovernment organizations, land grant universities, in the program’s design and delivery. Western SARE turns once again to its customers to reflect on its past and shape its future. The desired outcomes are:

- Identify and prioritize emerging and unmet research and education needs in sustainable food, fiber and energy systems
- Increase stakeholder and policymaker awareness of the accomplishments of the Western SARE program and its projects

In the medium and long term, outcomes will include more producers having knowledge and skills to adopt and profit from sustainable farming and ranching approaches.

Western SARE will use the stakeholder input to:

- Develop a plan to achieve greater integration among its Research and Education, Professional Development and Farmer/Rancher grant programs
- Implement ways to close the gap between research results from Western SARE-funded grants and stakeholders who could benefit from them

Timeline

The Western SARE Administrative Council approved conferences for:

- Pacific, Agana, Guam, October 16-18, 2007
- Southwest, Albuquerque, New Mexico, June 10-12, 2008
- Hawaii, Kona, Hawaii, September 23-24, 2008
- Mountain and Plains, Cheyenne, Wyoming, October 28-30, 2008
- Pacific Northwest, Spokane, Washington, February, 18-20, 2009
- California, location and specific date to be decided, August 2009

Execution



Jerry Dewitt

Conferences typically run 1½ to 2 days. They are designed to engage 75 to 100 key stakeholders from that region in intense give-and-take that encourages responses and opinions from all. Jerry Dewitt, director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture in Ames, Iowa, and a former acting director of the national SARE program, serves as moderator for each conference. Dewitt uses his well-honed skills, sharpened from many years in extension, to moderate the conferences, using wit and a sense of humor to draw comments and ideas from conference participants.

Those attending learn from presentations by keynote speakers addressing regional trends and issues and engage in tabletop discussions, facilitated and recorded by members of the Western SARE Administrative Council, state and protectorate Professional Development coordinators and local volunteers.

Focused Discussion

Attendees at each conference are asked to consider these questions:

1. What will be needed to create stronger local food systems that are less reliant on imports from elsewhere?
2. What are the local and regional consumption and production trends in your area?
3. The SARE program was commissioned, by Congress, to get its research results to the farmer and rancher. Why has this been a success or failure in your specific subregion?
4. What type of research, education and development projects will be needed over the next 10 years to help economically sustain farming and ranching and the environment?
5. If Western SARE received (from Congress) an additional \$1 million per region, what types of projects should be targeted or emphasized?
6. How can we (Western SARE) overcome barriers that may prevent underserved groups, including socially disadvantaged groups, from applying for and receiving SARE funding?

Posters and Handouts

To help showcase results of Western SARE-funded projects, staff members work with project PIs to craft posters and handouts showing results of projects from each subregion.



Outcomes

The Western SARE Administrative Council and staff, along with the principal investigators of each subregional conference, are compiling responses and surveys with the goal of addressing needs and concerns expressed at the grassroots levels by those attending.

Subregional Conference Principal Investigators

- Pacific, **Bob Barber** and **Manny Duguies**, both with the University of Guam
- Southwest, **John Allen**, Utah State University, **Jim Dyer**, Southwest Marketing Network, and **Dennis Lamm**, Colorado State University
- Hawaii, **Jonathan Deenik**, **Virginia Easton-Smith** and **Jody Smith**, all with the University of Hawaii
- Mountain and Plains, **John Allen**, **Jim Dyer** and **Dennis Lamm**
- Pacific Northwest, **Jeff Schahczenski**, National Coalition for Alternative Technologies (NCAT), and **Cinda Williams**, University of Idaho
- California, **Lori Berger**, California Specialty Crops Council