2016 Conference Summary Report

www.cascadiagrains.com / January 8th & 9th, 2016 / Olympia, WA

THE CASCADIA GRAINS CONFERENCE brings together farmers, processors and end-users, as well as investors, brokers and local government officials to support rebuilding a grain economy west of the Cascade Mountains in Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia through three value-added enterprises – brewing and distilling, baking and other food uses, as well as animal feed.

OVERVIEW

The 4th annual Cascadia Grains Conference was held on January 8th and 9th, 2016 in Olympia, WA. This year’s event brought together 293 participants with the goal of strengthening the regional grain economy west of the Cascade Mountains in the Pacific Northwest region through three value-added enterprises: animal feed, artisan baking and other food uses, as well as craft brewing and distilling. The conference is a project of Washington State University in partnership with Oregon State University and through the generous support of contributing sponsors and agencies.

The conference was expanded this year into a two day event. The new Friday program included optional add-on experiences: Baking Flatbreads Class taught by George DePasquale of Essential Baking Company and Andrew Ross of Oregon State University and a South Sound Brewing and Distilling Tour that took participants to Sandstone Distilling, the historic Old Brewery Building in Tumwater and Fish Brewery in Olympia. Both Friday options sold out and were highly rated by participants.

The main conference on Saturday featured 15 unique workshops and panels as well as 3 hands-on baking classes taught by 51 specialists from around the region. Workshop topics included grain production methods, supply chain development, equipment, malt, and laws impacting the grain shed. On average, the sessions were evaluated by attendees as being somewhat to very informative, or an average score of 4.1 on a scale from 0 (not informative) to 5 (very informative).
Conference participants came from all corners of the Pacific Northwest including Washington (76% of participants), Oregon (16%), California (3%) British Columbia (2%). Interestingly, 82% of participants were from west of the Cascades Mountains, with 28% from the South Puget Sound (Thurston and Pierce counties), 23% from the greater Seattle area (King and Snohomish counties), and 13% from either the greater Portland area (8%) or west central Oregon (Corvallis and Eugene, 5%). In addition to the Pacific Northwest, residents of the following states participated in the conference: Connecticut, Idaho, Massachusetts, Maryland, New York, Tennessee and Wyoming. While the conference continues to focus on issues on the west side of Cascades there is growing interest beyond the region and the conference hopes to continue to expand its vision to reflect issues east of the Cascades and beyond.

This year, for the first time, processors made up the largest percentage of participants (29%) including bakers, brewers and distillers. This is followed closely by support organizations (28%) including advocates and NGO groups. Farmers, which has been the largest group of participants dropped this year and made up the next largest participant group at 19% of attendees.

Researchers, educators and students (15%), retailers and seed companies (6%) and unidentified participants (7%) were also in attendance. As in 2015 the conference hit close to its maximum capacity of participants at 300. The Planning Team hopes to continue to attract a diverse group of sectors to the conference and are pleased by this year’s participant base. Interestingly 63% of participants were new to the 2016 conference and had never attended any other previous events.
At the core of the Saturday conference were 15 sessions, 3 hands on classes, and 4 networking sessions taught by 51 speakers representing a broad range of sectors, from universities to non-profits, economic development organizations to grain processors, as well as farm and food businesses. Morning and early afternoon sessions were one hour and 20 minutes. All sessions were divided into four concurring tracks that took place over six time blocks starting at 9am, breaking for a long lunch and going till 5:45pm. Session formats ranged from single speaker presentations to panel discussions, each moderated by a member of the conference Planning and Steering Committees.

One of the tracks included three hands-on baking classes taught by Amy Halloran, an author on local grain and flour and home baker as well as Brad Holderfield, a professional baker at Tabor Bread in Portland. These classes were limited in size and pre-sign up was encouraged. Additionally, the conference included a Resource Expo including 17 different agencies, organizations and companies engaging participants throughout the day with passive displays, hands-on activities, resources, program sign ups, and take-home materials. The day concluded with the Best of the Cascades Tasting Tour of regional craft beers and spirits highlighting 2 breweries, 7 distilleries, and 1 cidery.

Participants were asked to rank the sessions they attended on a scale from 1 (Not Informative) to 5 (Very Informative), and the average over all sessions was 4.1. The highest ranked sessions were Amy Halloran’s hands on Flatcake class, a panel on the WSU Bread Lab with Steve Jones and other WSU researchers, a short session on the Craft Brewing & Distilling Center in Tumwater, the half day Brewing & Distilling Tour on Friday January 8th, Matt Hoffman (Westland Distilling) and Jason Parker’s (Copperworks Distilling) session on distilling equipment, and the half day hands on class on baking flatbreads with Andrew Ross (OSU) and George DePasquale’s (Essential Baking Company). Only 6 of the 24 total evaluated sessions of the conference were rated below 4.

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The Saturday conference agenda is outlined below and the full conference program with links to presentations can be accessed under 2016 Program on the Cascadia Grains Conference website: www.cascadiagrains.com

**FRIDAY FIELD TRIPS:** In 2016 the conference expanded into a second day with two new hands-on field trips: The South Puget Sound Brewing and Distilling Tour and Flatbreads with Whole Grains.

**Selecting Varieties: How to Increase Your Yield Without Really Trying**
Steve Lyon, Senior Scientific Assistant, Plant Breeding Program, WSU Bread Lab

**Accessing Capital for Food, Beverage & Farm Businesses**
PANEL: Ricky Adams, Northwest Farm Credit Services, Alex Manda, Community Sourced Capital
Amy Pearl, Hatch Innovation & Celia Nightingale, Center for Business & Innovation, Thurston EDC

**The WSU Bread Lab: Grain Research & Connections**
Dr. Stephen Jones, WSU Bread Lab with Colin Curwen-McAdams & Brigid Meints, Research Assistants, WSU Mount Vernon Research Center

**Flatcakes: Field to Griddle**
Amy Halloran, Author The New Bread Basket

**Let’s Talk About Growing Grain**
PANEL: Jeff Broadie & Kasey White, Lonesome Whistle Farm, Jim Grieshaber-Otto, Cedar Isle Farm, Keith Kisler, Finnriver Farm & Cidery & Brian Thompson, retired grain farmer/miller

**Malting: The Rosetta Stone That Translates Barley Into Beer**

**Values Based Businesses In the Grain-Shed**
Matt Hofmann, Westland Distillery, Sara Nelson, Fremont Brewing Company, Mariah Ross, Scratch & Peck Feeds, Tissa Stein, Tabor Bread

**Fermentation with Whole Grains: Part 1**
Brad Holderfield, Tabor Bread

**Keen on Quinoa: Producing & Marketing Our Region’s Super Grain**
Researcher/Grower panel: Nicole Aluwi, Ian Clark, Julianne Kellogg & Kristofer Ludvigson, WSU
Processing with Don Kuiken & Sergio Núñez de Arco, Andean Naturals

**Organic Grain: A Market of Potential**
James Henderson, Hummingbird Wholesale & Nathaniel Lewis, Organic Trade Association

**Growing Alternative Grains & Their Rotational Benefits**
Jeremy Bunch, Shepherd’s Grain, Micaela Colley, Organic Seed Alliance & James Henderson, Hummingbird Wholesale. Facilitated by: Laura Lewis, WSU Jefferson County Extension

**Flavor First: Understanding Product Design and Equipment Selection for Craft Spirits**
Matt Hofmann, Westland Distillery & Jason Parker, Copperworks Distilling Company

**The New Bread Basket**
Amy Halloran, Author, The New Bread Basket with PANEL: Sue Hunton, Camas Country Mill, Annie Moss, Seastar Bakery & Handsome Pizza, Tissa Stein, Tabor Bread

**Fermentation with Whole Grains: Part 2**
Brad Holderfield, Tabor Bread

**Harvest-Home: Heirloom Crops for Health, Heritage, and Occasional Profit**
Richard Scheuerman, Palouse Colony Farm & Seattle Pacific University

**Shaping the Craft Brewing and Distilling Center**
Heidi Behrends Cerniwey & John Doan, City of Tumwater, Noel Rubadue, South Puget Sound Community College

**Fixing Broken Dirt: Restoring Agricultural Land Through Soil Biology**
Matthew Slaughter, Earthfort, LLC

Registrants signing in for a full day of workshops at SPSCC.
The conference is a project of Washington State University (WSU) and planned in collaboration with Oregon State University (OSU). Laura Lewis, County Director with WSU Extension in Jefferson County, chairs the Planning Team. Laura worked closely with Rose Burke and Aba Kiser, the conference coordinators, to select the day and location of the conference, select and manage the Planning Team and Steering Committee, manage the finances of the conference including financial sponsorships and in-kind contributions, set the program and recruit speakers, as well as evaluate the conference outcomes.

**The 2016 Planning Team** included the following educators and researchers: Dr. Chris Benedict (WSU), Dr. Brian Bodah (WSU), Scott Fisk (OSU), Dr. Girish Ganjyal (WSU), Dr. Patrick Hayes (OSU), Wendy Hebb (WSU), Dr. Stephen Jones (WSU), Dr. Kevin Murphy (WSU).

The Steering Committee was composed of individuals who work in the private sector or for economic development organizations. Through monthly planning meetings, the Steering Committee provides input on the program topics and speakers, brings in resources to support the conference through financial and in-kind sponsorships, promotes the conference through different outlets, and participates in the conference as support staff, speakers or facilitators.

**The 2016 Steering Committee** included the following individuals: David Bauermeister (Northwest Agriculture Business Center), George DePasquale (Essential Baking Company), Sue and Tom Hunton (Camas Country Mill), John Doan and Heidi Behrends Cerniwey (City of Tumwater), Wendy Knopp (Northwest Farm Credit Services), Seth Klann (Mecca Grade Estate Malt), Matt Hofmann (Westland Distillery), Matt Lincecum and Sara Nelson (Fremont Brewing), Dr. Lucas Patzek (Ag Innovations Network).
The 2016 Conference was proudly supported by Bob’s Red Mill, Fremont Brewing, Old Stove Brewing, and Pierce County.

The total budget for the conference was nearly $60,000, with 30% of the dollars coming from sponsorships, 28% from registration fees, 8% from WSU Extension support, 6% from grants, and 1% from the Resource Expo and Tasting Tour fees, plus approximately 15% of carryover profit from the 2015 conference. New to the 2016 conference was the Friday Add-Ons, which had limited registration and sold out. The registration for the Add-Ons was $60, which helped pay for the bus transportation for the Brewing and Distilling Tour, baking instructors, and Bayview School of Cooking rental for the hands on baking class.

Registration fees for the Saturday conference were tiered into three categories based on the timing of payment: early-bird ($75), regular ($95), and day-of ($115). Two tiers of scholarships of $45 and $25 were awarded to 35 individuals who submitted an online application. The conference awarded free registration to 19 individuals who volunteered their time during the event. The conference was delighted to have such a strong team of volunteers to take pictures, set up and break down, staff registration, help with baking class, clean up and more.

The conference cost nearly $45,000 to put together. Staff salaries, speaker travel reimbursement, catering, and venue rental were the top expenses. Excellent in-kind sponsor partnerships such as gifted coffee service by Batdorf and Bronson, DRY Sparking, and the Essential Baking Company helped to keep expenses down. The profit from the 2016 conference will go toward venue rental and staff salaries to start the planning for the 2017 event. Additional funds will be considered for expanding the Friday program offerings and to supporting other Cascadia event opportunities.
Successful Program Structure
In addition to sharing the latest science, techniques, and developments, the conference aims to create a space in which new relationships between business, policy and research can form and existing connections can be strengthened. In fact 50% of participants responded that opportunities for networking was their primary reason for attending the conference. Anticipating this, the Planning Team added to the 2016 conference a formal Networking Session broken down by sectors. During this time participants got to know one another and hear about other projects happening in the region. Based on feedback from our survey the Planning Team hopes to expand on this idea and do more “speed dating” style of formal networking. Other informal networking opportunities during the conference were also very well received.

Friday Add Ons
In order to expand hands on offerings at the conference the 2016 conference developed two Friday programs, the hands on Flatbread Class and a half day Brewing & Distilling Tour in Thurston County. Both programs were some of the highest rated sessions of the whole conference and attracted new participants to the main Saturday conference. In 2017 the Planning Team will look into repeating and expanding these offerings especially for our hands on bakers.

Popular Topics
Based on participation, the most popular sessions were on topics related to growing grains, specialty grains, malt, accessing capital and policy issues. Moving forward the conference hopes to capitalize on the growing interest in growing grains focusing on markets, equipment, and highlight the need for more organic grain and oats in our regional market. Specialty grains and specifically buckwheat and quinoa, which seem to be of particular interest to participants are other popular topics. Issues in the brewing and distilling sector will return including issues around malt, developing a malt house, and sourcing local grain malt and equipment. Finally small business issues such as marketing and accessing capital continue to be of interest.

*All photos by Swaying Trees Photography and Slow Hand Farm Photography.