

Farm to School Connections Team Meeting

WSU King County Extension – Renton, WA
October 22, 2007

Present: Tricia Sexton (WSU KCE Farm to School Program), Tim Crosby (21 Ares), Mo McBroom (WA Env. Council), Erin MacDougall (Public Health Seattle & King County), Tiana Clovis (Seattle SD), Heli Suokko (Bellevue SD), Holly Huttunen (Bellevue SD), Leea Brady (UW), Acacia Larson (WSU KCE Harvest of the Season), Mike Settles (Labor Union and Worm Farmer), Sue McGann (Marra Farm), Dennis Weaver (Change Your Food Change Your Life), Katie Khoury, Steve Evans (King County Ag Program), Emily Piltch (Tacoma-Pierce County Health Dept.), JP Kemick (Americorps at Tacoma-Pierce County Health Dept.), Gretchen Colonious (Lake WA SD), Carry Sekorski (Pierce County Farmboard Facilitator with WSU PCE), Michael Bennett (Pacific Prepak Inc., operates processing and distribution center in Snohomish County that services schools), Anne McMonigle (Celilo Industries, Chinook Book)

Tricia gave background on group.

Updates

Outreach Committee – (Sue McGann, Alison Leber, Elise Hart, Amy Berg) has been working on a toolkit for parents and others focused on improving nutrition options in schools including farm to cafeteria.

Puget Sound School Gardens group – went on trip to Islandwood this summer to learn about garden based education. www.pugetsoundgardens.org

Policy Committee – Steve Evans, Erin MacDougall, Tim Crosby, Tricia Sexton
Goal: advance policy efforts around F2S in the region. Focused on bidding rules that say must go for lowest price. Further update on policy will be informed by Mo McBroom. Crosby is working on related climate policy coming out of state -- support for an integrated regional food system. Climate impacts are not just food mile measures.

Mo McBroom – Washington Environmental Council

Local Farms – Healthy Kids bill proposal. 2008 Legislative session presents opportunity to influence policy to facilitate farm to school connections. This is one of WEC's four legislative priorities they will push forward in the session. WEC represents coordination of 21 environmental groups – which makes for a strong track record. Last year, they passed four of four bills. They need help shaping this policy and in harnessing excitement to engage people and interests groups in a constructive way. Why this issue? There is clearly buzz about local food issues, climate change, the governor wants to push issues that resonate with families.

Legislative session starts in January and runs for only 60 days this time. Leaves about 3 months to prepare.

Aims of the bill include:

- 1) Farm to school program at state level at WSDA coordinated with OSPI.

- 2) State "Lead by Example" – develop goals for local and state governments to purchase locally.
- 3) Revise state and potentially school procurement policy to provide more flexibility to schools.
- 4) Funding – state investment in schools and local farms. This is a non budget year and Gov. is committed to not spending a lot of dollars. But still will be asking \$3-5 million to create a state version of the Fresh F&V Program required to purchase locally, agricultural infrastructure needs, farm to food bank – getting funds to FBs to purchase from local farms. Funding for developing a processing facility in Eastern WA.

Challenge is how to do something that has impact but does have a huge cost. One way is to promote WA State as a leader doing something not done before.

Looking for input: ideas, suggestions, criticisms of the policy piece that will be laid out. Environmental community cannot do this alone. Need farmers, parents, health and children's advocates and businesses to be involved.

Questions:

How might this effort relate to immigration issues and farm labor? Short answer is that immigration is a federal issue. However, there will be an opportunity to educate legislators about farm issues.

What are the other three priorities and how are resources allocated?

All related to global warming but only two are being messaged as such.

- 1) Washington's Climate Action – broad regulatory framework for a cap and trade program.
- 2) Local Solutions for Global Warming – over 50% of GHG comes from transportation so need to plan compact communities. Require local govts to take climate change into account in doing transportation plans.
- 3) Evergreen Cities – as WA grows cities are losing urban forests needed to manage storm water runoff, sequester carbon, etc. Establish tree retention rules.
- 4) Local Farms, Healthy Kids

Resources – many people see Local Farms as the easiest to pass but may be a misnomer. Nature Conservancy will be very engaged. Futurewise and Audubon will be involved.

Is there a place to see all these proposals?

Yes, www.environmentalpriorities.org but it is not up and running yet. It will have contacts, press links, etc.

Would like this group to choose one person to be the liaison to Mo and the WEC.

Has outreach been done to legislators? Yes, a huge amount has been done so far, including to the Governor. Legislators called out of the blue asking to sponsor.

Tricia will send out reminder about proper use of list serve.

Timeline

Legislators get together in early December.

December – craft bill language.

Jan. 14 – Legislative session begins and is very short this time.

A bill in house and a bill in senate will move through both and then cross each others.

Bills have to be passed by cutoff dates – first week in Feb is one.

Floor vote on at least one bill by third week in Feb.

First opportunity to review language of bill will be in December.

Chance to review policy will be earlier and disseminated as widely as possible to get feedback and understand any opposition.

Talking points would be helpful to respond to comments like “the growing season doesn’t coincide with school calendar.”

Who will be informing the development of the policy? Goal is to remove barriers and provide “grease” to make it easier.

What about looking at what other states have done? This is being look at – Montana, Mass., New York, Oregon and others. This is a key strategy politically as well as practically.

One problem is being able to serve foods grown in school gardens because of labor union and safety issues. One approach is to serve these foods outside of the lunch program.

Round Table Updates

Crosby – Cascade Harvest Coalition is conducting a feasibility study of regional processing center – Puget Sound Food Project.

MacDougall – King County Food and Fitness Initiative funded by the Kellogg Foundation. Increasing access to locally food and safe spaces for physical activity and play.

Eat Local for Thanksgiving (www.pugetsoundfresh.org) campaign is being kicked off Nov. 2 Take the pledge to have at least one locally grown food on your Thanksgiving table.

www.king.wsu.edu/foodandfarms (click on food systems then acting food policy council or King County Food and Fitness Initiative)

Clovis – working on lunch room reform at Orcas School by focusing on changes in snacks. Students are part of committee now too. Modeling what they are teaching in the lunchroom. Working with PTA legislative chair as well. The kids are clamoring for different food. Bring back the Garden Bar!

Bennett – The time is right for healthy foods. Requests are increasing from retail and schools. People asking if the food is local, if the people providing it are local.

Larson – Harvest of the Season is a farm to school program in King County using FSNEP funding to bring locally grown food into low income schools to educate about seasonality and nutrition of food. Four times during school year WSU educator delivers a kit on wheels with produce for making a seasonal recipe. Uses snack time and nutrition education to do non-cooking food prep. Program trains teachers to deliver the lessons that are coordinated with school curriculum. Only at five schools now but at a point where it can grow and serve as a good model. WASL testing will include health and fitness in near future.

Sikorski – Advising Pierce County Farm Board on farm issues and serve as sounding board and trouble shooter for farmers, assist with marketing in Pierce County.

McGann – Kids nutrition gardening program. WASL testing conflicts with prime gardening time. Kids plant and don't come back for five weeks. Concord Elementary now has a pathway to connect the school to the farm. Potential to put food from farm into school is exciting.

Colonius – starting an herbicide free school project in a second school in Lake WA district. Needs a grape or apple press. Marra Farm has an apple press as does Orca School.

Weaver – consumer, eater oriented good health-education company, focused on organic food choices. Motivational music, rap, songs about healthy eating – internet releases.

Khoury – will be working on 4-h programs focused on nutrition and community gardens.

Piltch – Physical activity and nutrition dept of Pierce County Public Health. Working on community gardens. Planning for a local food coop in Tacoma. Held Conversations II meeting with 30 people to discuss improving urban food system and community gardens.

Kemmick -- Pacific Lutheran University made recent change to include more locally grown food.

Steering Committee Update

Developed a draft strategic plan for Farm to School Connections. Can be used as blueprint for the region for important goals and strategic actions. It will be available for anyone to address specific parts and work on. The Steering Committee decided to evolve itself into an advisory group to advise the WSU KCE Farm to School Program. The Strategic Plan includes an implementation plan which could be a summit meeting of stakeholders to look at the plan and the work that needs to be done.

MacDougall – Farmer Chef Connections conference in February 2008 might be an opportunity to have a farm to school component. Maybe folks from F2S group can participate in planning the conference and perhaps bringing a speaker like Chef Ann Cooper.

Food safety question needs to be addressed and Farmer Chef Connections conference might be a venue for having a session on this topic.

Clovis – proposed that policy be a priority focus for this year.

How do we bring people in who aren't at the table? What about an evening meeting once a quarter? Would capture a different group of people. Could have this as a working session at other conferences like Tilth Producers. Speakers bureau includes nutritionists, farmers, chefs, and parents.

Future Topics

Theme – Policy. Use topics to build partnerships.

Invite King County nutrition services directors interested in farm to school to speak from their perspective.

Policy language of proposed WEC bill.

Free fruits and vegetable money – and grant writing.

How do you know who the right people are to work with at school? Panel discussion.

Labor issues.

What to do if you're a parent?

Present Toolkit developed by outreach committee.

How to integrate nutrition curriculum into schools.

Tricia will send out announcement about next meeting and instructions for getting on list serve.

End.