



THE FURROW

Sowing Seeds of Change

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September, 2002

Battle over a Big Box

Back in January, the Blue Mountain Chapter began tuning in to rumors that Wal-Mart was planning to double the size of their Island City discount store by establishing a SuperCenter across the street. The SuperCenter would have all the offerings of the current store, plus a full-sized grocery, tire & lube center, gas pumps, vision center, florist, and more. The Chapter is opposed, under this basic premise: a Wal-Mart SuperCenter will not bring anything to Union County that is not already here. Instead, we will get a long-term reduction of consumer choices as existing businesses go under and we are forced to look more and more to Wal-Mart for our everyday needs. In communities across the country, Wal-Mart stores do not make the local economic “pie” any larger, they simply put more of the existing pie onto Wal-Mart’s plate.

Some argue that a SuperCenter will bring in more jobs, but they fail to account for the jobs that will be lost when other businesses close their doors. And few of the SuperCenter jobs will provide adequate wages for supporting a family, especially not since Wal-Mart considers full-time employment to be 28 hours per week, which at \$7.00/hour translates to an average income of \$11,000 per year. For all of the patriotism that Wal-Mart has espoused with its “Buy America” advertising, it is worth noting that the company is now the largest importer of Chinese goods in the world and since 1998 has aptly changed its slogan to “Bring it Home to the USA.”



All company specifics aside, a central question remains: is the proposed SuperCenter of a scale that fits with the character of commercial operations and quality of life in Union County? Most members of the Blue Mountain Chapter feel that it is not, and we are grounding our opposition in the context of land use. Union County is currently trying to update its comprehensive land use plan with what we believe are inflated 20-year population projections that are not based on historical growth patterns. In their current form, these projections will open the door for expansions
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ORA Supports Statewide Food Labeling Campaign

Ballot Measure # 27 “Requires Labeling of Genetically-Engineered Foods Sold or Distributed in or from Oregon.”

On July 5th, over 101,000 petition signatures were submitted to Oregon’s Secretary of State by the Concerned Citizens for Safe Food Campaign, of which ORA is a member. ***Many thanks to all of the ORA volunteer signature gatherers who helped give Eastern Oregonians a chance to be heard at the polls — without your support this historic event would not have been such a success.*** Oregon is the first U.S. states to put genetically engineered (GE) food labeling on the ballot, and this campaign is drawing national attention.

“ORA’s participation helped to create a statewide effort for the consumer’s right to know campaigns,” stated Ulee Yanok, an ORA Board member from Huntington who attended the rally on the capitol steps in Salem to submit the petition signatures. “This event takes us one step closer to making GE labeling a reality in Oregon.”

Opponents to the labeling initiative showed up at the signature “turn-in” to announce their campaign to defeat the measure, an unusual move that indicates the high stakes ahead. Grocery Manufacturers of America, the biggest food industry lobbying organization opposing the initiative, has threatened to stop doing business in states that contemplate mandatory labeling of GE food, arguing that labeling will disrupt food trade.

Kate Lord, a supporter of the labeling initiative, pointed out that, “Oregon’s independent streak has faced down such threats before. For example, Coca Cola never made good on a threat not to sell its products in the state when the Oregon Bottle Bill became law in 1971, requiring bottles be returnable and have a minimum refund value.” In a July 6th *Statesman Journal* article, initiative supporter Dawn Balzano added that, “Kraft has a division in Europe that labels genetically engineered foods, the same products that are made for consumers in North America.”

Harry McCormack, co-founder of Oregon Tilth—a non-profit research and education organization certifying organic farmers, processors, retailers and handlers throughout Oregon, the
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OREGON RURAL ACTION

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Please visit our website @ www.oraction.org.

Oregon Rural Action is a long term, multi-ethnic organization whose mission is to support and encourage community organizing around locally-identified issues, with a shared vision of creating a healthy, democratic, and just society. ORA's members and community groups work to promote social justice, agricultural and economic sustainability, and stewardship of the region's land, air and water. ORA grew out of the Eastern Oregon Organizing Project, a project of the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC). WORC is a network of grassroots organizations from seven states that includes 7,000 members and 46 local community groups. WORC helps its members succeed by providing training and coordinating regional issues campaigns.

FROM THE BOARD

Leaders Get Around

Our ORA Board Members, Issue Team and Chapter leaders have turned concerns into opportunities, speaking out at County Planning (and Zoning) Commission hearings, town hall meetings, civic groups gatherings, and college classes. We have had information tables at farmers markets, Earth Day events, Cinco de Mayo festivals, and the annual Solwest Renewable Energy Fair.

In mid-July, Board member Elizabeth Boretz represented ORA at the Summer Conference of the Northwest Federation of Community Organizations in Boise. She summed up her experience: "Endless social justice topics were presented at fun sessions, led by impassioned organizers. ORA presents to me people, places, ideas and fun times that I never would have known, had I not served on the Board. I encourage anyone at all, new to ORA or not, to consider taking a leadership role. I had absolutely no knowledge in the area of wind energy, field burning, nor confined animal feeding operations — no expertise is necessary, if you are willing to care and to pitch in whenever and however you can."

ORA'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Pat Dirr, Chair (Walla Walla)
Ulee Yanok, Vice Chair (Huntington)
Elizabeth Boretz, Secretary (La Grande)
Mary Benitez, Treasurer (La Grande)
Barbara Geren (La Grande)
Alice Lentz (Baker City)
Chuck Koch (Elgin)
Paul Gowder (Ontario)
Alma Doloras Quintero Wolf (Fruitland)
Dick Porter (Ontario)

ORA'S STAFF

Annie Ray, Organizer
Brett Kolver, Organizer
Jane Sabin-Davis, Office Manager



Oregon Rural Action's Board and staff

STATE OF OREGON VOTER'S PAMPHLET ARGUMENTS
submitted by
OREGON RURAL ACTION and OREGON TILTH

**Oregon Rural Action Urges YES ON
MEASURE 27!**

We believe that we have the right to know what is in the food we eat!

By voting YES on Measure 27, we can choose to label genetically engineered (GE) foods. Genetic engineering involves taking a gene from one species and splicing it into another to transfer a desired trait. This process does not occur naturally, where natural barriers limit the transfer of genetic traits between different species. Genetic engineering is relatively new and incomparable to traditional animal and plant breeding techniques.

Oregon can become the first state trusted for GE food labeling in the U.S. Many other countries already require labeling. Many of our nationally known brands sell food overseas that is free of GE ingredients or clearly labeled as having GE ingredients. We deserve the same consumer information available in Oregon.

Labeling genetically engineered foods is the only method to ensure that you have a choice and are in control of what your family eats! Vote YES to protect the health of our children.

Our choice of food is too important to be left to the corporations selling chemicals and biotechnology contracts to farmers for bottom-line stockholder profits. Given the corporate scandals we've seen this year, why should we trust the food corporations to tell us what regulations are best? We believe that family farmers have the right to be free from corporate control and liability for a technology outside their influence.

If GE foods were as wonderful as the corporations would have us believe, why won't they label to showcase GE ingredients?

Your YES vote on Measure 27 gives you the power to make your own decision about GE foods.

Contact: Annie, 975-2411

Learn more:

www.oraction.org

**EXERCISE YOUR RIGHT TO CHOOSE
THE FOOD YOU EAT!**

Oregon Tilth pioneered organic certification and the labeling of organic foods. As we invest our food dollars into alternatives to chemical agricultural, the agri-chemical industry is introducing a new form of environmental contamination – genetic engineering. While chemicals degrade in the environment over time, genetically engineered products replicate and multiply in the environment, becoming part of our evolutionary legacy. Consumers currently have no practical choice to avoid purchasing food products derived from this technology.

70% of all processed food contains genetically modified organisms.

This gene revolution has taken place without consumer demand, and farmers have suffered as European and Japanese markets have refused to buy the contaminated products. US citizens are the unwitting guinea pigs and the recipients of depressed prices resulting from our inability to segregate the altered product.

- *Genetic engineering is not traditional breeding. Genetic engineering crosses species barriers, using antibiotics and viral particles to achieve the asexual union.*
- *The threat from GMOs includes introducing new allergens to food, creating new viruses, and contaminating every naturally evolved organism with a patent protected genetic mutation.*

Ballot Measure 27 is not for or against GMOs. It simply reinforces the consumer's right to choose.

Oregon has a chance to show the world that democracy is alive, that consumers are partners in environmental stewardship, and that our state will not buckle to the demands of a few large corporate interests vying for control of the world's food system.

Please Vote Yes on Ballot Measure 27

Oregon Tilth, Inc. is an educational and research organization, the purpose of which is to support and promote biologically sound and socially equitable agriculture, as well as other related purposes within the scope of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

(This information furnished by Pete Gonzalves, Oregon Tilth, Inc. Learn more: www.tilth.org)

Blue Mountain Chapter News

Busy Year in Union County

The Blue Mountain Chapter meets regularly on the last Tuesday of each month in La Grande. Chapter co-chairs Barbara Geren and Bob Ottersberg have worked to plan meetings that are fun, informative, and active. Understanding that leaders' time commitments do shift over time, the Chapter reluctantly accepted Bob's resignation as co-chair in late May — **THANKS** Bob, for all of your hard work. We are looking for someone to step in with Barb to keep things running. That's an exciting task, seeing as how Chapter members have been working on several fronts, including renewable energy, food safety, and land use. *Contact: Brett*

In late January, the Blue Mountain Energy Team partnered with the Umatilla and Union County Extensions and EORenew to sponsor daylong workshops on wind energy; a two-day "nuts & bolts" workshop followed in April, designed to help folks work through the particulars of installing small-scale wind turbines on their property. The Energy Team has continued to encourage OTEC to be pro-active in making renewable energy sources a bigger part of their operations. ORA member Norm Cimon ran for a seat on the OTEC Board of Directors—although he was not elected this year, Norm's campaign helped raise the public discussion of renewable energy to a new level. The Blue Mountain Energy Team is currently making plans to push the 2003 State Legislature to make significant changes to the net-metering law (governing consumer-generated electricity) and to establish a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) that would stimulate the market for new alternative energy projects. Want to get involved? *Contact: Norm Cimon (963-0853) or Chuck Koch (437-2344).*

Concerns about a Wal Mart expansion have spurred the Chapter's Land Use Team to reconvene. See related story on Page 1.

The Food Issue Team worked hard this winter and spring to gather petition signatures for an initiative that would require the labeling of Genetically Engineered (GE) food. We can expect much of the food industry to oppose this measure, and the Food Team expects to mount an exciting campaign to educate the public on this issue and get out the vote in November. *Contact: Annie 975-2411*

Best Kept Secrets

The Blue Mountain Producer's Market will celebrate its 20th birthday this season! The tradition of bringing your produce and goods to market is time honored. How has this quaint farmer's market in La Grande fared during the last two decades? For those in the know, summer Saturday mornings on the lawn of Sunflower Bookstore is the place to get great deals on fresh veggies and catch up with friends and local vendors.

At the first meeting of the Blue Mt. Chapter back in October of 2000, members decided the market was a vital component to our community, recognizing the value of buying locally to keep more food dollars in our community. Family farmers struggle with globalization and the cost of production outstripping any slim profit margin they may realize. Creating niche markets for local growers is one way to help build local food security.

Last summer Oregon Rural Action signed up the Blue Mountain Producers Market to participate in the Senior and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) Farmer Market Nutrition Programs. These program vouchers brought thousands of dollars into the market from people who may not have been able to shop there before. Consequently, vendors were cleaned out of every last stalk of Swiss Chard. Unfortunately for many of us, there just wasn't enough to go around. Such a big demand means the market needs more vendors. Oregon Rural Action has put out the word to recruit more growers.

The City of La Grande, Chamber of Commerce/Visitors & Convention Bureau, and Downtown Association have all offered help to promote the Blue Mt. Producer's Market. The Oregon Rural Action Food Issues Team has held monthly meetings and discussed how best to take action on food issues that matter to us. Together we will celebrate the fine tradition of the public market that brings life to our community. Be a Yokel—Buy Local—See you at the Market! *Contact: Annie 975-2411.*

BECOME THE NEWEST MEMBER OF ORA TODAY

\$200 - \$1,000 FOUNDING MEMBER

\$35 Family Membership

\$100 Sponsor

\$25 Individual Membership

\$15 Living Lightly

Name: _____

E-mail Address _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone: (home) _____ (work) _____

(fax) _____

Snake River Chapter News

TAKES ACTION ON WATER BILLING

By Nadene Goldfoot, SNRC Secretary/Treasurer

The Snake River Chapter generally meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at the AFSCME Union Hall (463 S. Park in Ontario) from 6:30pm – 8:00pm. We use the back door and are very happy to have a regular meeting place. Thank you AFSCME for sharing your meeting hall with our members!

On August 12, 2002, members of the Snake River Chapter gathered for a festive potluck to celebrate our first year together and review of progress and goals. We re-confirmed our officers—Donna Buchanon as the Chapter Chairperson and Nadene Goldfoot as Secretary/Treasurer. The two Chapter Representative positions on the Oregon Rural Action Board of Directors are shared by Dick Porter, Alma Quinteros Wolf and Cori Brewster.

At our kickoff last year, we spoke out on the City of Ontario's water-billing ordinance, which members have since decided to rewrite in order to give low-income residents fair treatment. The revised ordinance is now before the city government for review (see story below). Our group will continue to be active in city and region-wide water issues.

Food safety is another ongoing issue of concern. Complaints about the use of agricultural chemicals (and particularly contamination by aerial spraying) led ten of our members to attend and testify at the Oregon Department of Agriculture's public hearings on Pesticide Right to Know. Extensive chemical application threatens surface and ground water, as well as farm worker and consumer health. We are anxious to work with local producers to transition to more sustainable, biologically intensive farming practices and will promote marketing of locally produced foods that are kind to workers and the environment. Our members want to help promote organic food production and sales of local produce at farmers markets throughout the region.

Some of our members have become active due to concerns about confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) that have taken over parts of Idaho and are becoming an increasing problem in our area as well. The boom in industrial scale animal factories means that it has become harder and harder for small, locally owned livestock operations to stay in business. CAFOs can also create tremendous manure runoff problems that contaminate both surface and ground water. In addition, the foul stench created by the concentrated animal waste can not only create serious public health problems but also cause nearby property values to collapse.

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TALKING POINTS

Members Nadene Goldfoot and Paul Gowder presented the revised water-billing ordinance to the Ontario City Council on May 13, 2002. The following talking points illustrated our commitment to improved access to water service:

1. Elderly or disabled people, with low incomes, are eligible for a reduced water rate. (Sound bite: This bill is a giant step to making sure the poorest of Ontario residents are never forced to go without water.)
2. Protects residents with serious medical conditions, threatened by water shut-off, would be protected. (Sound bite: Under the current ordinance, the public works department could shut off the water to a person on kidney dialysis, with impunity!)
3. Mandates a clear and comprehensible layout for city bills, so that residents can understand and pay their bills promptly.
4. Makes the grievance and hearing rights of residents with disputes (a) clear, and (b) actually usable. It improves the usability of the hearing process by allowing customers to request a hearing at any time, rather than before shut-off, as the current law requires.
5. Lengthens the time between delinquent notices and shut-off, to allow residents three weeks to come up with the money and determine if they really owe the bill. Under the current law, because of mailing times, residents could have as little as a couple of days to dispute bills before termination, and termination means loss of service.
6. Protects the city by only allowing reinstatement of water when past-due charges (plus the city's actual cost to restore service) are paid, or a payment plan is entered into.
7. Requires the city to accept payment plans for low-income residents.
8. In apartment buildings and mobile home parks (where the landlord pays the water), gives additional time and information for the tenants to get legal representation and force the landlord to pay the bill, before being shut off.

There are many more concerns about access to clean, affordable drinking water that the Snake River Chapter will take action on. Please get involved and help safeguard the public's right to water.

PLEASE JOIN ORA TODAY!!

Wal Mart (Continued from Page 1)

to local Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs), including the ones needed for a SuperCenter at the developers' preferred site.

Our members have worked hard to prepare written and oral testimony for both the County Planning Commission and the Board of Commissioners, and we have succeeded in raising some important questions. Oregon Rural Action and several individual members have established legal standing in this process, and we are prepared to appeal an unfavorable Commissioner decision to the Land Use Board of Appeals. We also plan to be involved when Wal-Mart applies to expand the La Grande and Island City UGBs. With the quality of testimony that Blue Mountain Chapter members have produced so far and the level of enthusiasm and commitment they have demonstrated, there is great hope of success in the land use arena.

Unfortunately, blocking a SuperCenter at the preferred site is only part of the larger battle. Without any limit on the size of retail stores in Union County, there are other buildable properties that the SuperCenter could call home, including the site of the current Wal-Mart store. While the land use impacts of expanding at the current site would be less—since the neighboring grocery would be bought out of instead of forced out of business, we would be spared the prospect of large quantities of vacant retail space – the community would feel the same economic impacts as having a SuperCenter at any other location.

Not having a SuperCenter ANYWHERE in our region would seem to be the least damaging option for the long-term economic health of our communities. All across America, more communities are losing their identity because they are littered with big box stores that can be found anywhere, creating a Generic America. Do we have a choice about the kind and size and scale of businesses that exist within our communities? Should our economic future be dictated by the monopolistic desires of mega-corporations that are not invested in our towns as those of us who live here are? What do we risk by trusting the larger marketplace to make economic decisions for us, when the global market values short-term investor profit over the long-term health and integrity of individual communities?

These are some of our questions and concerns. By engaging the larger community in an informed discussion of the SuperCenter issue, we hope to mobilize opposition to that particular project as well as support for economic development guidelines that are more community-friendly.

Contact: Brett 975-2411

To learn more:

§ www.walmartyrs.org

§ www.walmartwatch.com

§ www.sprawl-busters.com

§ www.jimhightower.com

Ballot Measure # 27 (Continued from Page 1)

United States, and internationally—spoke of our need to work together to counter the efforts of the corporate food establishment to make money to the detriment of our health, and how this initiative is the vital first step. Elaine Ingham, former Oregon State University professor, spoke of the proven need for proper testing of genetically modified organisms before release. Ms. Ingham has co-authored a [Manual for Assessing Ecological and Human Health Effects of Genetically Engineered Organisms](#). A copy of the 264-page protocol can be viewed or downloaded at <http://www.edmonds-institute.org>.



Many thanks to a few special ORA members who have made major financial contributions to support this GE Labeling campaign, including \$500 donated by Jacque Lee and Bill Oberteuffer to pay for ORA's argument in the Voter's Pamphlet and two \$100 donations to send an ORA member to the signature turn-in. More contributions are needed!

Stay tuned for upcoming events. ORA will sponsor a public forum in a town near you to help promote community education and passage of the labeling initiative. ORA's Food Safety Team needs your help to pass Measure 27.

Contact: Annie 975-2411

To learn more:

www.labelgefoods.org

(See the Oregon Rural Action and Oregon Tilth Voter Pamphlet arguments page 3. This year's voter pamphlet will be one of the most educational ever! Then vote YES on 27.)

Snake River News (Continued from Page 5)

Chapter members have spoken out on the problem of antibiotic resistance. Oregon Rural Action recently endorsed proposed legislation, S. 2508, The Preservation of Antibiotics for Human Treatment Act of 2002. This bill calls for the phase out of antibiotics that are used in human medicine as animal feed supplements. Low doses of antibiotics are routinely added to livestock feed and water to promote growth and prevent disease in crowded conditions. This practice promotes development of antibiotic resistance in bacteria that can be transferred to people. The American Medical Association also opposes non-therapeutic human use antibiotics use in animal feed.

Land use issues have taken a lot of time this past year. Members gave testimony at public hearings on an illegal subdivision, asphalt plants and the development of Malheur Butte as a motorcycle race track. Watch-dogging these and other land use decisions will be an ongoing commitment. Development pressures on the water supply and compliance with planning and zoning laws are some of the things that neighbors and those most effected nearby often bring up as concerns. If you're concerned with land use, give us a call. You're not the only one!

Contact: Annie 975-2411

“Believe it or not, there is a technique to effective activism. It can be taught, the art of organizing folks to come together as a community and make connections between the needs and the hearts and the minds of the people to make social change for the good of everyone,” says Paul Gowder, ORA Board member.

Principles of Community Organizing is an annual training given by experienced organizers from the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC), designed to teach just that—the method behind the madness of common effort. The skills that you learn at the training can be put to immediate use as a member, organizer, or leader of any community group, and they are skills you can use through your entire life. In addition to the substantive knowledge, you will also gain relationships that can sustain you through the long haul. This training is vital for anyone who wants to be more effective—and happier—fighting for social justice. *Contact: Annie.*

Principles of Community Organizing Training Session

October 12-15, 2002 -Twin Falls, Idaho

Become an effective leader in your community with tested organizing and fundraising skills.

*Training is **free** to members of Oregon Rural Action.*

*Request your application and brochure **TODAY** for this unique training in community organizing.*

Contact Oregon Rural Action or WORC

WORC, 2401 Montana Avenue, #301

Billings, Montana 59101.

phone 406/252-9672 fax 406/252-1092

New Local Chapter Coming in Baker County

At the 2001 Founding Convention, several ORA members expressed significant interest in starting a local chapter in Baker County. A mid-November house meeting in Baker City initiated the process, gathering area ORA members and friends to discuss local issues and suggest other contacts. Field organizer Brett Kelter spent the winter and spring making regular trips to Baker County to learn more about the issues and contact other interested people. He is currently developing a local Organizing Committee that will work through this fall to draw up specific issue campaigns and plan the chapter's kickoff, which is tentatively set for the fall of this year (November, 2002).

Baker County presents an excellent opportunity to address all three of ORA's primary goals—sustainable agriculture, environmental stewardship, and social justice. If you would like to be involved with the new chapter in Baker, or if you have thoughts to share about issues or local people we should invite to the Chapter kickoff, please contact Brett at the ORA office (975-2411 or brett@oraction.org).

*******MARK YOUR CALENDAR*******

THE 2ND ANNUAL ORA CONVENTION

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2ND

Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church, La Grande

SPECIAL FOCUS: GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOODS

WORKSHOPS: Energy & Food Safety & Trade

Childcare and a kids program

⇒ DINNER & BLUEGRASS/CONTRA DANCE

⇒ SILENT & LIVE AUCTIONS

We need your help to make this event a great success. Plan to donate an item and shop at this year's auction - contact Annie at 975-2411 about your silent auction entry that will assist us in reaching our goal.

UPCOMING ORA EVENTS

- September 16: Snake River Chapter, AFSCME Union Hall 463 S. Park in Ontario, 7 PM.
- September 23: Hanford Regional Issues, follow-up to the US DOE hearings, ORA Office, 105 Fir #208, 7 PM
- September 24: Blue Mountain Chapter meeting, ORA Office, 105 Fir #208, 6:30 PM.
- September 24: Oregon Department of Agriculture Public Hearing: Metals in Fertilizer, Blue Mountain Community College, 1 PM
- October 8: Blue Mountain Energy meeting, ORA Office, 105 Fir #208, 6:30 PM.
- October 12-15: Principles of Community Organizing, Twin Falls
- October 29: Blue Mountain Chapter meeting, ORA Office 105 Fir #208, 6:00 PM.
- November 2: ORA's Second Annual Convention, Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church, La Grande.



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