

News from the Potato Lab



Spring 2015

POTATO INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE by Bridgett Lake

I would like to start off by saying thank you to the Montana Potato Advisory Committee and the National Potato Council (NPC) for allowing me to take part in such an incredible opportunity. This was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience that I would strongly encourage anyone to take part in.

The PILI trip began in Spokane, Washington with 27 amazing people from all over the country whom are involved in every aspect of the potato industry. We got started with updates from the NPC by John Keeling, USBP by John Freed, and a Principles of Leadership meeting by Diana Love. From Spokane we bussed to Coulee Dam, WA for tours of the John Keys Pump Plant and Coulee Dam. The main focus of this tour was explaining how the Coulee Dam is the start of the Columbia Basin Water Project, which plays a vital role in the irrigation of Washington's crops.



After the tour was finished, we bussed to Moses Lake and stayed at a hotel. Friday started with a tour of Basic American Foods Processing Plant. The two-hour tour of their facility took us through the process, starting from the potato entering the building to the finished product, which could be

instant potatoes or even refried beans—both of which tasted amazing! We left Basic American Foods and headed to Odessa where we met with members of the Columbia Basin Water Project. We discussed what happens when the water leaves the Coulee Dam and how the project provides water to many farmers and ranchers in the state of Washington. From Odessa we drove to Pasco, Washington and toured Easterday Farm Produce Company. At Easterday's we saw how potatoes are graded and fresh packed before being shipped out. After the hour tour with Easterday's, we went to Syngenta Seeds and got to see how various varieties of vegetables are received, stored, cleaned, treated, and bagged. After Syngenta we drove to Richland, Washington and toured ConAgra/Lamb Weston Processing Plant. The Lamb Weston tour was focused on the production of their waffle fry. We were able to see the entire process, from when the truck is unloaded all the way to eating the finished product. After a very busy Friday we made the final stretch back to Pasco for dinner with some of the NPC and USBP board members.

Saturday was spent traveling to Washington, DC, which proved to be interesting with the weather situations! Sunday started with meetings that prepared us for our final goal: presenting current industry issues to our state Congressmen and Representatives. Christine Clapp from Spoken with Authority talked about the skills necessary for giving presentations at work and how to run an effective meeting. We learned methods to help control our nerves, how to stand in a way that expresses confidence, and ways to organize our thoughts during a speech. Sunday night was the Iron "Potato" Chef Competition and dinner at the *CulinAerie* culinary school. Our group was split up into teams and we were challenged with preparing an appetizer for the

Executive Committee in only 45 minutes. My team placed 4th out of 7 with our potato nest appetizers!

Monday started bright and early with a meeting on the NPC priority issues by Ryan Krabill. During this meeting we were given more background information about the current issues the NPC is focusing on and what actions we need our Congressmen to take. Chris Voigt from the Washington State Potato Commission and Pat Kole from the Idaho Potato Commission met with the group and did lobbying roleplaying with us to help prepare us for tough questions or situations that we may encounter during our meetings on Capitol Hill. After the roleplaying, Nancy Mitchell, owner of the Etiquette Advocate, discussed dining and social etiquette. On Monday afternoon, Steve Powell from Solum Consulting talked to us about how make an interviewer receive the message we want. We were taught how to keep an interview positive even in a bad situation and if interview does begin to be negative how to turn it around and be positive. Monday night was the start of the Potato D.C. Fly-in that we joined for the welcome reception and appetizers.

Tuesday was spent with the Potato D.C. Fly-in. We attended meetings throughout the day and were interviewed by Steve Powell to practice the techniques we learned earlier. After everyone in the group finished their interviews, we met again to review how we and everyone else did. At the Fly-in, we heard talks from Congressmen and Senators from the around the country about the political issues they are facing.

Wednesday was the last day of the Leadership Institute and was spent on Capitol Hill talking with our state Congressmen and Representatives. I would have never been able to discuss the issues with such confidence if it wasn't for the preparation provided by the Leadership program.



I left Capitol Hill feeling confident about what I presented and I owe it all to the PILI and the leaders who put it all together, Alex Grimm, David Fraser, and Hollee Alexander to name a few. Wednesday night was our group reception. We had dinner and an auction with the NPC Executive Committee at the Old Ebbitt Grill. The PILI group picked a Grower Leader for the 2016 trip that night, as well. I am honored to have been picked by my peers as the 2016 Grower Leader, and I will attend the PILI next year as well as the D.C. Fly-in. Being chosen as the Grower Leader is truly an honor. I not only get to be the first person from Montana, I am also the first female to ever be Grower Leader!

Again, thank you to everyone who made this experience possible for me, I walked away from this trip having the pleasure to know some of the greatest people in the industry but also having the pleasure to call them all my friends.

ACCESS ALL 'FOCUS ON POTATO' WEBCASTS, PLUS 12 OTHER RESOURCES FOR \$25

The Plant Management Network, publisher of 'Focus on Potato' and other crop management resources, is offering a special discount for potato growers in North America.

Through this limited-time offer, potato growers can get one-year access to PMN's entire collection of nearly 50 'Focus on Potato' webcasts, plus a dozen other resources housed on the Plant Management Network, for just \$25 -- a 50% discount off the regular \$50 price.

This entire collection of resources includes...

- **Focus on Potato, Focus on Soybean, Focus on Corn, Focus on Tomato, and Focus on Cotton** - Five webcast resources who help users seek information on producing healthy, high-yielding crops. Includes nearly 250 videos in total.
- **Plant Disease Management Reports** - More than 5,000 searchable reports on the effectiveness of fungicides, nematicides, and biological controls used on various crops
- **Fungicides for Field Crops Manual** - An online book that provides an overview of the current knowledge of fungicides and their use on nearly 20 field crops, including potatoes

• **Plant Health Progress** - An applied journal focusing on plant health. Covers plant disease, entomology, and nematology of crops and ornamentals

• **Applied Turfgrass Science, Crop Management, and Forage and Grazinglands** journals (soon to be combined into *Crops, Forage and Turfgrass Management*) - Peer-reviewed, applied journals covering the many applied management aspects of crops, forage, and turfgrass

• **Other searchable resources** that include PMN's image Collections, the PMN Extension Search, Plant Science Database, and Cross-Journal Search

Browse all of these resources at www.plantmanagementnetwork.org.

To purchase the discounted subscription, visit [PMN's Yahoo! Store](#). Enter coupon code **Farm50** during the checkout process before the end of April.

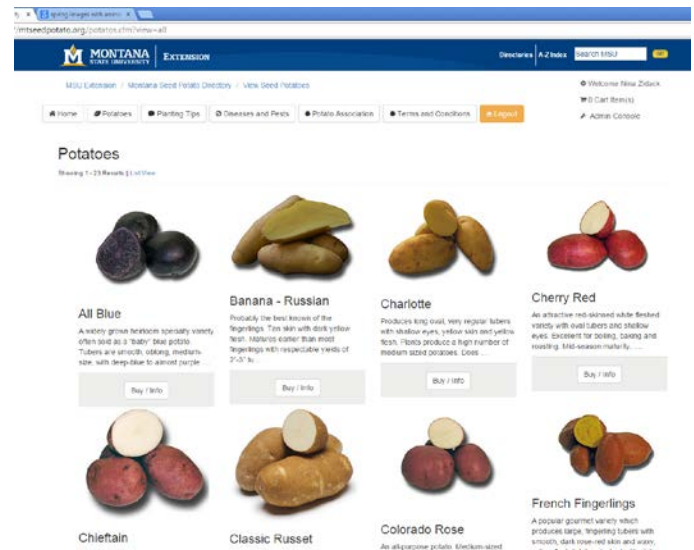
Also get monthly alerts and news on the Plant Management Network's full line of resources, through the free [PMN Update](#) newsletter.

The Plant Management Network (www.plantmanagementnetwork.org) is a nonprofit online publisher whose mission is to enhance the health, management, and production of agricultural and horticultural crops. It achieves this mission through a suite of applied, science-based crop management resources.

GARDEN SEED DISTRIBUTION NEARLY DOUBLE LAST YEAR'S VOLUME

In 2014 the Potato Lab received funding from the Montana Specialty Crops Block Grant Program to market and distribute Montana Certified Seed Potatoes to wholesale outlets throughout Montana. The goal of this program is to make sure that home gardens are planted with healthy seed that will not threaten our industry. It is also providing an outlet for many of the specialty varieties being produced throughout the state. Through the funding, a website was developed for customers to place orders. A total of 25 varieties including standards like Dark Red Norland and Yukon Gold are available as well as new varieties such as Huckleberry Gold, Colorado Rose and a number of fingerlings. All of the garden seed potato orders are in for 2015 and we have nearly doubled our volume from last year. Over the next

two weeks, Eileen and Nina will be delivering over 24,000# of potatoes around the state to nurseries, greenhouses and County Extension offices. Our Western route will take us over to Missoula, down to Hamilton, North to Kalispell and over Marias pass to hit the triangle region. Our Eastern route will head through Billings, North to Lewistown, Malta and Havre and over to Glasgow, Sidney, Glendive and back through Miles City. We will also be stopping at some smaller towns in between!



Screen-shot of some of the potatoes available on the Garden Seed Website

NPC UPDATE, by Dan Lake, NPC President

Greetings Montana Seed Potato Growers, It does not seem like it has been three months since I gave you all an update, time has gone fast and a lot has happened with the National Potato Council. NPC and the rest of the potato industry is still enjoying the final ruling by the USDA that allows white potatoes to be eligible for purchase using WIC Vouchers. This still remains a huge victory in the battle to protect and promote sound science in legislation affecting the potato industry. With that battle now firmly behind us there is plenty of work to be done on other current issues. The NPC has identified the Potato Special Research Grant as a priority issue this year. This grant funds competitive potato breeding done across the country. It is structured so that it supports matching funds from state, university and private breeding programs and has to be renewed each year by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). This Grant represents everything that is right with how the government should allocate funds. It is competitive, requires multiple state and private entities to combine

resources and expertise, has to have matching funds by the participants (historically more than two-to-one to the NIFA funding), is peer reviewed for importance and has to address a relevant industry issue. NPC is working with Congressmen to increase the funding from \$1.35M to \$2.0M which we feel is needed to conduct research and breeding efforts toward improving levels of resistance to diseases like PVY, PVY-NTN and "Zebra Chip". These newer challenges are becoming well established in the industry and need to be figured out. If you happen to see your Montana Representation, please remind them that their support of this increase in NIFA Potato Research Special Grant is very important to the long term survival of our industry and our ability to preserve export markets that use U.S. Potatoes. Both Senator's Daines and Tester are on important Appropriation Committees and their support is vital. During the D.C. Fly-In in February, both Senator's were supportive of our request but further follow up is important. Sid and I will be reaching out to both of them next week to reaffirm communication that was built on in February.

Pollinator Health is another important national issue as we defend the use of Neonicotinoids in our industry from emotional and political activists who don't understand that neonics were pursued by the chemical companies because they were much safer to bee's and other "good bugs" than the previous organophosphate(OP) and carbamate products; that is why we refer to it as "soft chemistry" because it is less toxic to beneficial insects like honeybees. Other than what I wrote to you last time about bee health challenges, the NPC is working with Syngenta and Pheasants Forever to initiate a "Bee Forage" project. Across the country, NPC wants to locate and implement growers who are willing to establish honeybee forage plots on their farms totaling 100 acres . There are seed mixes identified for any region/soil/environment that will provide forage areas for bees. I have talked with some of you about this and am proposing that if you are interested, please let me know and I can direct you to the next step. This project would be for your non productive type ground edges, etc. Their program will provide some money for seed, and establishment etc. but comes with a price; you have to sign a commitment contract to get paid. The other option, and the one the NPC has endorsed is; you commit and put the plot in on your own and it will qualify. We all use agricultural practices that are good for honeybees,

whether you are aware of it or not, so I am confident that Montana can contribute to this effort.

Truck Weight Reform to me is the perfect example of a "no brainer" issue. Currently 46 states allow trucks heavier than 80,000 pounds on their interstates which is the maximum allowed federally. This effort is to increase the federal limit to 97,000 pounds if the trailer has a third axle. Studies have shown that the safety, stopping distance, efficiency of moving product and reduced emissions are all benefits to increasing truck weights. Surprisingly, the main opponents are the railroads who don't pick up or deliver to your door like the trucks do.

Voluntary GMO Labeling is another priority issue. NPC supports legislation that authorizes the FDA to develop a label for voluntary adoption by food suppliers in response to market demand that would over ride state laws and eliminate labeling uncertainty, advance food safety, better inform consumers and provide consistency in the marketplace. Currently, there is no standard for labeling food products containing GMO ingredients, which many already have, and some states and regions of states are implementing standards on their own which reflect the opinions of the region. This has resulted in a patchwork of laws covering nearly 30 states that have passed legislation mandating that food made with GM ingredients be labeled as such. The NPC supports the *Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act* that allows processors and retailers to provide labeling for GM or non-GM food products when requested by consumers in a manner as specified by the FDA. This proposed legislation would make FDA approval of all GM food products mandatory instead of voluntary as it has been.

Those are the top issues for the year that the NPC is focusing on. Of course there are no less than 20 more lurking in the background. One of those for this week will be an industry conference call to provide input on a request to APHIS to allow mini tubers produced in Scotland to enter into the U.S. In this discussion, which will be attended by Sid Schutter and Dr. Nina Zidack, we will be protecting the U.S. and more importantly, the Montana Seed Industry. In my opinion, the U.S. potato industry has enough disease challenges without a federal pathway for more. The Scottish documents seem to address all possible issues but we all know how things can get by undetected. For sure, some segments of the

industry are going to push for approval but the Montana Certification Rules are very specific on this issue and at the very least we will be protected by them.

Montana was well represented at the 2015 Potato EXPO. Many thanks to all of you that made it and thank you for all the help with getting the booth sent back to Montana. John and Tim Venhuizen, Bill Skinner, Glen Droge, Sid Schutter and Jack Meyer, your help and support is greatly appreciated.

Once again, the D.C. Fly-In was a great meeting. Montana was well represented there also. It really is the flagship meeting of the NPC when we all can gather on Capitol Hill and talk face to face with our Congressmen. They are very grateful when you put forth the time and effort to come to them. Senator Steve Daines addressed the NPC group with a very informative presentation on issues affecting Montana and the country. He is definitely going to be a strong voice of reason for all of us in D.C. and we need to stay in contact with him as our issues develop.

Again, I want you to know how valuable the Grower Supporter campaign is to the NPC. It is voluntary by law but really helps the Council get to the finish line in the battles that have to be fought. Potatoes in school lunches, WIC, Mexico access for fresh potatoes all take resources to stay up on. Your support or continued support is an investment in the success of these battles.

Finally, I will be hosting the NPC Summer Meeting at the Hilton Garden Inn in Kalispell July 8-10. All are welcome to attend the entire meeting but if your time is short there will be an evening social event on Wednesday and we will have a farm tour on Friday that will end at Jan and I's yard for a western barbecue that evening. I will keep you updated as the agenda gets finalized.

As always, this is your National Potato Council working on your behalf. Please don't hesitate to contact Sid or myself if you have any questions or concerns that the Council should address. Stay connected by visiting the website at: nationalpotatocouncil.org

I wish you all a safe and productive spring season.
Thank you, Dan

DATES TO REMEMBER:

May 13 – Winter Testing Fees Due

June 2-13 – Cull Pile Inspections

June 10 – Registrations Due

June 11 – MPIA Directors Meeting – Missoula