

North Central Washington Food Coalition Meeting

206 Glover Street, Twisp, WA 98856

9:00 – 11:00 a.m. September 22, 2011

- Attendees: Jeri Timm (Washington Water Project of Trout Unlimited), Laura Clark (Precision Slaughter), Nancy Warner (IRIS), Jennifer Argraves (Crown S Ranch), Meg Donohue (Blue Star Coffee Roasters), and John Portor (Pacos Tacos/East 20 Pizza)
- Laura Clark gave a presentation on the Food Hub website:
<http://food-hub.org/>
 - A statewide effort and produced by EcoTrust
 - It has been interestingly referenced amongst other Washington State groups as a “statewide” food coalition.
 - Laura gave a demonstration of the website through her profile. Food Hub lists different businesses and what products there are. You can not search for businesses unless you are a member. Basic membership is free, but there are several membership types. On this website there are blogs, product details, and even community events.
 - Crown S Ranch and Blue Star Coffee Roasters are already signed up on the website, but have not found that it is improving their bottom line just yet. However, the network is rapidly growing and may prove to be a good venue to market their products. A comment was made by the group that judging by the way this effort has grown, then it must be working for some people
 - Another comment was that maybe Food Hub could work with the community school kids to have them show farmers how to use the site.
- The IRIS summit will be on November 16th in Bridgeport. We discussed the supplement IRIS created last year and how this year it will include a Foodways & Byways pullout section with website links to different producers.
- Nancy gave some background on the North Central Washington Food Coalition, one of the recommendations in the 2009 Regional Food System Assessment. A strategic planning session in 2010 set up policy, education and outreach, marketing/distribution, and networking committees. At this point those committees have been distilled into one informal learning network that meets quarterly. Nancy explained how there is more information on the IRIS website and that you can sign-up for notifications of the NCW Food Coalition <http://irisncw.org/> .
- The discussion of this meeting turned to struggles producers/distributors face and potential solutions. It was mentioned that it is becoming harder to farm while at the same time more people are supporting farmers. The food culture seems to be changing in certain areas of North Central Washington.
- It was recognized that there are numerous non-profit groups working in the North Central Washington area and while all are doing good, there is a lack of coordination. An idea was proposed to hold essentially a non-profit summit and

have each of the groups present on what they were trying to do. That way coordination could take place.

- Laura talked about how originally the NCW Food Coalition was going to try and help connect farmers so that they could share on distribution costs through coordination. However, Jennifer mentioned that it really doesn't work that well to pack and ship different products, because they are so completely different and require various storage and temperature needs.
- It was also noted that most businesses will not attend these meetings unless it directly benefits them. They simply do not have the time to do so for any other reason.
- The big issue of "Policy" was discussed. Jennifer asked if the non-profits and groups such as the Food Coalition would identify and fight policies that are a huge issue to farmers because they cannot afford to nor do they have time.
 - An example Jennifer gave is the new USDA label law that goes into effect January 1 which will essentially neutralize grain fed and grass fed products. Labels for animals grown with various chemicals and animals grown naturally are the same, which doesn't allow for making that distinction to the customer.
 - She also talked about how there are a lack of USDA processors in Washington State. In fact there are only seven left and only some are licensed to slaughter, cut and wrap, and cure. Very few do all.
 - Another hindrance Jennifer mentioned is the USDA custom restrictions and how it affects CSA programs.
 - In addition Jennifer expressed her concerns about GMO's.
- Jennifer talked about potential solutions including:
 - To get away from USDA and go to WSDA in order to sell meat by the package.
 - That farmers should feel like they are competing because there should be more demand than supply for local food.
 - Potentially teaching people how to produce their own food and how to distribute it.
- We recapped on potential opportunities for the NCW Food Coalition:
 - Continue to educate and collect data. Provide a toolbox to producers and consumers.
 - Keep having meeting agenda's and possibly make them more detailed.
 - There is value in the non-profits coming together to figure out one agenda and to coordinate and reduce duplication of efforts.
 - Provide an effective voice on a policy level
 - Identify elected officials, who represent the agriculture sector, to inform them on issues. Work with farmers to identify critical issues in order to work towards changing policy.