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## Introduction

The 1999 Annual Report provides an overview of active Western SARE-supported research, educational and professional development efforts.

On the brink of a new millennium, I am pleased to introduce this innovative work. I am confident that it will have a positive and sustaining effect on the nation's food and fiber supply in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Western SARE program in 1999 finds itself in strong shape, with consummate leadership, active and diverse participation in its competitive grants efforts and well-prepared staff.

For the first time, a farmer was elected chair of the region's governing Administrative Council in summer 1998. Larry K. Thompson, of Boring, Oregon, will lead the Western effort for a two-year period. As he has demonstrated during his first nine months in office, he will usher in a new century of sustainable agriculture research and education with enthusiasm, vibrant volunteer energy, and a grassroots understanding of producers' needs and desires. (For additional background about Larry, and two new staff appointments, see the "New Regional Leadership and Staff" section below.)

To mark the change of the century, and highlight the evolving agricultural practices fostered by Western SARE, a regional committee has already begun planning a major conference in March 2000. The event will draw 500 farmers and ranchers, field advisors, scientists, policy-makers, sustainable agriculture advocates, and agri-business representatives to Portland, Oregon from throughout the Western U.S. to consider region-wide topics. The conference will gather experts in the field, provide a venue for sharing research results and help to build momentum for more sustainable agriculture successes. I hope to see you at this exciting event.

As the year 2000 nears, we face the appropriations challenge of a balanced federal budget. It remains essential to inform our supporters and sponsors about the accomplishments of the effort. Day-to-day, however, Western SARE's primary goals are to expand knowledge and adoption of sustainable agriculture through its well regarded competitive grants programs; expand information-sharing and networking in-person, in print and via electronic avenues; and include producers in regional decision-making and execution of research, professional development and educational work.

The 1999 Annual Report includes:

- Two-page summaries of each project's progress and results,
- An overview of the farmer- and rancher-led projects,
- A table of recently-funded grants (1998 and 1999),
- A sustainable agriculture resource list, and
- Grant application information.

The rest of this section also provides you with: more background on Administrative Council Chair Larry Thompson and appointments of new staff members; a historical "snapshot" of the types of grants funded from 1995-1998; an overview of the 1998 competitive grants process; program

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efforts of note; and, background information about Western SARE, with a list of Administrative Council members.

I hope this information package is helpful to you in your efforts to expand understanding and practice of sustainable agriculture. Visit the Western SARE Web site at <http://wsare.usu.edu/> for on-line versions of this and other information products.

Thank you for your interest in sustainable agriculture and Western SARE.

Sincerely,



V. Philip Rasmussen, Ph.D., regional coordinator

### **New Regional Leadership and Staff**

Three major leadership and staff appointments took place in 1998: Administrative Council Chair, Professional Development Program (PDP) Coordinator, and Deputy Coordinator.

**Larry K. Thompson**, a second-generation berry farmer from Boring, Oregon, was elected the first farmer **Chair** of the Western SARE **Administrative Council**. According to Thompson, when he considers sustainable agriculture policy, or research and education priorities, his foremost question is "Does it work at the grower level?" Thompson has also stated that during his tenure as chair he wants to look at how much producers are employing the sustainable agriculture science sponsored by Western SARE and shore up the path between research and field use.

The Thompson family began growing berries in Gresham, Oregon in 1947. The farm has since expanded to its current size of 100 acres and 27 vegetable and fruit crops. Larry Thompson and his father used cover crops early on to stem erosion, but found they had the positive by-product of very little insect or fungus problems.

The land is farmed today by Larry and his wife Kathy. They cultivate a high number of beneficial insects through cover cropping and other techniques, apply no chemical insecticides or fungicides, and use about a quarter of the recommended amounts of herbicides for weed control. Thompson has also shifted the marketing of his crops from processors to fresh market. Thompson believes that how he makes his living has to coincide with his goals as a caretaker of the land, and as a contributing member of the community where he and his family live and farm.

After an open, competitive search, **Jim Freeburn** of the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service was appointed to the post of regional **PDP Coordinator** in fall 1998. Freeburn has extensive agricultural background and knowledge of the Western U.S. He most recently acted as County Extension Director and Extension Educator for the University of Wyoming. He is leading the regional PDP effort from the University of Wyoming's Research and Extension Center in Torrington.

According to Freeburn, one of his strengths is his ability to relate to producers on a personal level. His primary work has been in crop and livestock production, agricultural marketing, natural resources and community development. Freeburn will develop PDP calls for proposals and coordinate grant technical reviews, among other networking and leadership duties.

Also in late 1998, **Robert (Bob) Newhall** of Utah State University (USU) was appointed **Deputy Coordinator** of the program. Newhall has been a Utah state extension leader for sustainable agriculture for six years; he is continuing in this role as he takes on additional responsibilities for

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Western SARE. He is an extension research associate at USU, specializing in soil and water conservation.

Newhall will oversee the development of calls for proposals for both SARE and Farmer/Rancher grants. He will also coordinate technical reviews of these competitive grants programs and be involved in general program issues. According to Newhall, activities of special interest to him are teaching and hands-on lab work on erosion control. His research and extension interests include crop rotations and alternative crops, land-use, community planning, farmland preservation, agricultural effluent water use and low-level remote sensing.

### Competitive Grant Programs

Western SARE has three competitive grants efforts: Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, SARE, grants, which fund research and education projects; Professional Development Program grants, which support educational opportunities for Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and other agricultural personnel; and, the Farmer/Rancher Research Grant effort, which provides competitive grants to Western producers to test their field questions or overcome local challenges.

In the **1998** round of competitive grant selections, just over **\$2 million** in awards was disbursed to universities, farmers and ranchers and organizations to further knowledge and adoption of sustainable agriculture. More than a third of the grant work involved livestock, and almost another third focused on sustainable agriculture approaches for tropical climates. The latter demonstrates the effectiveness of the region's outreach initiatives to the Pacific Islands. Also, the number and caliber of proposals from the Native American community grew significantly during this selection cycle.

Other projects funded in 1998 expand knowledge of soil quality, alternative crops, organic marketing techniques, agroforestry and natural buffers, and minimum tillage practices for cotton, among other topics. One California project is targeting professional development in sustainable agriculture to private pest control advisors and agricultural consultants.

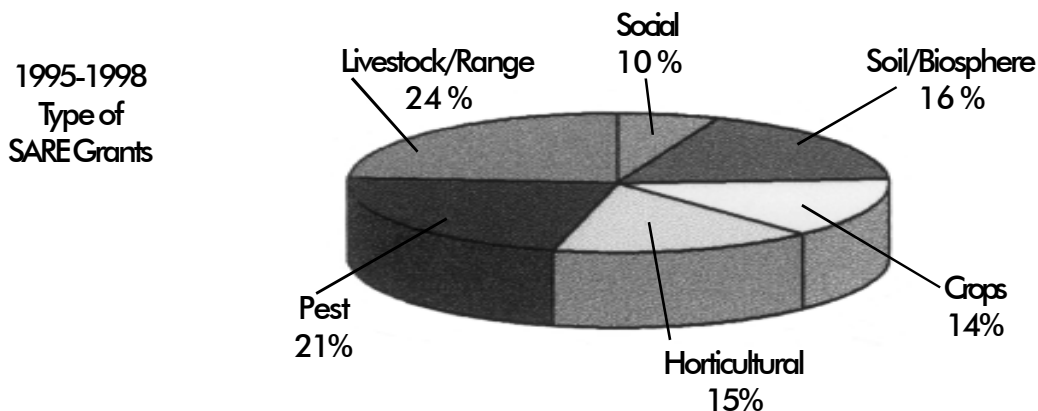
Specifically:

- More than \$1.3 million was awarded to research and education (also known as SARE) projects. The fund total represents 10 projects that were selected from 73 submitted proposals. The overarching goal of this effort is to increase knowledge of agricultural practices that are economically viable, environmentally sound and socially acceptable. Farmers or ranchers are directly involved in the planning or implementation of projects, whether they be university-based or on-farm trials.
- Roughly \$404,000 was allocated to professional development projects, supporting seven projects from a possible 15. In addition, \$164,000 was split among state Cooperative Extension programs in the West to further diverse state-level education and outreach activities primarily aimed at agriculture professionals.
- Just over \$143,000 was shared by 31 farmers and ranchers, who will lead research and community development projects that will test their "in the field" sustainable agriculture questions, or grapple with a related community or producer challenge. The grantees were chosen from among 104 applications.

For an on-line, state-by-state list of **1998** or **1999** competitive grant selections for research and education, professional development or producer grants, go to <http://wsare.usu.edu/docs/newsrel.htm> and click on the appropriate news release title.

For some historical perspective, the following pie chart illustrates the diversity of subjects of Western SARE grants from 1995 through 1998.

The chart shows seven grant subject areas, and the percent amount of dollars awarded to each category.



### Program Efforts of Note

#### ❖ Western Sustainable Agriculture Conference, March 2000

“Farming and Ranching for Profit, Stewardship and Community” will be the theme of a Western SARE-sponsored event that is scheduled for March 7-9, 2000 in Portland, Oregon. Conference planning is well underway, headed by a committee of scientists, educators, producers and state-level agricultural professionals from throughout the Western U.S. The three-day conference will highlight the methods and outcomes of diverse research and education projects funded by the regional program — including university-based, on-farm and producer-directed work. The role of non-profit organizations and public policy in promoting sustainable agriculture will also be discussed, as well as marketing strategies, and the benefits of involving farmers and ranchers in agricultural research. The event will also offer a number of information-sharing opportunities.

Conference co-chairs are John Luna, Oregon State University (OSU), Sean Swezey, University of California Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (UC SAREP) and David Granatstein, Washington State University. Coordinator Mary Staben, OSU, welcomes questions at [stabenm@bcc.orst.edu](mailto:stabenm@bcc.orst.edu) or (541) 737-5437.

#### ❖ Evaluation

The region has begun formal evaluation activities to collect data on the accomplishments and on-the-ground outcomes of its funded research and education projects. The work adds to the findings of the Western SARE-sponsored opinion survey of its stakeholders fielded in 1997. Both endeavors provide information about the attitudes and opinions of key SARE clientele, and begin to track the effectiveness of the program over the long-term.

The current evaluation effort will focus on six or seven selected SARE (research and education) projects. Selected project coordinators will be asked to identify producers who have adopted, or have considered adopting a new technique or technology that was examined as part of a SARE project. There will be questions about transfer of information to end-users, and the field impacts of research trials.

#### ❖ Joint Meeting of Administrative Council and PDP State Leaders Held in Summer 1998

A major gathering occurred in August 1998: the first joint meeting of the Administrative Council with Professional Development Program (PDP) state leaders and members of the land-grant Western Coordinating Committee on Sustainable Agriculture (WCC-67). The interaction of the groups

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spurred fruitful information-sharing, better understanding of state-level professional development activities, networking and goal-setting among the participants. A field tour of Northern Nevada sustainable agriculture projects highlighted local efforts from suburban Reno to the Carson Valley. In August 1999, PDP state leaders will meet in tandem with WCC-67 representatives in Tucson, Arizona. For advance or follow-up information about this year's meeting, contact Jim Freeburn, PDP Coordinator, at [SARE@agmail.uwyo.edu](mailto:SARE@agmail.uwyo.edu) or (307) 532-8892.

#### ❖ Web Site Expansion

For the first time, the region's 1997-98 Annual Report ("The Tenth Year") was made available on the Web site in both "browser" and searchable formats. The "browser" version matches the print edition in design and content, with inter-linking features that bond it to the larger Web site in many ways. Users can now review the document in a "book" style, and can link directly to the national SAN/SARE and other Internet sites referenced in the product. The report is also available in a searchable, Folio software-based format. The 1999 Annual Report will follow suit and be accessible in both formats as well. Go to <http://wsare.usu.edu> to see these and other regional publications and databases.

#### About Western SARE

Western SARE is led by an Administrative Council of scientists, farmers and ranchers, business leaders and administrators, in cooperation with the USDA SARE office and Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service.

Administrative Council members and officers in 1998 and 1999:

- Larry Thompson, chair (term: August 1998 to August 2000), farmer, Thompson Farms, Boring, Oregon
- Jerry Schickedanz, chair (term: August 1997 to August 1998), New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico
- Mike Somerville, state conservationist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Phoenix, Arizona
- Robert D. Heil, Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, Colorado
- Susan Matsushima, farmer, Alluvion, Inc., Haleiwa, Hawaii
- Antoinette Betschart, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Albany, California
- Kathleen A. McCarthy, U.S. Geological Survey, Portland, Oregon
- Mark W. Frasier, rancher, Woodrow, Colorado
- Kai Siedenburg, California Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, Santa Cruz, California (until March 1999)
- Dennis Teranishi, Hawaiian Host Inc., Honolulu, Hawaii
- Meta Boyer, Montana State Department of Agriculture, Helena, Montana
- Billy Dictson, Cooperative Extension, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico
- Jill Shore Auburn, USDA program leader for Sustainable Agriculture, SARE director
- Harry W. Wells, U.S. EPA

Since 1988 through federal fiscal 1998, the U.S. Congress has allocated more than \$92 million to the federal SARE effort; Western SARE has received \$20.7 million in funds.

The SARE program, which was authorized by Congress in the 1990 and 1996 Farm Bills, is managed regionally by four councils: Western, North Central, Northeast and Southern United States.

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These committees of scientists, producers and administrators represent a variety of interests and provide local leadership to research and training efforts. Regional councils operate in cooperation with the USDA SARE office and the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service.

V. Philip Rasmussen, a soil scientist at the program's host institution of Utah State University, is the regional coordinator of Western SARE. Robert Newhall, also of Utah State University, is deputy coordinator. The professional development program is led by Jim Freeburn, coordinator, from the University of Wyoming. Al Kurki of the National Center for Appropriate Technology, NCAT, Montana, is co-coordinator of the PDP effort.

The region includes Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Micronesia, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, N. Mariana Islands, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

Go to <http://wsare.usu.edu/> for calls for proposals, news announcements, publications and archived project progress reports.

Who to contact at Western SARE:

❖ **Western SARE Headquarters, Utah State University**

<http://wsare.usu.edu/>

Phil Rasmussen, regional coordinator; Bob Newhall, deputy coordinator; and Florence Hinck, administrative assistant

phone: (435) 797-2257; fax: (435) 797-3376

[wsare@mendel.usu.edu](mailto:wsare@mendel.usu.edu)

**Contact about:** calls for proposals; SARE and Farmer/Rancher grants; general policy and program goals; contracting and grants administration.

❖ **Professional Development Program, University of Wyoming Research and Extension Center**

Jim Freeburn, PDP coordinator; Lori Schafer, regional assistant

phone: (307) 532-8892

[SARE@agmail.uwyo.edu](mailto:SARE@agmail.uwyo.edu)

**Contact about:** PDP grants administration; PDP goals, policies and planning.

Al Kurki, PDP co-coordinator

phone: (406) 475-3729

[akurki@mcn.net](mailto:akurki@mcn.net)

❖ **Public Information Office, University of California, Davis**

Kristen Kelleher, communications specialist

phone: (530) 752-5987

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**Contact about:** news media questions, publications and information products, Sustainable Agriculture Network outreach materials.