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Spring was a time of transition at the Saskatchewan office of OACC. The focus of my position has moved from Prairie-wide to primarily Saskatchewan based, now that Saskatchewan is supporting my position to a larger extent. Alberta funding for OACC is being used in Alberta. Ongoing projects that benefit Saskatchewan organic producers but which involve Alberta and Manitoba collaborators will continue for the coming year.

Looking back, it seems that the spring was a season of activity. It was also a season of renewal, as I attended two professional development days, a scientific conference and even caught up on my backlog of holidays.

I made a number of presentations:

- ✓ I attended the meeting of OCIA SK#2 to present Marc Loiselle with the Outstanding Organic Farmer of 2007, on behalf of OCIA Research and Education Board. Marc was awarded this honour for excellence in farming practice, dedication to environmental stewardship and commitment to the organic community.
- ✓ I prepared and delivered an invited talk on organic weed management for students in a vocational agriculture course at UofS
- ✓ I gave an invited talk to the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation corporate strategic planning meeting on “issues” for organic agriculture. At this meeting Keith LePoudre of the First Nations Agricultural Council of Saskatchewan shared that First Nations people tend to approach agriculture from an organic and natural perspective. A climate change speaker predicted that milder winters in Saskatchewan would impact agriculture primarily by allowing greater pest survival.
- ✓ Organics got a boost at the Plant Canada meeting held in Saskatoon in mid June. Plant Canada is an umbrella group of 6 professional societies that deal with plants – agronomists, horticulturalists, botanists, weed scientists, physiologists and pathologists. The meeting included an organic symposium sponsored by the Canadian Society of Agronomy: “Progress in organic cropping systems” and one sponsored by the Canadian Society of Horticultural Sciences: “Organic horticulture – Separating fact from fantasy”. The Horticultural society also sponsored an Organic Horticulture Forum. The Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food booth at the Plant Canada trade show featured Organics as one of four of its pillars (with people, food safety and research). I presented an invited paper in the agronomy symposium, with Rod MacRae and Ralph Martin, entitled “Economic and social impacts of organic production systems”. We are also working on a manuscript based on the talk, to be published in the proceedings. I also sat on the “expert” panel for the forum.

News from OACC Prairie Office, March to June, 2007

I prepared articles for the Western Producer

- ✓ “Marc Loiselle wins Outstanding Organic Farmer of Year Award”
- ✓ “Organic Management for Field Bindweed”
- ✓ “Alternatives in Animal Care” was written by Shelly Juurlink of OACC at NSAC, and I edited it for submission to Western Producer
- ✓ “Seeding: To Till or Not To Till”
- ✓ I prepared an article on the second place winner of the OCIA RnE award, for distribution to the Eastern Canada media list: “Raymond Loo Recognized Internationally as an Outstanding Organic Farmer”
- ✓ I wrote an article for the GO newsletter: “Direct Seeding” and one for TCOG: “The Battle of Good and Evil Played Out on Prairie Fields” (on beneficial insects)
- ✓ I worked on the ongoing project to develop bulletins for the Best Organic Management Practices project

I met with people concerned with organic research and extension:

- ✓ The SAF/OACC steering committee met to discuss plans for a Research Needs Assessment and for work on a revision to *Organic Farming on the Prairies*.
- ✓ I sampled soil at the green manure test at Eastend that was initiated by Kirby McCuaig
- ✓ Jazeem Wahab, Horticultural Crop Agronomist with CSIDC (Canada Saskatchewan Irrigation Diversification Centre) is leading a project that will transition an area at the Outlook centre to organic management under irrigation. We are planning organic horticulture research and a field day for this summer.
- ✓ I helped Daphne Gottselig shepherd her honours thesis on green manures for brown soils through the UofS system, and provided a final reading on another 4th year project on organic weed control methods.
- ✓ I met with Gary Kruger at Western Ag to discuss the use of PRS probes for soil nutrient measurements
- ✓ I attended Alison Nelson’s PhD candidacy exam. She did well and is now ready to proceed with another field season looking at mycorrhizal associations, soil microbial diversity and nutrient content in pure and mixed crops. I visited Chris Neeser at Olds and saw his research project on the use of organic essential oils for increasing storage time of potato (this project is partially funded by OACC, and a poster on this research was presented at Plant Canada); I visited Chantal Hamel to discuss a project looking at mycorrhizal associations and soil P availability;
- ✓ Sukhdev Malhi from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada at Melfort is planning a test of various organic soil amendments. We are discussing possible products to include in the test.

I supported other organic groups:

- ✓ I met with the Organic Connections board to critique the last conference and discuss the possibilities for another.
- ✓ I facilitated meetings of the Organic Crop Improvement Association Research and Education board
- ✓ The group overseeing the new production manual met to consider budget implications of various contracting options, and to come to a firmer estimate of page allotments

Working on what has so far been an incredibly effective model, I hired a young person who grew up on an organic farm. Jasmine Liska now helps me one day per week in the office.

News from OACC Prairie Office, March to June, 2007

I attended to the usual administrative matters, a performance appraisal, staff meetings, emails, and financial reporting. I also got to talk to several farmers who wanted to discuss their agronomic options this spring.

I requested information on field days. The following is what I have been able to find out so far:

When	Where	Who - group	Who - host	What
June 09	Moosomin	OPAM	Glen and Dawn Ekert	Beef
June 21	Saskatoon	SK Veg Grower	Joan Merrill	(not organic)
June 21	Saskatoon	Haskap Day	Bob Bors	Haskap
July 07	Preeceville Yorkton	SK Fruit Grower		(not organic) www.saskfruit.com
July 7	Blue Mountain	OCIA SK#2	Barbara Willick	Fun and sharing
July 09	Vonda	OCIA SK#5	Marc Loisselle	Horticulture/RedFife /research
July 12	Outlook	CSIDC	John Linsley	Irrigated veggies
July 14	Hodgeville	OCIA SK#8	Danny Rempel	Mixed grain/stock
July 19	New Norway	LRH / Sunworks / OCIA AB#1	Steve Snider Ron Hamilton	Chickens, grain
July 21	Francis	OCIA SK#4	Rick Oliver	
July 25	Swan Lake	OPAM	Marie and Gerry DeRuyck	Grain, veggies, value added
August 11	St. Francois Xavier	OPAM	Lori Ann and Rene Regnier	Garden