

MINUTES

MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 52nd LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK, & IRRIGATION

Call to Order: By CHAIR LINDA NELSON, on January 25, 1991, at
3:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Linda Nelson, Chair (D)
Don Steppler, Vice-Chairman (D)
Bob Bachini (D)
Joe Barnett (R)
Gary Beck (D)
Jane DeBruycker (D)
Roger DeBruycker (R)
Jim Elliott (D)
Marian Hanson (R)
Harriet Hayne (R)
Vernon Keller (R)
Don Larson (D)
Jim Madison (D)
Ed McCaffree (D)
John Phillips (R)
John Scott (D)

Staff Present: Connie Erickson, Legislative Council
Claudia Johnson, Committee Secretary

Please Note: These are summary minutes. Testimony and
discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

HEARING ON HJR 6

Presentation and Opening Statement by Sponsor:

REPRESENTATIVE HOWARD TOOLE, House District 60, Missoula, said this is a resolution asking the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) to get involved more heavily in providing water development and resource development grants for research in sustainable agriculture. He stated that a companion bill addressing this issue is being heard in the Senate at this time.

Proponents' Testimony:

Richard Thieltges, Farmer from Chester, Montana and a member of

Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO), spoke in favor of HJR 6. He stated that farm technology is changing very rapidly. Mr. Thielges said that demonstrations are given to the different farmers and that is how technology is spread, from one farmer to another and it is very important that it continues.

Al Kurki, Executive director of AERO, said that AERO is a membership organization of farmers and ranchers in Montana who are committed to enhancing the productive capacity of their farms and ranches, to resource conservation, and to family farm economic vitality. He stated that small research demonstrations are given on the farms to help further agricultural productivity. Mr. Kurki stated that the Iowa State University just completed an evaluation of its three year old farm demonstration program to protect groundwater. The result of the program changed the farming practices and attitudes of the cooperating farmers and their neighbors. He said the University of California has a four year-old, \$1.35 million research program that has yielded results useful enough for participating and other interested farmers to change their farming practices. The most well known example of effective sustainable agricultural research and demonstration that involved 1,860 farmers and ranchers in cooperation with the university and other researchers over the last three years, is the federal Low-input Sustainable Agriculture Program (LISA). He stated that more Montana farmers and ranchers have participated in this program with MSU, research centers, extension agents, and AERO, than have farmers in other states, including California and Iowa. In just three years, 244 Montana producers have participated in federal LISA projects. Mr. Kurki stated that the agriculture community is generally not aware of these programs and said the interest is there and not to let a lack of information be a barrier to Montana agriculture in meeting its changing needs. Mr. Kurki urged the committee to support this program by passing HJR 6.

Closing by Sponsor:

Rep. Toole thanked the committee for a good hearing.


EXECUTIVE ACTION ON HJR 6

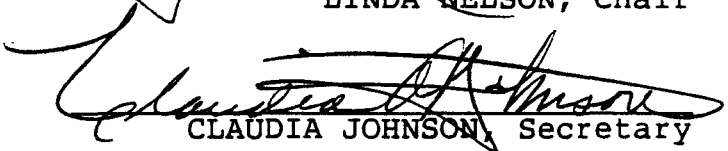
Motion: REP. BACHINI MOVED HJR 6 DO PASS

VOTE: HJR 6 DO PASS. Motion CARRIED unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 3:25 P.M.


LINDA NELSON, Chair


CLAUDIA JOHNSON, Secretary

LN/cj

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK AND IRRIGATION COMMITTEE

ROLL CALL

DATE 1-25-91

NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT	EXCUSED
REP. DON STEPPLER, VICE-CHAIRMAN	✓		
REP. BOB BACHINI	✓		
REP. JOE BARNETT	✓		
REP. GARY BECK	✓		
REP. JANE DEBRUYCKER	✓		
REP. ROGER DEBRUYCKER	✓		
REP. JIM ELLIOTT	✓		
REP. MARIAN HANSON	✓		
REP. HARRIET HAYNE	✓		
REP. VERNON KELLER	✓		
REP. DON LARSON	✓		
REP. JIM MADISON	✓		
REP. ED MCCAFFREE	✓		
REP. JOHN PHILLIPS	✓		
REP. JOHN SCOTT	✓		
REP. LINDA NELSON, CHAIR	✓		

HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

January 25, 1991

Page 1 of 1

Mr. Speaker: We, the committee on Agriculture, Livestock, and
Irrigation report that House Joint Resolution 6 (first
reading copy -- white) do pass.

Signed: _____

Linda Nelson, Chairman

TESTIMONY OF AL KURKI
FOR THE ALTERNATIVE ENERGY RESOURCES ORGANIZATION
ON HJR 6 BEFORE THE HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
JANUARY 15, 1991

My name is Al Kurki. I'm the executive director of the Alternative Energy Resources Organization, a membership organization of farmers and ranchers in Montana who are committed to enhancing the productive capacity of their farms and ranches, and necessarily, to resource conservation and community and family economic vitality. I'm here on behalf of AERO to testify in favor of HJR 6.

Small research and demonstration projects in sustainable agriculture are a proven approach to helping farmers and ranchers expand their management options. Having more options means relying less on a narrow choice of non-renewable, expensive and potentially contaminating inputs.

Iowa State University just completed an evaluation of its three-year-old farm demonstration program to protect groundwater. They looked at whether the cooperating farmers, and their neighbors, have changed their farming practices and attitudes related to groundwater protection as a result of the farm demonstration program. What they found is that the program IS effective and they intend to expand the program as a result.

The University of California has a four-year-old, \$1.35 million program of sustainable agricultural research and demonstration that has already yielded results useful enough for participating and other interested farmers to change their farming practices.

Probably the most well-know example of effective sustainable agricultural research and demonstration, which has involved 1,860 farmers and ranchers in cooperation with university and other researchers over the last three years, is the federal Low-Input Sustainable Agriculture program. More Montana farmers and ranchers have participated in this program with MSU, research centers, extension agents, and AERO than have farmers from any other state, including places like California and Iowa. In just three years, 244 Montana producers have participated in federal LISA projects. THE INTEREST IN AND NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AND DEMONSTRATION IS HERE!

You might wonder what small, on-farm demonstration projects can accomplish when compared to university experiment station work. They are a very necessary companion to the long-term, statistical research that universities do:

First, demonstration projects can test practices on a particular farm or group of farms, and in a particular community. They enable us to begin to understand the interactions between the physical, chemical, biological and human resources of a given place we're interested in.

Second, they test in realistic settings—where management, economic and weather variables are real—a broad set of agronomic variables that are key to ensuring the permanence of agriculture in Montana: pest resistance, tillage methods and machinery, crop rotations, alternative crops, pest-predator relationships, weed, disease and insect pest control, and nutrient cycling—ALL AT THE SAME TIME.

Third, demonstration projects build relationships among producers, researchers, extension agents, and soil conservationists that enhance the knowledge of everyone involved. Most of what is known about implementing sustainable agricultural practices—practices that protect soil, surface and groundwater quality—is known by farmers and ranchers. The fact that the DNRC programs can accomodate the active participation of farmers and ranchers is one of their greatest strengths, because at this point, learning and knowledge need to flow in many directions.

Fourth, demonstrations can yield immediate results—results that are visible. Experiment station research in sustainable agriculture is critical in the long run, but on-the-ground testing is critical for right now.

The 1990 Montana Farm and Ranch survey confirmed what AERO has learned over the years working directly with Montana farmers and ranchers: They are looking for ways to expand their management options, while protecting the resources on which they depend. These DNRC programs can help in demonstrating ways to do that.

But, only two organizations that I know of have participated in sustainable agriculture projects through the DNRC programs. The agriculture community generally is not aware of these programs for testing and demonstrating resource-conserving production practices. The

Kurki—3

EXHIBIT 1
DATE 1-25-91
HB HJR 6

interest is out there—let's not let a lack of information and awareness about program availability continue to be a barrier to Montana agriculture's meeting its changing needs.

I urge this committee to support this resolution. Thank you.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

VISITOR'S REGISTER

Agriculture COMMITTEE BILL NO. HJR 6
 DATE 1-25-91 SPONSOR(S) Rep. Laale

PLEASE PRINT

PLEASE PRINT

PLEASE PRINT

NAME AND ADDRESS	REPRESENTING	BILL	OPPOSE	SUPPORT
Richard Thielges	Self/AERO	HJR 6		✓
A. Kurki	AERO	HJR 6		✓

PLEASE LEAVE PREPARED TESTIMONY WITH SECRETARY. WITNESS STATEMENT FORMS ARE AVAILABLE IF YOU CARE TO SUBMIT WRITTEN TESTIMONY.