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December 2, 2009

FROM STEVE'S DESK

by Steve Taylor



Thanks and No Thanks

With last week being Thanksgiving, it seems appropriate to have a "Thankful" theme in this Wrap-Up. There's much to be thankful for, but also a few things we are not. I will mention only a couple examples.

We are thankful for the support of our friends in the U.S Congress. H.R. 4016 (the Hazardous Material Transportation Safety Act of 2009), which contains Section 401 that allows special permits, had a hearing in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee just before Thanksgiving. Many MO-AG members operate anhydrous ammonia nurse tanks and operate under a special permit held by The Fertilizer Institute (TFI) which is allowed under this law. Working with TFI, MO-AG has expressed concern that no fitness standards have ever been established by rulemaking for determining fitness for applying for the special permit.

During the Committee hearing, Missouri Congressman Sam Graves spoke strongly for the need for standards in the application process. Without these standards, Congressman Graves rightly noted how Missouri agribusinesses and others could be at the mercy of "the arbitrary whims of the agency (DOT)." Immediately after his comments, Congressman Graves was able to secure verbal assurance from Committee Chairman James Oberstar, Minnesota, to work to address the issue and have it resolved before the bill goes for a vote on the House floor.

On another issue, MO-AG strongly supports maintaining and defending the Hours of Service (HOS) exemption. The HOS exemption allows drivers transporting agricultural commodities and farm supplies for agricultural purposes a waiver from the DOT limitations on maximum driving time.

MO-AG is thankful for the work of Missouri Congressman Blaine Luetkemeyer in protecting the very important HOS exemption. Also just before thanksgiving, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee held a hearing and DOT Deputy Secretary Porcari was a witness to the Committee. Congressman Luetkemeyer discussed the

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t**
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importance of the HOS agricultural exemption with Deputy Secretary Porcari. With Congressman Luetkemeyer's leadership, we expect more action will occur on this issue to assure this important policy stays in effect and is properly administered by the DOT.

Everyone, and especially those in Congressmen Graves' and Luetkemeyer's districts, might consider sending a word of thanks to both these gentlemen for their efforts on our behalf.

"No Thanks"

Unfortunately, there is the other side of the coin. MO-AG says "No Thanks" to calls for unnecessary increases in laws and regulations governing agriculture. On Tuesday of this week, EPA sponsored a seminar that focused on a report developed by an EPA task force which was to develop "innovative approaches to nutrient management." Among other things, the report recommends increased regulations on non-point (agricultural) sources of nutrients and "increased accountability among the fertilizer user community by establishing a registration process leading to monitoring and reporting on a watershed level."

A featured speaker at the EPA seminar was the Environmental Working Group (EWG). Over past decades, EWG has harassed agriculture by recommending more state laws and regulations to restrict certain cropping practice, by blaming global warming and gulf hypoxia on ethanol production, and by advocating for government support for farmers to transition from conventional farming to organic farming.

MO-AG defends the environmental stewardship record of our industry and of our current conventional agricultural system as a whole. There are many examples of proactive environmental protection by agribusiness. One example is the fertilizer industry promoting the 4R Nutrient Management Strategy to help farmers implement management practices that will put the right fertilizer products, at the right rate, in the right place, and at the right time.

For more information on the '4R' system, [click here](#).

Also, related to my comments above about anhydrous ammonia tanks, MO-AG, in partnership with the Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), is offering a clinic to help businesses that need to test NH3 nurse tanks and comply with U.S. DOT regulations. For more information on the clinic, visit our [website](#) or call our office.

Finally, with a theme of thankfulness, I would be amiss if I didn't

mention how thankful we are for you, our members. MO-AG doesn't exist without members. And, MO-AG exists for our members.

Until next time,
Steve

REMINDERS

2010 MO-AG Winter Convention Exhibitor Registration Open until Friday, December 4

You have until December 4th to register for a booth for the MO-AG Winter Convention. the exhibitor brochures have been mailed, but you can also download the brochure by [clicking here](#).

2010 MO-AG Sponsorship Letter in the Mail

At this time, we are accepting sponsorships for the 2010 MO-AG programs. Please check your mailbox or [click here](#) for more information. Thanks again for everyone who was a 2009 MO-AG Sponsor.

NH3 Nurse Tank Testing Workshop to Be Held on December 10-11 in Columbia, MO

Missouri Agribusiness Association (MO-AG), in partnership with the Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), will be offering a workshop to provide you with the training your company needs to test NH3 nurse tanks and comply with U.S. DOT regulations. The workshop will be held on December 10-11 at Stoney Creek Inn in Columbia, MO. The brochures have been mailed and can also be accessed by [clicking here](#).

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Forty-One Watersheds in 12 States Will Be Part of Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI)

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that 41 watersheds in 12 states, known as Focus Areas, have been selected to participate in a new initiative to improve water quality and the overall health of the Mississippi River Basin. The selected watersheds cover more than 42 million acres, or more than five percent of the Basin's land area. "The USDA is committed to working cooperatively with agricultural producers, partner organizations and State and local agencies to improve water quality and the quality of life for the tens of millions of

people who live in the Mississippi River Basin, the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative will help" Vilsack said. [This] "announcement is another step toward achieving this goal, and I encourage as many eligible participants as possible to join us in this major conservation effort."

The Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative, which was announced on Sept. 24, 2009, will provide approximately \$320 million in USDA financial assistance over the next four years for voluntary projects in priority watersheds in Arkansas, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee and Wisconsin. MRBI will help producers implement conservation and management practices that prevent, control and trap nutrient runoff from agricultural land.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) manages the initiative. NRCS State Conservationists from the 12 watershed states selected the watersheds with guidance from State Technical Committees and state water quality agencies. Selections were based on the potential for managing nitrogen and phosphorus -- nutrients associated with water quality problems in the Basin -- while maintaining agricultural productivity and benefiting wildlife.

Next, smaller watershed projects will be selected through a competitive process under NRCS' Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI). NRCS assistance will be leveraged with contributions from partners, expanding the capacity available to improve water quality throughout the Basin. Three requests for project proposals will be announced in the next several weeks, including one for CCPI. Funding for CCPI projects will come from NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program. Two other requests for proposals will fund projects through the Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program and Conservation Innovation Grants. [*Source: Ag Professional*]

China Approves Bt Rice and G.M. Corn

Reuters says China has approved a strain of genetically modified rice and a GM corn for commercial production. Two members of the Chinese Ministry Agriculture's Biosecurity Committee say bio-safety certificates have been issued to the Huazhong Agricultural University for a Bt variety of rice and the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Science for a type of phytase corn.

China is the world's largest producer and consumer of rice. The Bt rice is expected to reduce pesticide use by 80 percent, while increasing productivity by eight percent. The corn is designed to increase phosphorus digestibility in hogs, thus reducing phosphorus run-off. Both products need to go through registration and field trials but should

be ready for large-scale production in two to three years. [*Source: Brownfield*]

NASDA Says Plan to Help Producers Taking Shape

Two-thirds of the "Meat the Need" rescue program proposed by the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) to help struggling dairy, pork and poultry producers has been put in place. Missouri Ag Department Director Jon Hagler is co-chairman of the NASDA working group that proposed the "Meat the Need" plan two months ago.

Hagler says \$350 million dollars in dairy relief was included in the Ag Appropriations bill and Secretary Vilsack recently announced an additional \$50-Million-dollar purchase of pork products for federal food programs, "I'm really pleased with Secretary Vilsack and what he's been able to do. He's been very, very responsive to our farmers and our farmers needs. He understands that crisis very well." Hagler says these steps to reduce the oversupply on the market are starting to work, "So far it looks like we've got a market response from that. You know, things are headed in the right direction, they're a long way from being there. Our dairy folks are still hurting and struggling and the quickest we can get this out to them, I think that's important." Hagler says steps at the state government level in Missouri have helped struggling dairy farmers as well, "We were able to change our single purpose facility loan program to allow for refinancing and operating costs and that's helped some dairies. In fact, last week, we made our first loans on that. And so we're pretty pleased with that. It's just one more tool that we're trying to do - that Governor Nixon's asked us to look for every way we can to keep farmers in business."

Hagler concedes things remain tough for many dairy and pork producers - with prices still way below the cost of production. Hagler says federal and state governments must keep doing all they can to help. As for dairy relief, the Kansas City Commodity Office has announced it will solicit bids before the end of the year for the \$60 million worth of cheese for food programs in the Ag Appropriations bill. There's still no word on the direct producer payments yet. [*Source: Brownfield*]

UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER, 2009

- 2-3 2009 MU Ag Crop Management Conference
Columbia, MO
- 6-8 Missouri Farm Bureau Annual Meeting; Tan Tar A;

Camdenton, MO

- 10-11 **NH3 Nurse Tank Testing Clinic, Stoney Creek Inn, Columbia, MO**
11-12 Missouri Cattlemen's Association Annual Meeting and Convention; Springfield, MO

JANUARY, 2010

- 6-7 **MO-AG Winter Convention; Lodge of Four Seasons; Lake Ozark, MO**
7-9 Missouri Governor's Conference on Agriculture; Hyatt Regency; St. Louis, MO
8-9 Missouri Land Improvement Contractors Winter Convention; Isle of Capri Hotel; Boonville, MO

FEBRUARY, 2010

- 10-11 Missouri Pork Expo
24 MU Agricultural and Life Sciences Career Fair 2010; Reynolds Alumni Center; Columbia, MO

Note: Items in **red** are new postings since the last Wrap-Up issue.

Letters to the Editor

Do you have a response to the Missouri Agribusiness Wrap Up? Let us know! The Missouri Agribusiness Wrap Up is a bi-weekly publication of the Missouri Agribusiness Association (MO-AG). MO-AG is a member-owned association based in Jefferson City, Mo. which protects members' interests in state legislation and provides educational opportunities.

Missouri Agribusiness Association
PO Box 1728, 410 Madison Street
Jefferson City, MO 65102
(573) 636-6130
Fax: (573) 636-3299
[MO-AG Website](#)

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Missouri Agribusiness Association | P.O. Box 1728 | 410 Madison Street | Jefferson City | MO | 65102