



Far Western Chapter



WINTER 2004 - 2005 NEWSLETTER

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President's Message (continued)

We will be hosting the annual banquet as a private affair in the world renowned Monterey Bay Aquarium. This will be a real treat especially for those who have not previously had the opportunity to experience the Aquarium.

Planning will also begin soon for the Far West Chapter's 2006 conference. If you have ever considered becoming more involved with your chapter then this would be a great time to begin. Please contact either Brett Huston or myself and we will make sure to include you in the planning process.



Monterey Bay

Finally, if chapter involvement is your desire but the conference planning process seems a bit too intimidating or overwhelming, why not consider "mentoring" a new member? By merely sharing your experiences you will not only have the opportunity to provide valuable insight as to the benefits of membership but also have the opportunity to create a new personal relationship. Please take a look at Brett Huston's report at Page 4 and give him a call.

NATIONAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Richard French

Your National Board of Directors held its midyear meeting on January 15 in Chicago. That's right, Chicago in January! However, single digit temperatures outside certainly had no impact on the lively and productive discussions that took place during the course of the meeting, a summary of which I will now share with you.

Executive Director Kim Fantaci and Carole Wiltsee of the **National Office** continue to put in the effort needed to provide the service NSAC expects and

deserves. They are actively working with National Program Committee Chairman Dan Nutley and his committee chairs to help assure that this year's national meeting will be a great success.

Although it's taking a little longer than expected, the task of cleaning up our member database is just about complete. This would not be possible without the great response by members to last October's request to provide updated member information, which is to be maintained in a searchable directory within the NSAC website.

Speaking of **membership**, it was reported that our national member count as of December 31, 2004 stood at 1,608, a decrease of about 2 percent from 2002 and 2003 levels. Although a decline, the numbers are relatively stable when compared to the 17 percent decline we experienced between 1998 and 2002. Looking ahead, we have already received more than 1,000 renewals for the upcoming year, which, according to the National Office, represents an exceptionally high rate for this time of year.

As most of you know, increasing membership is a key strategic initiative of your Board. Although we have no control over the impact of consolidation, downsizing, etc. that has been taking place within our member base, we can take steps to **increase the value of membership** in NSAC. To that end, it was reported that the "Distance Learning" program that was implemented in 2004 has been very well received. In turn, the Education Committee, chaired by Dan Groscost, is planning to offer at least six new sessions in 2005 that will include topics such as fraud, hedging and financial analysis. Member fees for these webcasts are only \$46 per site plus \$10 per CPE credit. Talk about value! This is a great deal which we at Sunkist took advantage of this past year. I encourage all of you to do likewise.

The Board approved the addition of a section on the NSAC website where member cooperatives, as well as their service providers, will be able to post job openings. Although discussed, a decision on allowing members to post their personal resumes was deferred for the time being. The Board also agreed to look into the feasibility of creating an accessible "Tax Library."

Turning to **finances** - Secretary-Treasurer, Ron Hennen, reported that it appears 2004 operating results will end with a loss of between \$5,000 and \$10,000. Although the target for the year was to break even, transition costs associated with the

National Office change came in higher than expected. However, looking ahead to the current year, the Board approved a 2005 operating budget that projects a surplus of approximately \$50,000. It is important to note that such a surplus would be a result of lower costs, not increased fees.

Obviously one of the most significant factors affecting operating results is the **annual meeting**. Your Board voted to keep the 2005 meeting registration fees at last year's reduced levels. To be specific, the member rate for the combined general and tax program will be \$495 if received prior to June 15. Since the fee increases to \$655 if received subsequent to that date, make sure you register early. We expect registration materials to be available on-line in February. Hardcopies should be mailed by mid-April. As the Far Western Chapter will be hosting this year's meeting, please make every effort to attend so that we can be assured of a great turnout.

The Board approved several **changes to the NSAC bylaws**. Changes included the elimination of the "Director at Large" position, limiting the number of directors to a maximum of two for any chapter, and the removal of the specific reference to geographic rotation of the annual meet site. As for the latter, no changes to the traditional rotation practice are anticipated anytime soon.

Other subjects addressed at the meeting included the wording of our mission statement, D&O coverage, and revisions to the Silver Star program.

In closing I would like to say that I appreciate the opportunity to serve along with Matt Connors as your National Director and a member of the Executive Committee of the National Board. However, in order to better serve you, it would be helpful to hear from you. Please feel free to contact me either by email at rfrench@sunkistgrowers.com or by phone at (818) 379-7411.

MEMBER PROFILE: ANA SPYRES & SUNSWEET GROWERS, INC.

Ana Spyres is Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of Sunsweet Growers, Inc. and a member of the NSAC Far Western Chapter Board of Directors.

Ana lives with her husband and daughter in Arbuckle, where she grew up. Husband Blaine farms rice in the Arbuckle area, while daughter Britney is a junior at Arbuckle High School. Britney is on a "sabbatical" from cheerleading, in which she has been active since

seventh grade, but is now stat-keeper for the boy's varsity basketball team and student body vice president. Busy school activities keep both Britney and Ana out of trouble, and Ana has also been known to torture the occasional golf ball. She is a HUGE Sacramento Kings fan.



Ana joined Sunsweet in 1999 after several years with the Sacramento office of Arthur Anderson. She previously spent four years in the finance and accounting department of California Pacific Rice Mills in Arbuckle. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from California State University, Sacramento.

Sunsweet Growers, Inc. is the world's largest processor and marketer of dried plums, prune juice, and dried plum products. Headquartered in Yuba City, Sunsweet has been in business since 1917 and boasts approximately 440 members.

Sunsweet's main facility covers over one million square feet and is the largest, most modern dried-fruit plant in the world. The coop also operates a bottling facility in Fleetwood, Pennsylvania, and markets in over 40 countries around the world.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

2005 Time & Place Committee, Dan Nutley
(209) 955-6108
dan.nutley@mossadams.com

Your Board of Directors and National Program Chairman have been working with the NSAC National Program Committee to put together the national program in Monterey, August 1 through 3. The meeting will be held at the Portola Plaza Hotel

(formerly the Double Tree). The hotel is in a great location at the beginning of Fisherman's Wharf; the President's Reception will be at the world famous Monterey Bay Aquarium.

The Program is just about complete. We will now turn our efforts to those all-important social activities for guests and spouses. Any ideas you may



have for spousal activities would be appreciated. We are particularly in need of ideas for a Tuesday night optional activity. The last two national meetings have offered a night at a professional baseball game, but San Francisco and Oakland are just too far away to make that practical. Please contact Dan Nutley or Doug Buehrle with ideas.

Mentor Committee, Brett Huston
(916) 554-1654
bhuston@kpmg.com

The Mentor Committee is looking for volunteers. As a new committee of the Far Western Chapter, we are working to develop plans for how we can help new members feel welcome and get involved.

The Mentor Committee will serve as a resource to answer questions about NSAC and connect new members with fellow cooperative professionals. Its goal is to make sure new members realize the benefits the NSAC Far Western chapter can provide, which will also help us attract and retain members. New members will be encouraged to become involved in the chapter by attending chapter meetings and participating in training.

If you are interested in helping with this committee, please contact Brett Huston. New and interested members are critical to the success of the chapter.

Membership Committee, Steve Sutter
(530) 891-6474
ssutter@matson-isom.com

Thanks to all who responded to the National Office's request for updated membership information. The request was part of an effort to modernize our

membership information and create a searchable database, which will be a great tool.

Two years ago our chapter board set a goal of stabilizing our membership, which had decreased from 298 to 190 during the previous eight years due to mergers, bankruptcies, and other shifts in the coop world. At December 31, 2003 we had 183 chapter members. We now have 175 members and have set our target at 190.

We have contacted several prospective members who were identified through attendance at our chapter annual meeting, the national meeting, and the long distance learning seminars, but need more. Please take a few moments to review your business contacts and let us know of any who could benefit from NSAC membership.

The National office will soon print membership cards similar to what they have done for other organizations they manage. The cards will list the benefits of membership on one side and information to help members access the website and the growing list of valuable educational and other information to be found there.

As always, please feel free to call or email me with questions or comments.

Newsletter Committee, Brent Morrison
(530) 893-4764
brent@morrisonco.net

We are looking for ways to make the Far Western Chapter Newsletter more useful to members (see story on Page 1). If you have an idea for the newsletter or just want to tap the vast collective wisdom of the Far Western Chapter, contact newsletter editor Brent Morrison at (530) 893-4764, or email at brent@morrisonco.net

TIDBITS
News from the Far Western Chapter

Sunkist is currently reviewing ERP systems, including products from Oracle and SAP. Sunkist CFO Rich French would appreciate feedback from anyone who has recently gone through an ERP selection, especially with either of these vendors. If that's you, he'd appreciate hearing from you at (818) 379-7411 or rfrench@sunkistgrowers.com

Chapter member Chris Wiedensohler of the Sacramento office of KPMG has been promoted to Tax Manager. Congratulations Chris, and just in time for tax season!

Congrats too to member Christine Lau, Director of Tax and Benefits at Sunsweet Growers, Inc., who is expecting her second in May. First child Emi is now almost 3 years old, so Christine should have her hands full.

Be sure to welcome new Sunkist employees – and NSAC Far Western Chapter members – Barbara Lau and Pamela Wen. Barbara is now Sunkist's Corporate Controller while Pamela joined as Corporate Tax Manager.

Sunkist also welcomes new Sunkist Fun Fruit, "kid-sized" packages of orange wedges, apple slices, pineapple spears, grapes and carrots in single serving peel-and-open pouches. The product is initially being marketed to school districts on the East coast.

Diamond of California is taking the big plunge with a 30-second Super Bowl ad for its line of Emerald Nuts, which will be shown during the fourth quarter. If you don't get a chance to watch, you can read about it at www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6859306/. The "Encouraging Norwegians" and other "EN" puns are gone, but the ad manages to tie in a unicorn, Santa Claus, and the Easter Bunny. Not sure how they do it, but it sounds entertainingly nonsensical.

Did your organization apply for a 2004 Value-Added Producer grant from USDA? Six California coops were successful, but all applicants should have received copies of the reviewer score sheets. Brent Morrison at Morrison Consulting is compiling the scores on a confidential basis; it is hoped the results will highlight the differences between proposals that

were awarded and those that weren't. No organizations will be identified, but we will print a comparison of the scores in a future chapter newsletter if enough organizations participate. If you are interested, contact Brent Morrison at (530) 893-4764 or send email to brent@morrisonco.net.

If you have news about yourself, your company, or anything else of interest to NSAC members, please let us know. We are also interested in articles that have run in your company's newsletters or other publications. Contact newsletter editor Brent Morrison at brent@morrisonco.net, or call (530) 893-4764.

TIDBITS CONTEST WINNERS!



Congrats to Ana Spyres of Sunsweet Growers and Terece Castanias of KPMG, who won the drawings for a NuCal logo shirt and sports blanket, respectively.

To be eligible, just contribute news for "Tidbits" or a newsletter article. Prizes for this issue were generously donated by Doug Buehrle of NuCal Foods.



Drawings are conducted by the company that donates the prizes. Out-of-chapter members are eligible during our Annual Conference year. The newsletter editor is not eligible.

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Additional Committee Chairs include:

Education – Dan Nutley
Mentor Program – Brett Huston
Newsletter – Brent Morrison
Silver Star – Joe Lavagnino
2005 Time & Place (National) – Dan Nutley

The NSAC Board of Directors has approved a policy to permit approved organizations to present graphics, text, and/or artwork promoting their businesses in *The Cooperative Accountant* and certain other publications. In exchange, these organizations are asked to support NSAC as follows:

- One-half page presentation in each of four consecutive quarterly issues of *The Cooperative Accountant*, as well as the *Membership Directory & Resource Guide* - \$1,000
- Full page presentation in each of four consecutive quarterly issues of *The Cooperative Accountant*, as well as the *Membership Directory & Resource Guide* - \$2,000



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