

## USDA Fellows Update

Doctoral Fellow, **Joe Campbell** partnering with **Dr. T. Allan Comp**, Appalachian Coal Country Team (ACCT) OSM/ VISTA Team Coordinator initiated as part of his fellowship program an Environmental Protection Agency-sponsored research project "Volunteers for Rural Watersheds" that continues today under the leadership of current OSM/ VISTA Jenna Fehr.

This project identifies, tests, and monitors demonstrated "best practices" to recruiting, managing, and retaining volunteers in rural mining communities, often hard-hit by economic decline.

Based in Beckley, West Virginia, but working throughout Appalachia and the Hard Rock mining region of the Rockies, Campbell partnered with dozens of small "watershed" organizations to identify and develop a list of 25 successful non-profit management strategies. In the year leading up to this project, Campbell worked very closely with 16 different organizations to survey over 300 volunteers. This information provided much of the context and information about the factors that help determine a successful volunteer management strategy in rural, mountain communities. While these practices ranged greatly, they each proved effective

for their respective organization. Practices include: building partnerships with church groups and 4x4 off-road clubs, providing transportation services to the elderly and for youth volunteer organizations, and hosting community fundraisers.

Small non-profits across Appalachia and the Rockies were encouraged to test out these approaches in their own communities. In late 2009, Campbell worked to link those organizations that expressed both the most need for a practice and had the capacity to implement and monitor their use over a one-year "testing" period. This grew into a massive research endeavor totaling 48 different place-based studies, testing 23 of the original 25 strategies twice, and testing 2 of the practices once. 34 different watershed organizations,

ranging from Pennsylvania to Tennessee and Colorado to New Mexico tested one or more demonstrated "best practices."

The current project lead is analyzing the 48 individual case studies developed through this research. Commenting on early project findings, Fehr suggests "that the need for a lead person or committee to drive planning is a key factor in the success or failure of many of the management practices tested. In small rural communities, specificity was crucial, broad appeals for help with tasks and events often went unheeded." Practices that employed targeted recruitment of individuals and groups with skills for specific tasks had the best results. For tasks requiring large groups or crews of volunteers, rural

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*Joe presenting place-based research findings with volunteers of the Woodlands Community Land Trust in Clairfield, TN (Photo by Jessica Vierling)*

organizations often succeeded by bringing in outside groups, such as alternative spring break crews and faith-based mission teams.

This project has been featured on the EPA's *Watershed News* publication, and findings from the research have been presented at conferences across the United States. Already an in-depth guidebook for working with alternative spring break groups has been created and shared with partner organizations, and more opportunities for resource creation are being explored. According to Fehr, "project presentations and workshops have been an effective way to educate others about environmental and economic problems and answering community efforts in rural mining communities ... the need for these resources has been felt by the positive and eager response of those attending presentations of the project and case study examples at local, state, regional, and national conferences. Attendees are impatient for final products as a good source of ideas and a guide of where to start and what to expect."

Currently, the "Volunteers for Rural Watersheds" project has reached its final phase and is transforming research findings into useable rural volunteer management resources. Final reports are being compiled into accessible case studies for each of the tested practices. If trials are deemed successful and replicable, practices will be reported in a toolkit of best practices to guide watershed organizations in rural areas. Campbell, reflecting on the 2½ years of research, comments, "I'm amazed at how far the scope of this project has grown. Many hardworking volunteers have put a ton of time and effort into making this project take flight. I hope that the efforts of these partners are realized through improved volunteer management in their own communities and watersheds. The toolkit that Jenna is currently putting together will offer an incredible variety of pragmatic examples to other organizations facing similar volunteer and community engagement struggles in their home places." 🌱



## Past Director Receives Prestigious Meritorious Service Award

Professor **William Flinn** was honored at the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences awards luncheon on March 5, 2011 for his substantial service to the Rural Sociology program and the international programs office in the college through his work in MUCIA. Congratulations Bill!

## SRI Affiliate Serving Abroad

**Tom Koontz**, Associate Professor in the School of Environment and Natural Resources and a member of the SRI Executive Council, will be spending spring quarter in Luneburg, Germany. Tom will be serving as visiting scholar at Leuphana University's research group on governance, participation, and sustainable development. Tom, who studies collaborative watershed management and water policy, will be collaborating with Prof. Jens Newig on research related to citizen participation in environmental governance. He will also be interviewing stakeholders involved in community-based watershed planning in Lower Saxony, a German state similar to Ohio in terms of land use and water issues.



## SRI Website Gets a New Look

The new and improved website is now active. Visit the site (**[www.sri.osu.edu](http://www.sri.osu.edu)**) to keep up-to-date on our happenings and to access the many resources we have available on the social dimensions of food, agricultural, and environmental issues.

## SRI Affiliate and USDA Fellow Highlight Survey Research on Consumers

Professor **Linda Lobao** and **Danielle Deemer** (former USDA-NIFA Fellow and current Environment and Natural Resources doctoral student) participated in the 2nd Annual Animal Welfare Symposium on November 30th and shared research on Ohioans' Perceptions of Farm Animal Welfare. The keynote speaker for the symposium was Dr. Temple Grandin, Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University and well-known animal handling expert. The purpose of the event was to build on the success of last year's Animal Welfare Symposium, and further the goal of increasing knowledge about and enhancing our ability to properly address farm animal welfare issues in Ohio. The symposium was co-hosted by The Ohio State University's Department of Animal Sciences and the College of Veterinary Medicine and there were approximately 200 stakeholders in attendance.



## Scaling-Up Connections between Regional Ohio Fruit and Vegetable Producers and Local Markets: Distribution as the Missing Link

Ohioans consume an estimated 4.65 billion pounds of vegetables and 3.08 billion pounds of fruit annually, yet less than 1% of these fruits and vegetables are grown by Ohio farmers. Consumer demand for locally grown foods continues to increase, given current production levels, Ohio farmers could be satisfying over 26% of Ohioans vegetable needs and 5% of their fruit needs. To increase the availability and accessibility of local foods to mainstream consumers, Ohio grown fruits and vegetables need to be integrated into the mainstream distribution system and retail markets (where over 90 percent of all food for home consumption is purchased) (USDA ERS, 2010). Few farmers have relationships with traditional fruit and vegetable distribution networks, limiting connections between consumer demand and Ohio farmers.

Recognizing the potential economic development opportunities for Ohio farmers, distributors, and retailers, the Ohio Food Policy Council, Food System Assessment Task Force partnered with Ohio State University's Center for Farmland Policy Innovation (in the Department of Agricultural, Environmental and Development Economics) and the Social Responsibility Initiative to understand the social and economic relationships distributors have with growers and retailers.

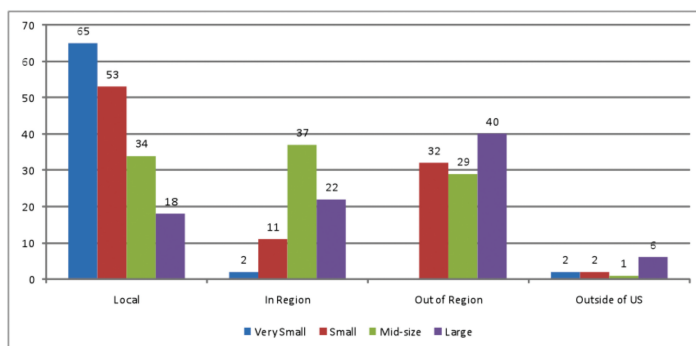
The research team conducted interviews with Ohio retailers, and surveyed Ohio fruit and vegetable distributors to: 1) Identify current fruit and vegetable distribution to retail outlets in Ohio, and; 2) Provide recommendations for scaling up the volume of Ohio fruit and vegetables distributed to retail outlets. Almost all fruit and vegetable distributors responding to the survey are headquartered in Ohio. The 39 fruit and vegetable distributors represent 219 distribution facilities in Ohio, 753 full time and 37,620 part time workers. This study was made possible by funding from an Ohio Department of Agriculture's Specialty Crop Block Grant.

### References:

USDA, ERS. 2010. Food Marketing System in the U.S.: Food Retailing. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodMarketingSystem/foodretailing.htm>

### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Governor Strickland established The Ohio Food Policy Council by Executive Order in 2007. The Council established four task forces, including the *Food System Assessment Task Force* which is charged with collecting and analyzing information on the production and processing of foods in Ohio, as well as the patterns of food consumption. In addition the task force is charged with identifying barriers: farming, distribution, processing, local and statewide markets and institutions.



*Distributors, Percentage of Ohio Grown Fruit and Vegetable Inventory in Height of Growing Season (Note: The percentages are averages for each category and therefore do not necessarily add to 100% for each distributor size.)*

### Highlights of the team's findings include:

**Market Expansion and Profitability.** All distributors agreed Ohio produce is priced comparably to fruits and vegetables grown in other states, and their transportation costs are lower because they are purchasing locally. Distributors also indicated they can sell Ohio grown foods at a premium. Respondents all reported it was important for the future of their business to purchase Ohio grown fruits and vegetables. Economic opportunities can expand by focusing on capacity building efforts for smaller growers and distributors that have the potential for participating, but lack the time and capital to participate.

**Partnerships to Develop Infrastructure.** Over 75% of distributors provided their contact information and reported they are willing to partner with growers and agencies to develop infrastructure and educational resources. Farmers, distributors and retailers can create strategic and profitable relationships by working together to develop produce lists and planting schedules, and by utilizing and expanding existing infrastructure such as adding cooling facilities to existing fruit and vegetable aggregation centers.

**Relationships Matter.** Distributors indicated having a personal relationship with farmers facilitated through face-to-face meetings were more important and useful compared to printed or on-line local grower directories. These results reinforce the important role local food trade shows and networking sessions have in expanding economic markets.

To learn more, visit: <http://cffpi.osu.edu/distribution.htm>. 🌱





## Social Responsibility Initiative Highlights

### Spring 2011 issue

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## Grants

Doohan, D., J. Parker, and M. Bean. "An Integrated Approach to Understanding Food Safety Practices and Attitudes Among Local Food System Actors." North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education, \$128,102.

Sharp, J.S., Clark, J.K. and S.M. Inwood. "Small and Medium Scale Farm Growth, Reproduction and Persistence at the Rural-Urban Interface: Balancing Family, Goals, Opportunities and Risks." National Institute of Food & Agriculture, \$343,931.

## Journal Articles

Bean, M. and J.S. Sharp. 2011. Profiling Alternative Food System Supporters: The Personal and Social Basis of Local and Organic Food Support." *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*. (Forthcoming).

Deemer, D. and L. Lobao. 2011. Public Concern with Farm Animal Welfare: Religion, Politics, and Human Disadvantage in the Food Sector. *Rural Sociology* 76. (Forthcoming).

Doohan, D., R. Wilson, E. Canales, and J. Parker. 2010. Investigating the Human Dimension of Weed Management: New Tools of the Trade. *Weed Science* 58(4): 503-510.

Cattaneo, A.A., R. Wilson, D. Doohan, and J. LeJeune. 2009. Bovine Veterinarians' Knowledge, Beliefs, and Practices Regarding Antibiotic Resistance on Ohio Dairy Farms. *J. Dairy Science*. 92: 3494-3502.

Wilson, R., J. Parker, D. Kovacs, D. Doohan, and J. LeJeune. 2009. Contamination Prevention and Response Related to Fresh-Cut Produce: An Expert Perspective on the Farmer Decision Making Process. *Food Protection Trends* 29: 488-492.

Wilson, R., J. LeJeune, M. Tucker, N. Hooker, and D. Doohan. 2009. Targeting the Farmer Decision-Making Process: A Pathway to Increased Adoption of Integrated Weed Management. *Crop Protection* 28: 756-764.

## Masters' Theses

Barton, Julia. 2010. "Agricultural and Food System Development at the Rural-Urban Interface." The Ohio State University. Jeff S. Sharp, Advisor.

## Outreach Workshops, Facilitation, and Engagement

Doohan, D. (Facilitator). FDA Sponsored Public Hearing on Safe Production of Fruits and Vegetables. The Ohio State University. Columbus, OH, March 2010. 500 participants.

Doohan, D. (Facilitator). Food Safety Education Planning Session with Ohio Produce Growers and Marketers and Ohio Produce Marketing Agreement. The Ohio State University. Columbus, OH, March 2010. 6 participants.

Moore, R.H. 2011. "Water Quality Trading in the Scioto Watershed." Waldo, OH, March 2011.

Moore, R.H. 2011. "Water Quality Trading in the Scioto Watershed." Mt. Victory, OH, March 2011.

Moore, R.H. 2011. "Water Quality Trading in the Scioto Watershed." Lancaster, OH, March 2011.

Moore, R.H. 2011. "Water Quality Trading in the Scioto Watershed." Plain City, OH, March 2011.