

CUSTOMNews

Representing Custom Farming in Wisconsin | **SPRING 2022**



After a session on H2A Visas, facilitated by USCHI, a group of dual WCO/USCHI members posed for a group photo at Symposium.

Two directors elected, advisor added, retiring directors honored *By WCO*

WCO members elected two directors, welcomed an advisor and honored retiring directors during the annual business meeting on Feb. 23, held in conjunction with the Forage Symposium at the Chula Vista Resort.

Amanda Krepline, an employee of Krepline Custom Harvesting LLC in Reedsville was elected as an operator director. Isaac Lemmenes, product specialist for R Braun, Inc. was re-elected as a corporate director. Joseph Sanford, assistant professor at UW-Platteville, joined the board as an advisor.

Krepline manages the bookkeeping and office for Krepline Custom Harvesting LLC as well as the family dairy and grain farms. During the season, Krepline serves

as a machinery operator. In addition to WCO, she is a member of Wisconsin Farm Bureau and supports her local 4-H and FFA activities. Krepline is passionate about promoting agriculture, with a keen focus on the diverse roles women play in the industry. In her free time, she enjoys snowmobiling, hunting, 4-wheeling and other outdoor activities. She also competes in rodeos and barrel racing. Together with her husband Larry, Krepline has one daughter.

Lemmenes serves as a product specialist and equipment sales representative for R Braun, Inc., a diverse farm service business that offers ventilation, excavation, dredging and manure services, fabrication, sales,

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UPCOMING DATES:

WCO Mini-grant program
Accepted on a rolling basis

WCO Scholarships
Applications due May 1

WI Farm Technology Days
July 12-14, Loyal, Wis.
Board meeting - July 12

CONTACT WCO:

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From the President's Cab: a grassroots movement

By Raymond Liska



Years ago, a group of individuals sat down together in a town hall style fashion because they wanted to change the outcome of their situation.

Ideas and goals were discussed, alliances were formed, decisions were made, and from that meeting came a group of individuals with the motivation to make a difference.

And while they weren't drafting the declaration of independence, they were drafting what would eventually become Wisconsin Act 377; giving agriculture on the highways the definition and clarity it needed to propel the Wisconsin agricultural machine to become one of the greatest fleets in the world.

Wisconsin Custom Operators members, board of directors, and sponsors were recently together in the Wisconsin Dells, in person, for the Forage Symposium and annual meeting. With the absence of our in person meeting last year, we made a point to serve our members in a bigger way in 2022.

Together with our education committee, the WCO board of directors works all year to bring you relevant topics from

experts. We hear time and time again that exhibitors, sponsors and most importantly our members find tremendous value in Symposium. Some even say it's the best event they attend all year!

Topics presented have ranged from current issues affecting custom operations, to new, unrealized areas of expertise, all to give you the 360-degree view of your business.

Probably the most visible additional investment at Symposium was our two keynote speakers. Tom Wall, also known as The Dairy Coach, opened the event with a thought provoking talk about "people problems" geared toward business owners. Recruiting and retaining talent has always been important to WCO members, and with competition for employees at an all-time high, Tom's presentation hit home for a lot of us.

Our Wednesday morning keynote, Shannon McCain, helped the audience work through generational differences in our businesses. Like many farms in Wisconsin, custom farming businesses are often multi-generational. This fact can be both our biggest asset and our greatest challenge.

Of all the relevant topics available at Symposium, safety remains the

cornerstone of our association by continuing our safety certification program, to ensure that everyone makes it home to their families this year. If you missed the accredited sessions this year, make sure to attend local safety events and send us a copy of the agenda so you can keep your certification current.

The founding members of WCO had an idea in mind when they decided to sit down together. But they weren't just paving the way for trucks and tractors, like their fathers and mothers before them. They were planting the grassroots movement that is still growing in our hearts today. These are the roots that connect people from coast to coast and beyond, and these are the roots that motivate us now to preserve the greatness of past, present, and future.

I encourage everyone this year to share your ideas, plant the seeds for future generations, and let WCO be the vehicle to propel those ideas forward. The deep roots of our existence have a firm hold in the soil of our society. Have a safe and happy harvest season, and may God be with you on your journey! 🍷

-Ray

board changes (continued from p. 1)

rental equipment and more. In addition to his corporate role, Lemmenes, also has experience as a custom manure applicator.

Sanford, assistant professor of agricultural and biosystems engineering in the School of Agriculture at UW-Platteville, joins the board as an honorary advisor. Sanford is one of the first faculty hired with funding from the state's Dairy Innovation Hub, which is a state investment of 7.8 million dollars per year split between Platteville, Madison and River Falls. His research interest is in agriculture wastewater management.

Officers were selected by the WCO board of directors, including three re-elected officers and a new vice-president. Ray Liska, owner of Apollo-Vale Enterprises in Cochrane was re-elected as president and William Smith, owner of Smith Custom Farming in Darlington was newly elected as vice-president. Josh Bartholomew, a corporate director from Oxbo International in Clear Lake, was re-elected as secretary and Isaac Lemmenes was re-elected treasurer.

Smith is the owner of Smith Custom Farming, which provides custom forage and grain harvesting services to farmers in Southwest Wisconsin. Smith also farms 2,000 acres of grain in the Darlington area. He is a member of Midwest Forage Association, Lafayette County Farm Bureau, National Federation of Independent Business and supports local FFA and 4-H activities. Smith Custom Farming has a strong presence on social media with nearly 3,000 people following their Facebook page. Smith and his wife, Jamie, have two sons.

Two retiring directors were honored at the meeting. Kevin Shinnars, professor



Jesse Dvorachek (left) and Kevin Shinnars (right) were honored for their service to WCO. Ray Liska, presented both awards. Photos by Troy Meyer.

emeritus of biological systems engineering at UW-Madison, was honored for his 14 years of service to WCO. Shinnars is credited with starting the scholarship and awards committee, developing the selection criteria, and running that committee since 2010. As WCO has grown, the board expanded the award dollar amounts and number of awards.

During his productive career at UW-Madison, Shinnars mentored 53 graduate students, brought in \$7.2 million in research funding, and published countless papers and book chapters. But it has been his passion for farmers and students that has always stood out. Sanford will step in as the new scholarship and awards committee chairman.

Jesse Dvorachek of Dvorachek Farm and Industry, LLC in Brillion was also

honored for his service to WCO.

The WCO board meets 3-4 times a year and holds conference calls periodically. If you are interested in joining the board, email execdir@wiscustomoperators.org.

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Issues to watch: Farm Service CDL By WCO

Like many agricultural supply chain partners, custom farmers struggle to find qualified CDL drivers. This is an ongoing problem that has been exacerbated by the pandemic and increased demand for drivers. Two years ago, during Dairy Day at the Capitol, WCO members discussed this issue with their elected leaders. Fast forward to today, with the pandemic hopefully in the rearview, WCO is working with fellow ag groups to address ongoing CDL challenges.

One potential solution would be to expand the existing Farm Service CDL (F endorsement) to make it more useful to custom operators, cooperatives, farmers, and other agricultural supply chain partners.

In full disclosure, making any changes

could be a challenge. First because many of the current parameters are federalized, meaning we can't easily change them, and second, because agribusiness partners are hesitant to disrupt something that is currently meeting their needs. To read more about the Farm Service CDL, google "WI Farm Service CDL".

The Farm Service CDL is available for seasonal employees in various farm service sectors. It is currently underutilized and at times discouraged as a CDL option for custom operators because the current parameters do not fit the realities of custom work. However, 'custom harvester' is one of the user categories.

There are three aspects of the Farm Service CDL, that if broadened, could

bring more drivers into the farm service industry, increase public safety, and improve efficiency and sustainability for Wisconsin farms.

Time frame: A Farm Service CDL is available for employees who work 180 days or less in a farm service industry. The recent federal bipartisan infrastructure package increased this to 210 days. The days can be divided into two separate time frames with two separate applications. Even with the extension, this time frame is prohibitive because the cropping season exceeds the 180 day calendar (or 210 days with the extension). Some users cannot break up the calendar days because they provide services throughout the summer.

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Continued from p. 4

A seasonal employee should be defined by the demands of the season. WCO would favor a time frame that covers a complete and continuous season.

Definition of 'custom harvester':

Farm Service CDL language describes custom harvesters as "a business that is engaged solely in the provision of for-hire harvesting services to farmers". The word 'solely' suggests that a custom harvester may not engage in any other business. Given the seasonality of harvesting, many custom operators have secondary businesses. WCO suggests removing the word 'solely'.

The term 'custom harvester' implies harvesting crops and excludes custom manure applicators, who are a very important part of Wisconsin agriculture, and who operate similar CMVs, during similar seasons. WCO suggests changing

the term to 'custom operator'.

Liquid fertilizer gallon limit: Transport of hazardous materials is allowed with a Farm Service CDL, however the 3,000 gallons limit for liquid fertilizer excludes custom manure hauling because most tanker CMVs used to haul liquid manure are upwards of 7,000 gallons. The current limit is based on the federal Pipeline and Hazardous Material Agency's rules restricting farm liquid fertilizers on a IOH transport to 3,000 gallons.

Amending the current Farm Service CDL parameters to be inclusive of modern agricultural best practice will encourage more custom operators and farm service providers to use this classification of CDL.

While a Farm Service CDL gives the driver the ability to operate Class B CMVs, it restricts drivers from operating a Class A (tractor/trailer combination) CMV. In

addition, there is a 150-mile distance-to-farm requirement.

More drivers with a Farm Service CDL will not increase competition for Class A CDL drivers; it will bring more talent to the agriculture profession, improve public safety, decrease road damage and increase efficiency. It could also act as a pipeline for additional Class A CDL drivers.

As previously mentioned, we haven't gotten overly optimistic feedback from trade groups who represent other users of the Farm Service CDL, but we still think there is a case to be made for these changes and legislators who would be willing to look into it.

During the legislative recess, we will continue to explore this and other solutions for WCO members struggling to find sufficient CDL drivers. 🧢

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Hannah Dahl



Reagan Scidmore

WCO announces scholarship winners; 2022 applications due May 1

By WCO

WCO recently awarded two scholarships. These students were selected based on leadership, civic engagement, academics and volunteer activities related to agriculture. Students also submitted essays detailing their educational and vocational plans for the future. Scholarship winners are required to have ties to the WCO – either as a member, relative or employee of a member, or as a relative of a member client. Students received a \$1,000 or \$1,500 scholarship.

“WCO understands that the foundation for the continued success of Wisconsin’s agricultural economy depends on a well-educated workforce,” said Kevin Shinnars, former chairman of the WCO Scholarship and Awards Committee and emeritus professor of biological systems engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. “We also recognize that the high-cost of additional education can impact this need.”

Reagan Scidmore of Chadwick, Ill. received a \$1,000 scholarship. She is a freshman at Highland Community College majoring in animal sciences, with plans to transfer to UW-Platteville. Reagan was raised on her family’s 300-cow dairy and beef farm, Scidmore Dairy LLC, where she assists with various farm chores. The farm is a customer of WCO member Schultz Bros. Forage Service in Dakota, Ill.

Hannah Dahl of Columbus, Wis. was selected to receive the \$1,500 Robert Hoerth Memorial Scholarship to honor WCO Past President Robert Hoerth who passed away unexpectedly in early 2020. This award is given to the most deserving scholarship applicant based on their alignment to the overall criteria. Hannah is a freshman at the University of Notre Dame majoring in economics with plans to attend law school to pursue a career in ag law. Hannah’s family are shareholders

in RG Miller and Sons dairy farm in Bristol, Wis. The farm is a customer of WCO member D & J Manthe Forage Service LLC in DeForest, Wis.

Applications for the 2022 WCO scholarship are due May 1. More information is on the WCO website under the “about us” tab.

In 2022, three (3) awards will be given: Two (2) \$1,000 scholarships and the \$1,500 Robert Hoerth Memorial Scholarship.

To be eligible, applicants may have direct family ties to a current WCO member or to an employee of a WCO member. Applicants may also be a member themselves. In addition, A WCO member may nominate a scholarship applicant who does not meet the above criteria. For example, if a WCO member has a customer who has an exemplary son, daughter, or employee, they are eligible to apply. 🇺🇸

And the winner is...



Jeremy Heim from Heim Brothers Custom LLC in Kewaunee, Wis. won \$1,000 at the recent WCO annual meeting during Forage Symposium. Members were entered to win after completing the online member survey and Jeremy’s name was chosen at random. Congrats Jeremy! 🇺🇸

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Membership incentive program

Don't forget - WCO has a membership incentive program! If you sign up a new member you receive \$25 towards your 2023 membership. Sponsors can participate also. Simply list your company name on the "referred by" line and earn money towards your 2023 membership or sponsorship.

Incentive not to exceed cost of membership or sponsorship. Help WCO grow our membership base!

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Additional policy and safety considerations

State Budget: The Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) projected the state will finish the 2021-23 budget with a \$3.8 billion surplus, nearly \$2.9 billion more than was expected just several months ago.

Nitrate Bills: AB 727 / SB 677 establishes a nitrate optimization pilot program, a cover crop incentive, and a state hydrogeologist position to conduct mapping. It passed the Assembly 96-0 and needs a vote in the Senate.

WCO Certification Program: Safety is the cornerstone of WCO and we are proud to offer a robust certification program. To become certified:

- Attend an in-person safety event every two years. 2022 is an "off" year
- Attend Symposium in "off years" for safety sessions, noted in registration materials
- or-
- Attend other trainings and submit materials. 🇺🇸

Please send your photos to WCO

Photos featured in the *Custom News* are taken by staff or submitted by members and sponsors. We are always looking for high quality images of custom farmers in action. We do our best to feature multiple brands of equipment and diverse custom farming practices.

Please e-mail your high-resolution images (1MB or larger) to execdir@wiscustomoperators.org and we will be sure to feature you on our social media channels and in our publications. Thank you in advance!



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Welcome new members!

These individuals/sponsors joined WCO from Nov. 2021 - March 2022

- » Riley Bores - Royal Flush Pit Pumping
- » Andrew Brown - Poettinger US Inc
- » Steve Enyart - Enyart Farms
- » Timothy Herricks - Herricks Enterprises
- » Nicholas JaDoul - Apollo-Vale Enterprises
- » Hans Johnson - Creeks Edge Farm
- » Raphiel Joliffe - Outlaw Ag, LLC
- » Max Kraus - Kraus Custom Forage Harvesting LLP
- » Marcus Krentz - Krentz Family Dairy
- » Amanda Krepline - Krepline Custom Harvesting
- » Brandon Lamers - Vanderloop Equipment
- » Joe Maass - Maass Farms
- » John Meyer - Quarry Hill Dairy
- » Midwest Ag and Commercial Contractors
- » Alex Perry - Vanderloop Equipment
- » Joe Pontbriand - Vanderloop Equipment
- » Alex Tesarik - French Creek Farms
- » Dane Trustem - Larson Acres
- » Steven Salzmman - Salzmman's Custom Field Work
- » Troy Strangstalien - Ag Pro LLC
- » Carey Vanderloop - Vanderloop Equipment
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“ I encourage everyone this year to share your ideas, plant the seeds for future generations, and let WCO be the vehicle to propel those ideas forward. ”

-Ray Liska, column on p. 2

To complete your no fee loH/Ag CMV permit applications
(Required as of January 1, 2015), go to
wisconsin.gov and search “no fee ag permits”

Questions about loH definitions and rules? Go to
wiscustomoperators.org/resources