

CUSTOMNews

Representing Custom Farming in Wisconsin | **SPRING 2023**



WCO's immediate past-president Ray Liska and his wife Holly testified in favor of Senate Bill 66 on March 15. Photo by Shawn Pfaff

WCO members testify in favor of SB 66

By Maria Woldt for WCO

WCO members have been meeting with legislators for three years to discuss the shortage of CDL drivers. In early 2022, WCO formed an alliance with Dairy Business Association and Cooperative Network, targeting the Farm Service CDL as an area of opportunity to bring more drivers into the industry, increase public safety, and improve efficiency and sustainability of Wisconsin farms.

WCO elevated several potential changes to the Farm Service CDL program, including to extend the 180-day window to 210 days, which would be consistent with federal law.

In February, legislation for this needed improvement moved forward as Senate Bill 66 introduced by Sen. Cory Tomczyk (R-Mosinee) and Assembly Bill 74

introduced by Rep. Jon Plumer (R-Lodi). On March 15, the Senate Transportation Committee held a public hearing for SB 66.

WCO members Ray and Holly Liska testified in favor of SB 66, sharing their personal story from the 2018 season when intense rains extended the harvest into December.

Many of their Farm Service CDL drivers were unable to finish the harvest because they ran out of days. Ray and Holly also discussed how many of their Farm Service CDL drivers go on to seek a Class A CDL after gaining confidence driving smaller Class B CMVs.

There will be a public hearing for AB 74 and we will keep you informed on the progress of these bills. 🇺🇸

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WCO Mini-grant program
Accepted on a rolling basis

WCO Scholarships
Applications due May 1

WI Farm Technology Days
July 18-20, Baraboo, Wis.
Board meeting - July 18

CONTACT WCO:

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From the President's Cab: a voice for custom farming

By William Smith



It's hard to believe that in just a few short weeks, we will be in the fields getting ready for another growing season. In fact, much of the cover crops in the Wisconsin have greened up and started to grow!

This is my first column as your president, and while I won't be in this role long (I have one year left in my board term), it's an honor to serve the membership.

This past February, we celebrated with our annual Forage Symposium event in Wisconsin Dells and as usual, the speakers did not disappoint. WCO organized content based on your suggestions, including client bankruptcy, different employee visa types, DOT rules, and more.

One of my favorite speakers was Dr. David Kohl and his presentation about 'mega trends' for 2023 and beyond. I've heard him speak a few times before and I always love listening to his predictions of the agricultural economy for the future. His thoughts on land values, interest rates, and world economics are usually

pretty close to reality.

During the WCO annual meeting, held in conjunction with Forage Symposium, we said farewell to three retiring board members who have had a huge impact on the organization. Ray Liska, immediate past president, Derek Ducat, and Josh Bartholomew. It's been an honor working alongside these three guys for several

“Being ‘busy’, albeit legitimate, delegates the work of engaging with elected leaders to ‘someone else’. As WCO members, we are the best representatives for our industry.”

years, and we wish them well in their future endeavors.

We welcomed new faces to the board too. John Osterhaus, Jeremy Heim, and Randy Clark stepped up and we are looking forward to leveraging their talents to benefit WCO. John was even elected VP

during his first board meeting! Our article on page 3 will provide a glimpse into their backgrounds and businesses.

In my role as president, I am excited to help continue to elevate our issues to elected leaders. One such opportunity is at Dairy Day at the Capitol on April 19 in Madison. WCO is a sponsor of this event, and we have the unique opportunity to talk directly with our local legislators about issues that are important to us, such as proposed changes to the Farm Service CDL, among others.

As farmers and custom operators, we often want to be left alone to do our work. Being 'busy', albeit legitimate, delegates the work of engaging with elected leaders to 'someone else'. As WCO members, we are the best representatives for our industry, and should be the people who talk about how regulations and laws impact our businesses. We realize that talking to people in Madison isn't for everyone, so we try to make it as easy as possible – and, have a seat at the table when critical conversations are happening.

I look forward to serving this year and wish you a safe and timely spring. 🍷

Three directors elected to WCO board, retiring directors honored

By WCO

WCO members recently elected three directors and honored retiring directors during the group's annual business meeting on Feb. 22, held in conjunction with the Forage Symposium at the Chula Vista Resort.

Jeremy Heim and John Osterhaus were elected as operator directors. Randy Clark was elected as a corporate director.

Heim is co-owner of Heim Brothers Custom in Kewaunee, a 200-million gallon per year custom manure hauling and chopping business. In addition to the custom business, Heim is co-owner of an 850-cow dairy, Heim's Hillcrest Dairy. Together with this wife Kari, Heim has two kids, Ben (18) and Kiley (27). Kiley has been working full time on the farm since 2013 focusing on calf care and Ben plays a big role in field work and the custom business.

Osterhaus owns Silver Streak AG Services in Chadwick, Ill. with his wife, Monica. Together, they harvest 5,000 acres annually in Northwest Illinois and sell and service Meyer Manufacturing equipment. In addition to WCO, he is an active member US Custom Harvesters. The Osterhaus' have three grown children, including a son, Alan, who has

continued his passion for agriculture as a marketing specialist for CLAAS of America. Two of their children have been awarded WCO scholarships.

Clark is the owner of RCI Engineering in Mayville, where he designs and manufactures equipment solutions for the hay and forage industry, including plot research equipment and the Ag-Bag product line. In addition to WCO, he is involved with Wisconsin Section of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers, Midwest Forage Association, and other industry groups. Clark credits his wife, Wendy, for his success in business and in life. The two work together at RCI Engineering where Wendy serves as marketing manager. They have three boys, Ryan (15), Isaac (13) and Colin (10) and enjoy snowmobiling, hunting, and whatever adventures the boys want to seek out.

Officers were selected by the WCO board of directors. William Smith, owner of Smith Custom Farming in Darlington will serve as president and John Osterhaus, owner of Silver Streak AG Services in Chadwick, Ill. as vice-president. Amanda Krepline, an employee of Krepline Custom Harvesting LLC in Reedsville was elected as secretary

and Isaac Lemmenes, product specialist for R Braun, Inc. 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.

Krepline manages the bookkeeping and office for Krepline Custom Harvesting LLC as well as the family dairy and grain farms. During the season, she serves as a machinery operator. Together with her husband Larry, Krepline has one daughter.

Ray Liska of Apollo-Vale Enterprises in Cochrane, Derek Ducat of Ducat Farms Custom Work in Kewaunee, and Josh Bartholomew, territory manager for Oxbo International in Clear Lake retired from the board of directors and were honored for their years of service. 🍷



Jeremy Heim



John Osterhaus



Randy Clark

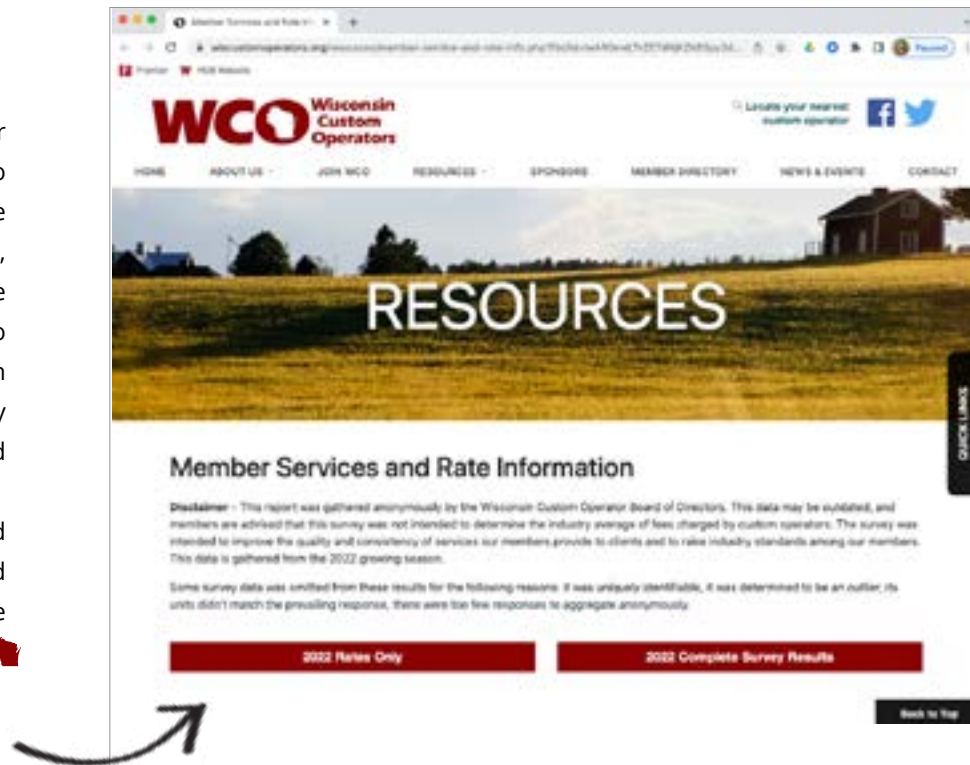


William Smith

Member survey data on the WCO website

Data from the most recent member survey is live on the WCO website. Go to wiscusomopertors.org and click the “resources” tab. From the drop down, select “member services and rate information”. Users have the option to view rates only, or the entire survey, which contains information on technology adoption, employee management, and other relevant topics.

WCO invested significant time and money into the member survey itself and the resulting data visualization. We hope that you will find value in this resource! 🍷



WCO safety videos enhance spring team meetings



John Shutske

WCO planned to host three safety certification sessions at the recent Forage Symposium in Wisconsin Dells.

Unfortunately due to the weather, we had to cancel two of these sessions.

Our speaker, Dr. John Shutske, generously recorded his sessions and posted them to YouTube. There are additional materials linked in the comments sections that Dr. Shutske references during the videos to engage your employees and enhance learning.

These videos are excellent tools to use as you prepare for the 2023 growing season – you can watch as a group, or individually.

Make sure to *actually do* the activities, and take time to reflect on the material. The videos also work well as a podcast.

After you have watched or listened to the videos, complete the online attendance sheet for credit toward your WCO safety certification.

Email Dr. Shutske directly with questions, john.shutske@wisc.edu, so he can best assist and learn about situations you encounter in the field.

Topics include:

Technology, automation & safety

<https://youtu.be/KrleCTTCjY>

Coping with stress in an uncertain ag economy

<https://youtu.be/WAzNgMGZ2Mk>

To access the YouTube videos, online attendance sheet, and other resources, open the camera on your smart phone and **scan the QR code.** 🍷



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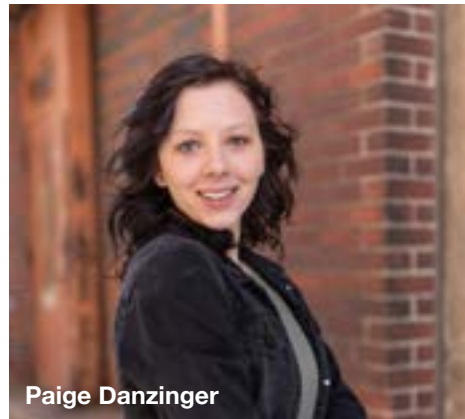
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WCO announces scholarship winners; 2023 applications due May 1

By WCO

WCO recently awarded two scholarships to students pursuing further education. 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.

“WCO understands that continued success of Wisconsin’s agricultural economy depends on a well-trained workforce,” said Joseph Sanford, chairman



Paige Danzinger

of the WCO Scholarship and Awards Committee and assistant professor in the School of Agriculture at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. “We also recognize that there are a growing number of training opportunities to fulfill this need, ranging from traditional college experiences to trade and apprenticeship programs.”

Paige Danzinger of Alma, Wis. received a \$1,000 scholarship. She is a first-year student at Chippewa Valley Technical College majoring in animal science management. Paige was raised on her family’s 600-cow dairy farm and custom harvesting business, DS Farms, where she assists with feeding calves, herd health and driving tractor during harvest.

Initially, Paige planned to pursue a career in the medical field, but after working as a Certified Nursing Assistant during high school, she found herself being called back to the farm. Paige enjoys working with animals and her educational background will help her reach her goal of eventually taking over the family dairy farm. DS Farms is long-time member of WCO.

Chloe Ertl of Stanley, Wis, also received a \$1,000 scholarship. She is a second-year student at Northcentral Technical College majoring in agribusiness with a certificate in graphic design. Chloe discovered her passion for agriculture as a high school student when a scheduling error landed her in an ag class. From there, she joined FFA and pursued multiple leadership opportunities, ultimately setting her sights on a career in agriculture.



Chloe Ertl

In addition to her studies, Chloe is a marketing assistant at Swiderski Equipment in Thorpe, Wis. After college, she hopes to continue her career in agriculture marketing and eventually start her own direct-to-consumer beef farm. Swiderski Equipment is a corporate member and sponsor of WCO.

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

In 2023, 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.

New in 2023, the program has been expanded to include any post-secondary training program including traditional college experiences and career training programs such CDL truck driver training courses, pesticide applicator training program/exam, or other industry relevant training programs. Individuals on a non-academic post-secondary education path searching for career opportunity in the industry such as joining a harvest crew or other apprenticeship program, are also encouraged to apply. 🇺🇸

Don’t forget about WCO’s mini-grant program!

In addition to scholarships and other awards, WCO has a mini-grant program designed to provide smaller, more flexible awards to assist with important projects or programs that will benefit the custom farming community and the ag community.

The WCO board feels strongly that it is important to invest in great people and innovative ideas. To learn more about the mini-grant program and to download the application, go to wiscustomoperators.org and click the “about us” tab.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and awards range from \$500-\$5,000. Funding is available as soon as

the application is approved by WCO. Funds are distributed as follows: 50% upon application approval and 50% upon receipt of final report.

Like most grants, there are reporting obligations and we also ask that recipients be willing to speak about their project at a WCO event such as the annual Forage Symposium.

Priority is given to projects that:

>>Directly benefit the custom farming community

>>Involve custom farmers or clients of custom farmers

>>Involve post-secondary student research or organization opportunities

>>Emphasize farm safety and health, leadership, teamwork, sustainability, innovation or community involvement

This program is open to university/technical college faculty, staff, students, student organizations or non-profit organizations. Others deemed appropriate by the WCO Scholarship and Awards Committee will also be considered.

Examples include: Funding for students as part of larger project, costs associated with hosting an event or farmer meeting, incentive funds for farmers/custom farmers to try new practices.

Questions? Call (608) 577-4345 or email execdir@wiscustomoperators.org 🇺🇸

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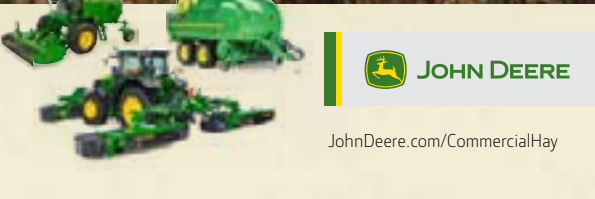


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Membership incentive program

Don't forget - WCO has a membership incentive program! If you sign up a new member you receive \$25 towards your 2024 membership. Sponsors can participate also. Simply list your company name on the "referred by" line and earn money towards your 2024 membership or sponsorship.

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

Welcome to WCO

General Members (\$50/year) derive their income (whole or part) from custom farming. Receive full voting rights and featured on website with business information.

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Welcome new members!

These individuals/sponsors joined WCO from Nov. 2022 – March 2023

- » Trevor Balthazor – Riesterer & Schnell
- » Heath Berndt – Dairy Queens Farms LLC
- » Adam Boeder – Riesterer & Schnell
- » Chad Clemment – HHR Harvesting
- » John Cooper – Swiderski Equipment
- » Jennifer Folkman – Ryan’s Farm Services, LLC
- » Beau Froese – U.S. Custom Harvesters
- » Matthew Holub – Holub Custom Work
- » Trevor Johnson – HHR Harvesting
- » Kevin Klubertanz – Vanderloop Equipment
- » Jim Klug – Klug Tile Installation
- » Dawson Miller – Miller Custom Harvesting
- » Andrew MIsna – HHR Harvesting
- » William Nate – Nate Farms Custom AG
- » Jason Orr – Woeste Custom Harvesting
- » Bronson Pederson – HHR Harvesting
- » Austin Rogers – AB Ag Services
- » Andy Schleusner – AB Ag Services
- » Joshua Schloneger – AB Ag Services
- » Coby Snider – Silver Streak AG Services
- » Ernie Sundstrom – Sundstrom’s Pit Pumping
- » Carrie Tesarik – French Creek Farms, LLC
- » Steve Tesarik – French Creek Farms, LLC
- » Cody VanDyke – VanDyke Ag Services
- » Alex Van Zeeland – Vanderloop Equipment
- » Dustin Vervoort – Forage Storage Solutions, LLC
- » Sarah Wagler – Nutrient Management Partners
- » Dan Wussow – Wussow Farms LLC

Issues to watch in the biennial state budget

Rural road funding – we need a long-term sustainable fix. Rural roads are important to Wisconsin’s economy, and they need to be funded accordingly.

Support for clean water initiatives – increased funding for water quality programs such as the farmer led watershed program, farmland preservation program, nitrogen optimization program etc.

Improvements to the CAFO program – our customers need efficiency, reduced wait times, and other improvements.

WCO is a proud sponsor of Dairy Day at the Capitol, Wednesday, April 19. To register, visit dairyforward.com

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 and we do our best to feature diverse equipment brands and 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! 🇺🇸



WCO members attending the USCHI convention. Submitted by Kathy Vander Kinter, Denmark, Wis.

Kraus wins \$1,000 grand prize!



Julie Kraus from Kraus Custom Forage Harvesting in Elkhart Lake, 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 Julie’s name was chosen at random. Congrats Julie! 🇺🇸



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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”

photo by Andres Dreyton

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