

# CUSTOM News

Representing custom farming in Wisconsin and beyond | FALL 2024



## Online equipment auction benefits WCO; now accepting consignments *By Maria Woldt for WCO*

WCO is proud to announce our third annual an Fall online auction, Nov. 26–Dec. 10, coordinated by Hansen Auction Group. Consignments are accepted through November 22. The auction includes machinery typical for custom operators, but virtually all items will be considered.

WCO is always looking for creative ways to raise funds and keep costs to members down. In addition, industry consolidation has a natural impact on our sponsorship revenue. Given these factors, our fall and spring auctions have quickly become one of our largest fundraising opportunities. The WCO board wants to continue supporting our members through quality content at Symposium,

increased scholarships, industry data, policy initiatives, and more.

WCO receives a percentage of the buyers fee from this auction.

Consignments from WCO members and outside sellers are accepted - ask about Hansen’s zero commission option! To make a consignment, contact Parker Massey from Hansen Auction Group at [parker@hansenauctiongroup.com](mailto:parker@hansenauctiongroup.com) or by phone at (715) 642-3981.

To preview and purchase items, go to [hansenauctiongroup.com](http://hansenauctiongroup.com) and search for the WCO auction. We will also send an email and promote on our social channels. The auction runs from Nov. 26 thru Dec. 10 at 6 p.m. 🇺🇸

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## UPCOMING DATES:

**WCO Mini-grant program**  
Accepted on a rolling basis

**WCO Fundraising Auction**  
Ends Tues. Dec. 10  
Online

**Forage Symposium**  
Feb. 17-19, 2025  
Chula Vista, Wis. Dells

## CONTACT WCO:

[execdir@wiscustomoperators.org](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org)  
(608) 577-4345

## From the President's Cab: *Invite a friend*

By John Osterhaus



What a difference this fall has been compared to the spring. After much of the region dealt with extremely wet conditions this spring, we had a very dry fall. We had less than two days that we were shut down due to rain here in Northwestern Illinois this corn silage season.

Unusually warm and dry weather caused the corn to dry down faster than normal. So instead of dealing with mud, we spent our time chasing corn as it was getting too dry. Personally, I'll take the warm, dry conditions over rain and mud.

I hope everyone progressed with fall harvest and manure application in a safe and timely manner.

It doesn't seem possible but it's time to start thinking about attending our annual Symposium in Wisconsin Dells, February 17-19 at Chula Vista. Not only would I encourage you to attend but also invite a few non-members that you think could benefit from becoming a member.

A personal invitation to an event like this is a great way to reach out to potential member prospects. If you

know of someone, feel free to contact either myself or Maria and we will have membership or Symposium info sent to that person.

In addition to fellow operators as new members, please think about the companies you do business with. Are they at the Symposium? Should they be? Our

**“ A personal invitation to Symposium is a great way to reach out to potential member prospects. Don't be afraid to invite a few non-members. ”**

sponsors and trade show participants help fund our association activities for the year, and we need their support. Give Maria a call or email with names she should reach out to.

As we are getting our speakers and discussion topics finalized for this year, I ask that if you have any suggestions for future topics and or speakers, please share them with a board member. Many

of our speakers have been selected because someone heard them speak at a previous event. We are always looking for new ideas. As is the case with the Symposium every year, our topics come directly from member feedback, either from the paper surveys or from someone contacting a board member directly.

Speaking of a new, but yet old idea, the board has been talking about doing another silage event. We are interested in hearing your ideas and needs for this type of safety day. Please reach out to me or a board member with your ideas or requests. We are planning on holding it at the University of Wisconsin Arlington Ag Research Station which is about 20 minutes from Madison. A date in the early spring of 2026 is being discussed as well. Please give us your feedback so that we can make this a successful event.

We hope to see you at the Forage Symposium in Wisconsin Dells in February. If we have not met before, please feel free to stop me and say hi.

I hope you have a great holiday season and that 2024 was a safe and successful year. 🇺🇸

*- John*





## Election recap

Early November saw some exciting and important races for the nation and Wisconsin. In general, WCO doesn't endorse candidates, but we do advocate for favorable agriculture policy and work across party lines with like-minded legislators.

As we all know by now, President Donald Trump was re-elected as the 47th president of the United States. He won Wisconsin's 10 electoral votes, receiving 49.7% of the state's vote. Despite Trump's victory, Senate Democrat Tammy Baldwin won re-election because she outperformed the Democratic candidate for president Kamala Harris across most of Wisconsin, especially in rural areas.

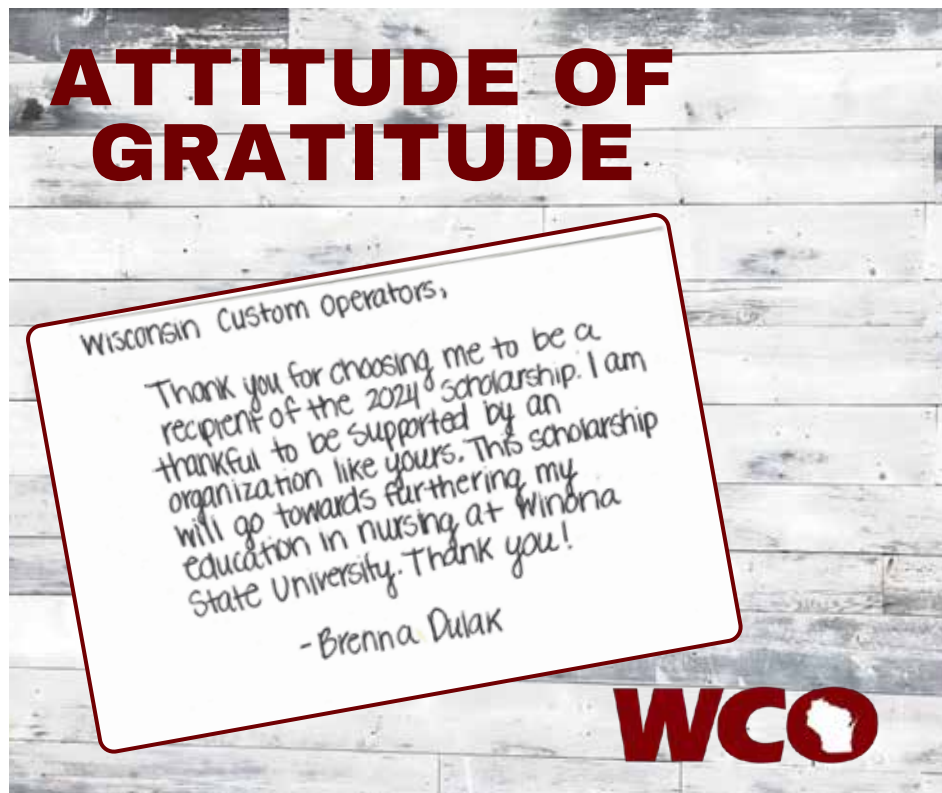
Baldwin has supported agriculture-friendly legislation across several administrations and experts expect that trend to continue.

On the state side, the Democrats gained three seats in the state Senate due to recently redrawn district maps – including those of GOP state Sens. Joan Ballweg and Duey Stroebel.

Ballweg's loss is especially troubling for the agriculture community as she chaired the Senate Ag Committee and was a long-time supporter of policy that was favorable to farmers and related businesses.

In local elections, Wisconsin voters passed 78 percent of the school district referendum funding requests accounting for \$3.4 billion for infrastructure, staff salary increases, and programming.

The 2025-2026 state legislative session begins on January 6, 2025, with the inauguration. WCO will continue to monitor relevant policy and other legislative engagement opportunities on behalf of members. 🇺🇸



We love hand-written thank you notes! Learn more about Brenna and her fellow scholarship recipients in the spring 2025 newsletter.



## Reconnect with friends and contacts, learn from inspiring speakers

By Maria Woldt for WCO



Maria Woldt

It's that time of year again! We are excited to host the 2025 Forage Symposium, February 17-19 again at Chula Vista Resort. The event follows President's

Day weekend which seems to be popular as many kids are off school, and attendees bring their families to enjoy the water park.

The WCO Education Committee works all year on topics for the Symposium. They gather feedback from members, pay close attention to emerging trends and attend other industry events for speaker ideas. Increasingly, other groups book our speakers for their own events after hearing them at Symposium. We love it when our speakers gain exposure from our event and our fellow organizations can preview excellent speakers.

As of November, we are a short four months from the event, and WCO has all our topics chosen – including two high impact keynotes for the whole group to enjoy – plus those in the “WCO room”. Like previous years, the WCO board feels strongly about investing in excellent speakers for Symposium, even if it requires additional funds.

On Tuesday morning, we are excited to welcome keynote speaker Amanda Radke, a fifth-generation rancher from Mitchell, SD. Alongside her husband, Tyler, and their four children, they operate Radke Land & Cattle, an Angus seedstock operation. A former National FFA Extemp Speaking Champion and National Beef

Ambassador, Radke has spent nearly 20 years on the road fighting to keep agricultural families on the land, rural main street businesses thriving, and an abundance of food on the dinner table.

Amanda is an entrepreneur at heart and wears many hats, in addition to being a ranch mom. Amanda will speak to the large group about dealing with stress, navigating pitfalls, and generational conflicts. Later in the WCO room, she will speak about ag storytelling, advocacy, and promoting agriculture in your own way.

On Wednesday of Symposium, we will continue with our “forage harvesting around the country/world” theme with Matthias Siegrist from Siegrist Harvesting in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Matthias was born in Europe and will share his experience of moving across the world, starting a business, and what keeps Siegrist Harvesting going. He'll touch on some similarities with US farming trends as well as dramatic differences with Canadian agriculture. Matthias will answer all your equipment questions based on his fleet.

More information will roll out in the next month, and registration opens in December, so watch your mail and email. We can't wait to see all of you in February for these and other exciting speakers. 🇺🇸



Siegrist Harvesting



Amanda Radke



### Member survey data on the WCO website

Data from the WCO member survey is online. Go to [wiscustomoperators.org](http://wiscustomoperators.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.

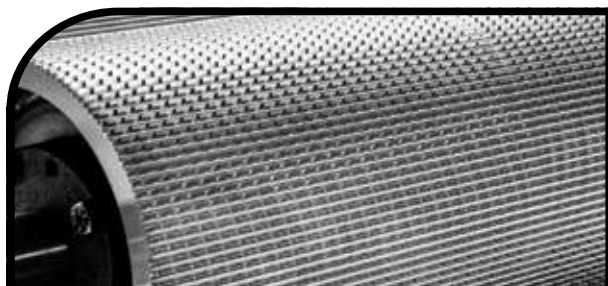
WCO invested significant time and money into the member survey itself and the resulting data visualization. We hope that you will find value in this resource, and complete the survey when it lands in your email! 🇺🇸



### Complete the WCO member survey, win \$1,000!



This could be you! Daryll Manthe won \$1,000 because he completed the WCO member survey. Be like Daryll. The survey is sent to WCO operator members in January and everyone who makes a submission is compensated *and* entered to win our grand prize.



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# Wisconsin Custom Operators 3rd Annual Fall Auction Now Accepting Consignments



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**WCO receives a percentage of the buyers fee!**

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**Auction Ends: December 10th**

**Last Day to Consign: November 22nd**

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### 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 and the ag communities.

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](http://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.

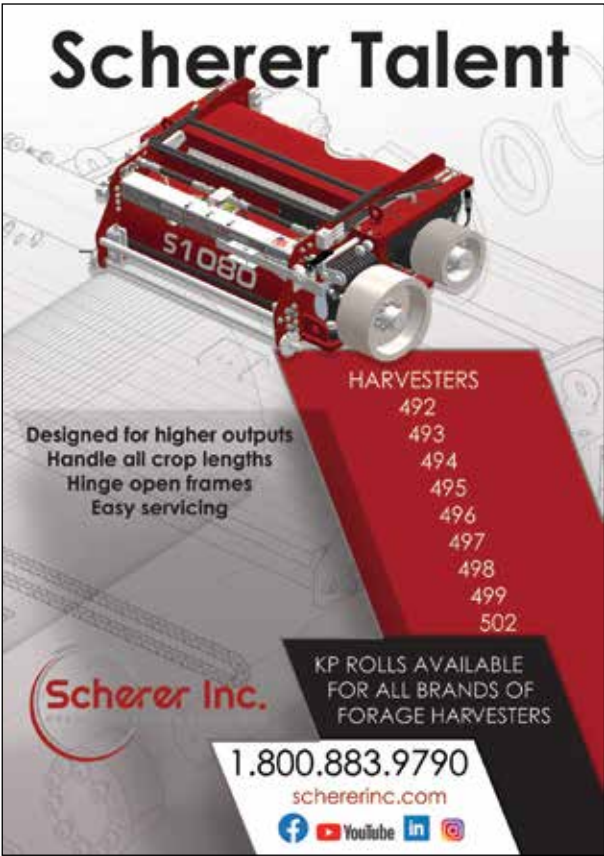
- Priority is given to projects that:
- >>Directly benefit the custom farming community
  - >>Involve custom farmers or clients of custom farmers
  - >>Involve post-secondary student research or organization opportunities
  - >>Emphasize farm safety and health,

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](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org)



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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 2025 membership. Sponsors can participate also. Simply list your company name on the "referred by" line and earn money towards your 2025 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.

**Associate Members (\$50/year)** support the custom farming industry, but do not engage in custom farming themselves.

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**Please return membership form with payment to:**

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[www.wiscustomoperators.org](http://www.wiscustomoperators.org)

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## 2024 Directors

- President – John Osterhaus
- Vice President – Jeremy Heim
- Secretary – Randy Clark (corp. rep)
- Treasurer – Isaac Lemmenes (corp. rep)
- Southeast region – Pat Johnson
- Southwest region – Bruce Dannenberg
- At-large director – Amanda Krepline
- Honorary Representatives:  
Dr. Brian Luck, UW–Madison  
Dr. Joe Sanford, UW–Platteville

**In 2025, WCO will elect the following:**

- At-large operator director
- Corporate director

## Forage Symposium speaker highlights:

- » **Amanda Radke** – professional speaker, podcaster, and farmer from South Dakota
- » **Matthias Siegrist, Siegrist Harvesting Inc** – farmer and custom operator from Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
- » **Brittany Herricks**, 1st Community Credit Union and Herricks Enterprises

## Renew your membership or sponsorship

Membership renewals mail at the beginning of December and will include information to register for Forage Symposium. You can renew your membership when you register or you can renew directly with WCO. Either option is acceptable, but we always appreciate direct renewals by check or online payment. Sponsorship renewals will mail the week of Thanksgiving and must be paid direct to WCO. 🇺🇸

## Board nominations & annual meeting

WCO is looking for board of director nominations. Elections will take place during the annual meeting at 8 a.m. on Feb. 19, 2025 held at the Chula Vista resort in Wisconsin Dells. Directors must be members of WCO and serve three-year terms with no more than two consecutive terms.

The board meets four times per year:

- February** - At Forage Symposium
- March (if needed)** - At WCO safety event or conference call
- July** - At WI Farm Tech Days
- December** - Stand alone meeting

If you are interested in running or know someone who is, contact Maria Woldt, executive director, at [execdir@wiscustomoperators.org](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org) or (608) 577-4345. 🇺🇸

## Join a committee

If you are looking for a small but important way to get involved, consider joining a committee:

- » *Education/Conference*
- » *Media*
- » *Scholarship & Awards*
- » *Safety/Regulations*


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## 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](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org) and we will be sure to feature you on our social media channels and in our publications. Thank you in advance! 🇺🇸



Students at the WCO-sponsored tractor safety training also toured Feltz Family Farms and Dairy Store in Stevens Point, Wis. Photo contributed



WCO periodically hosts plant tours with our association sponsors. Last winter, the WCO board travelled to Clear Lake, Wis. to tour the Oxbo plant. Board members love the opportunity to talk shop with the makers of their favorite product lines. Want to host the board? Contact us! Photo by WCO 🇺🇸

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*Heim Brothers Custom, Algoma, Wis. Photo by Dan Hegenow*