

# CUSTOMNews

Representing Custom Farming in Wisconsin | FALL 2016



Greenbay Packer Jordy Nelson poses with the crew from Arneson Custom Harvesting, LLC. Nelson was shooting a commercial on a nearby farm.

## WCO Member Survey:

### What we've learned & future plans

By Matt Digman, chairman, WCO Special Projects

2016 marks the second year for the WCO member survey. If you missed the survey last year, I would encourage you to participate. Not convinced? Take a look at last year's summary (2014 data) under the resources tab on the WCO website and read on as we share the progress that we've made in just one year.

In the first year of the survey we were able to observe that although hourly rates from custom operators were higher than data reported by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), our rates were more comparable on a per acre basis. Our interpretation of this finding is that our members' larger, more productive machines may necessitate higher hourly costs but are more cost-effective at covering acres. Stated another way, it demonstrates the cost-benefit of the wider, more productive machines

employed by our operators.

This year, with the mission of better understanding the link between productivity and cost in mind, we've modified the survey to include average harvested width and speed. You might ask us: which field, what yield and what cutting? We're not looking for the YouTube video where you clocked 10 MPH with a 12-row head; instead, we are asking you to report width and speed considering a typical field size, shape and yield. In alfalfa, we'd like to separate first cutting from subsequent cuttings. It is our goal to use this data to study the link between per acre and per hour costs.

Our survey isn't just about machines and productivity. It's also about recruiting, educating and retaining the best people. In an effort to disseminate the best practices, we plan to again ask about pay and benefits offered

*Continued on page 2*

## INSIDE:

President's Cab.....	2
WCO sponsors.....	3
WCO board & nominations.....	4
Welcome new members.....	4
Membership incentive.....	5
Employee of the Year.....	6
Policy update.....	6
Symposium info.....	8
Permit links.....	8

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

WCO Board Meeting - Dec. 7

Forage Symposium  
Jan. 23-25, 2017  
Chula Vista Resort  
Wisconsin Dells, Wis.

Spring Business  
Development Workshop  
March 2017, location TBD

## CONTACT WCO:

Membership or Sponsorship:  
execdir@wiscustomoperators.org  
(608) 577-4345



## From the President's Cab

By Kathy Vander Kinter



Greetings and happy forage harvesting and nutrient application season! Hopefully your harvesting has been going well and has been safe and profitable

thus far. I will keep my column brief as there is never a lack of things to be done this time of year.

It's hard to believe, but the planning and details of the topics and speakers for the winter conference are almost complete! The Education Committee strives to bring our members the latest tools and technology as well as human resource and business management ideas to add to your professional portfolio. Your feedback has prompted the committee to try something a little different this year in the way the topics are presented.

This year we are offering a tract scheduling format where some topics will repeat throughout the event. This approach will enable you to attend more of the topics you are specifically interested in. WCO has a fair amount of members who are also members of

MFA and PNAAW and this will allow more flow to all the groups involved as well as manager verses employee interests.

Your feedback will be helpful to determine if this schedule will benefit you our members in the future. Topic ideas for the 2018 conference will be collected as in the past so bring your ideas with you!

One topic that will be on the schedule at this year's symposium involves crisis communication. I want to highlight this topic selfishly because I believe it is an important one. In this session, Jane Hillstrom, from Hillstrom PR will highlight how to effectively handle the media, neighbors and emergency workers in the event of an accident or catastrophe. For example, if you have a manure spill, what do you say if a news crew comes to the scene? What if a neighbor approaches you because he/she doesn't like corn silage remnants on their lawn...how do you handle these situations whether you are an owner, operator, employee or just the first person on the scene?

What you say and do in these will reflect your business, your employment, possible litigation and

the entire agriculture community. Please be sure to attend this session as I think it will be a huge benefit to your business.

On another note I would like to thank all the sponsors and members for your continued financial support and membership. Without a doubt, WCO has come a long way since its inception. I am proud to have served as a board member and most recently, President, for such an awesome group of people. At this year's symposium my 2nd term for the northern region will be complete. Isaac Lemmenes' 1st term in the southeast region will be up and he will not be seeking re-election. In the Corporate Rep. position, Troy Meyer will have completed his 2nd term on the board.

Please be thinking of members that would be a "good fit" to join the board and fill these shoes! Contact Maria or Cole to nominate someone or volunteer yourself ahead of time. It is a truly rewarding experience.

It is time to say farewell for now! As always, be safe!

-Kathy

## WCO Survey (continued from p. 1)

including what opportunities you offer your employee for growth in your business. We hope that through the exchange of ideas here and our newly-developed employee of the year program that WCO members can attract and cultivate the best harvesters in the country.

And finally, our survey is an opportunity to share how you promote your business and retain clients. Here again, we'd like to get a pulse on how members are using both traditional and social media to promote businesses and the value that highly-trained, professional custom operators bring to Wisconsin agriculture.

If you weren't able to participate in last year's survey, please take a look at our first year's data and consider the value of your contribution. If you contributed last year, we'd like to see how things are changing in your business. And most importantly, if you have ideas on how we might improve the survey, we'd like to hear from you. It is the goal of the survey committee to continue the advancement of our industry through the exchange of ideas facilitated by the WCO survey.

**Take the WCO  
member survey at  
<http://bit.do/WCO16>**



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*It's Time to Renew!*

WCO sponsorships expire in December. Notices are sent via mail and e-mail. Please remember to renew your sponsorships before the end of 2016 - important Symposium discounts depend on it! You can also renew and pay online at [wiscustomoperators.org](http://wiscustomoperators.org)



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**Board of Directors  
2016**

**President** – Kathy Vander Kinter  
**Vice President** – Cole Olson  
**Secretary** – Troy Meyer (corp rep.)  
**Treasurer** – Chuck Rabitz (corp. rep.)  
**Director at Large** – Bryce O’Leary  
**Director at Large** – Isaac Lemmenes  
**Director at Large** – Bill Arneson

**Honorary Representatives**  
Dr. Kevin Shinnars, UW-Madison  
Dr. Matt Digman, UW-River Falls

**Board Nominations**

WCO is looking for Board of Director nominations. Elections will take place at the annual meeting on Jan. 25, 2017, held in conjunction with the Symposium event at Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells. Directors must be members of WCO and serve three year terms and with no more than two consecutive terms.

**In 2017, WCO members will elect:**

- Corporate rep
- North Region (operator)
- South East Region (operator)

If you are interested in running or know someone who is, contact:  
execdir@wiscustomoperators.org  
or (608) 577-4345.

**Join a committee**

Looking to get involved in a specific area of WCO? Consider joining one of the following committees:

- |             |                  |
|-------------|------------------|
| scholarship | media            |
| education   | membership       |
| safety      | special projects |

**Welcome New Members!**

The following individuals joined WCO from July 1 to Nov. 15, 2016.

- |               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| Joe Austin    | <b>New sponsors:</b> |
| Mike Bearson  | McFarlanes’          |
| Jake Erickson | HUB International    |
| Shawn Guetter | Titan International  |
| Allen Hoff    |                      |
| Joe O’Hearn   |                      |

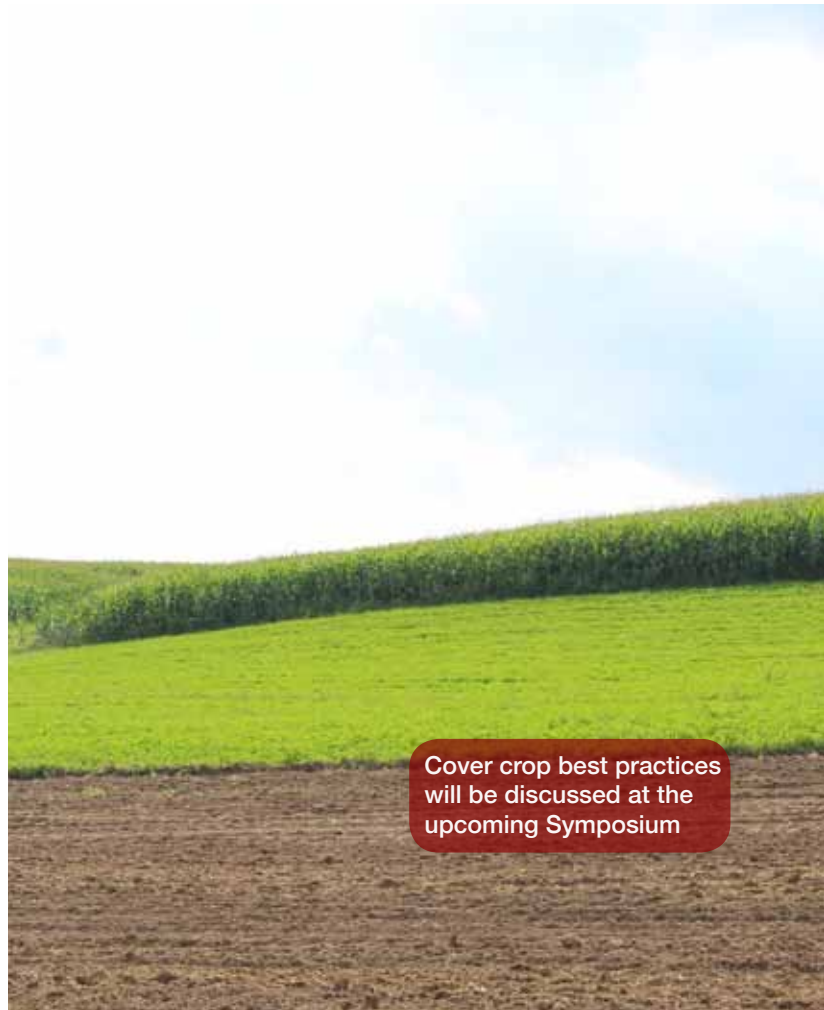


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Cover crop best practices will be discussed at the upcoming Symposium

## Membership Incentive Program

Don't forget - WCO has a membership incentive program! If you sign up a new member and they list your name on the paper application or online, you receive \$25 towards your 2017 membership. Sponsors can participate also. Simply list your company name on the "referred by" line and earn money towards your 2017 sponsorship.

Incentive not to exceed cost of membership or sponsorship. We already have members and sponsors taking advantage of the program. 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.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Type: \_\_\_\_\_ General \_\_\_\_\_ Assoc.

Amount Paid: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Referred By: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return membership form with payment to:

Wisconsin Custom Operators, Inc.  
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## Deadline extended: WCO Employee of the Year

Do you have someone on your crew who really stands out? Nominate him or her for this new award.

Mother Nature has not been kind to us this fall. For most of the state, harvest and manure season are still in full swing. **We've extended the deadline to Dec. 1.** We hope this gives you enough time to get through harvest and reflect on the 2016 season.

**The winner will receive a check for \$750. The nominator will receive a check for \$250.**

Nominees should have achievements in at least three of the five areas:

**Professionalism:** above average knowledge of their job responsibilities and delivers job performance and services well beyond the expected norm. He or she shares pride in ownership of the day-to-day operation of the business

**Customer Focus:** consistently recognizes and meets the needs and requirements of the customer. The nominee demonstrates professionalism

when working with customers, and is mindful of how his or her attitude and actions are perceived.

**Safety:** consistently uses safe practices during his or her work - both in the field and out. Examples of safety improvements suggested and developed by the nominee are appropriate.

**Teamwork:** the nominee consistently demonstrates teamwork by offering support to fellow employees to benefit the overall business effort. He or she has a positive approach in interacting with fellow employees and customers.

**Innovation:** The nominee has developed an original idea or suggestion that has a positive effect on the business; particularly innovations that improved the safety, efficiency or profitability of the business operation.

## Policy Center

**NR 151:** In an effort to address groundwater issues and public health, WI DNR is updating NR 151 (runoff management rule). Revisions will likely address geologically sensitive areas such as those with shallow and fractured bedrock.

DNR has appointed a Technical Advisory Committee to provide guidance on the rule changes. Roy Lemmenes, a custom operator, manure hauler and WCO member from Waupun is a member of this group. To stay up to date on the rule change process including public hearing dates, visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search NR 151.

**Anti-CAFO Rules:** Within the last month in various locations, local governments have made moves to limit the abilities of certain dairy farms to expand. Dunn, St. Croix, Fond du Lac and most recently Lafayette counties have held votes. In some cases the vote passed. Please keep an eye out for these proposals and voice your opinion at your local government meetings.



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**Remember to renew your WCO Membership!**

**Memberships expire in December - renewals are sent at the end of November. You can renew with your Symposium registration, via the WCO website or by mail. Thank you for supporting Wisconsin's custom farming industry!**

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

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

**Save the Date!  
2017 Forage Symposium**

**January 23-25, 2017  
Chula Vista Resort  
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin**

- **New schedule**
- **Network with fellow operators**
- **Develop business relationships**
- **Learn the latest industry innovations**

**Registration opens in December  
at [wiscustomoperators.org](http://wiscustomoperators.org)**