



THE XERCES SOCIETY
FOR INVERTEBRATE CONSERVATION



Event Release

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3rd Annual Biodiversity Working for Farmers Tour in Idaho

A collaboration among farmers, researchers, conservationists and industry.

EVENT DATE: Thursday, June 23, 2011

PLACE: Ernie's Organics, Shoshone, ID, Stevenson Family Farm, Bellevue, ID

TIME: 9:00-6:00 P.M. Bus leaves at 9:00 from Twin Falls and at 5:00 from Bellevue

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TO REGISTER BY PHONE CONTACT: Gwendolyn Ellen, 541-737-6272

Agricultural biodiversity is an important component of sustainable agriculture world-wide. Research shows agricultural biodiversity can increase a farm's resiliency to climatic catastrophes, decrease pesticide contamination, aid in biological pest management, improve soil tilth while decreasing soil erosion and provide much needed habitat for keystone animal species such as pollinators, amphibians, beneficial insects and birds of prey. A USDA funded group of specialists in agricultural biodiversity that includes scientists, industry representatives, non-profit personnel and farmers meet regularly in the western USA to develop ecological practices that can be adopted within agriculture. This group known as The Western Region Functional Agro-Biodiversity Work Group (the FAB Work Group) focuses on pollination and biological pest suppression by predators, parasites and pathogens and the synergies and balance agricultural biodiversity can bring to western farming systems. In lieu of indoor conferences, the FAB Work Group conducts annual short courses on farms highlighting agricultural biodiversity. This year the **3rd Annual Biodiversity Working for Farmers Tour and Short Course** will be on two farms in the high desert habitats of south central Idaho where resource conservation and production practices are successfully combined.

This free event will provide useful information and opportunities for discussion for decision makers, political representatives, regulators, the food industry, conservationists and area farmers. Our farm hosts, Fred and Judy Brossy of Shoshone, owners of Ernie's Organics and the Stevensons of Bellevue will lead us through 1000's of acres of farm land highlighting key biodiversity enhancement measures, current on-farm research projects and collaborations, ecological soil building techniques, and alternative crop production practices. Botanists, conservationists, entomologists, local farmers and ranchers, natural history experts and industry representatives will be giving brief interactive mini-presentations throughout the tour. In addition, a mid-day bag lunch of local foods from Twin Fall's Local Dish will be provided. We will lunch at The Nature Conservancy's internationally known Silver Creek Preserve.

Come see first-hand the progressive biodiversity enhancement practices that are driving sustainable agriculture forward in the 21st century. The day includes direct interaction with scientists, farmers and professionals who are helping us understand the role and importance of on-farm biodiversity for crop quality, yield and pesticide use reduction. The insights gained on this tour should be of direct relevance to discussions on agricultural policies that encourage adoption of these practices as well as

to reveal the constraints that may limit the potential for the full benefits on-farm biodiversity practices to be realized.

In addition to the quality agricultural products these farms produce, the stars of the tour will be the organisms themselves, including plants, pollinators, beneficial insects and bird predators that contribute to agriculture in such important ways. We will take great pleasure in describing these organisms and demonstrating the role that they play in farm production as we encounter them throughout the day. We strongly encourage you to bring notebooks and cameras to record the day's events.

A bit more about the farms.

Fred and Judy Brossy have been farming 1800 acres in south central Idaho for over 20 years. They raise wheat, pinto and red beans, potatoes, carrot, green bean and sweet corn seed, cut flowers, hay and forage crops and run about 65 head of cattle on about 300 irrigated acres.

They utilize cover crops, rotations, and mechanical weed management to produce their certified organic products. Farmer Fred, who has a BS degree from Prescott College in agroecology, says they have natural habitat by default-being isolated between sagebrush and the river with its mature riparian areas. As evidenced by their farm and the quality of their products, they respect, value and rely on the balanced natural environment that surrounds their farm. They are enrolled in the NRCS Conservation Security Program and enjoy a plethora of beneficial organisms on their farm from hawks to native bees.

In the afternoon we will be visiting one of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) Idaho's "Showcase Barley Farms", the Stevenson's Ranch in Bellevue, Idaho. Approximately 30 minutes north of Ernie's Organics the Stevenson Ranch is a barley and alfalfa farm that is collaborating with TNC on water quality and watershed habitat enhancements in their watershed-wide Silver Creek Initiative. The Stevenson's are putting over 800 acres into the NRCS Wetland Reserve Program. In 1999 they began a tree farm and use those trees in conservation plantings near creeks and in center pivot corners. They maintain 100 foot buffers around their production fields and will be restoring several miles of tributary spawning habitat in their creeks. Seventy-five percent of their barley is conventional and 25% is produced using certified organic methods. Gary Beck, their farm manager, has utilized many types of cover crops, rotations and organic practices in addition to conservation practices. There are two sections of the farm- the northern and southern (divided by HWY 20). The northern acres are the most productive and here they are focusing on water and energy conservation measures. The southern acres are very wet and will be largely restored to native wetland habitat.

Sponsors include:

Horticulture Department at Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR

Integrated Plant Protection Center at Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR

National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), Butte, MT

Metro, Portland, OR

The Nature Conservancy ID, Silver Creek Initiative

The Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides, Boise, ID

USDA, NRCS Plant Materials Center, Corvallis, OR,

USDA Western Region IPM Center Functional Agro-Biodiversity Work Group (the FAB Work Group)

Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, Portland, OR