

August 21, 2013

The Honorable Paul Thissen  
Speaker, Minnesota House of Representatives  
Chair, Legislative Commission on Planning and Fiscal Policy  
463 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155-1298

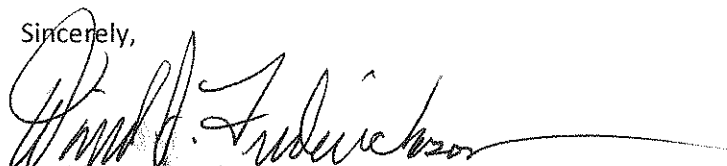
Dear Speaker Thissen,

Thank you for your letter of August 2, 2013, requesting information about the three advisory groups created in statute for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) in regards to the work of the Legislative Commission on Planning and Fiscal Policy as required by the 2013 revisions to the Minnesota Sunset Act. Attached is the information you requested for each advisory group.

In my opinion, each of these three of these advisory groups provides valuable and necessary input for decisions made at the MDA. All three of these groups came before the legislature over the past two years. Two were reauthorized and one was expanded.

If you require further information, please contact me or Greta Gauthier, MDA's government relations director at (651) 201-6180.

Sincerely,

  
David J. Frederickson  
Commissioner

## **Food Safety and Defense Task Force**

### **History**

The Task Force was established in 1990 to advise the Commissioner of Agriculture and the Legislature on food defense and safety issues. At that time, some members were mandated by statute and others were appointed by the governor. In 2003, the task force was, with a number of other advisory groups, eliminated. However, the Commissioner and task force members believed the group input was vital and so the Commissioner continued this group as a commissioner's task force under Chapter 15. In 2007, the Legislature reinstated the Task Force in statute, Chapter 28A.21, as a formal appointed body to advise the commissioner and Legislature on food safety and defense issues. In 2012, the Department of Agriculture testified before a House committee on the continuance of this advisory group. As a result, the committee **did not** include the Food Safety and Defense Task Force in a bill (which was considered but not passed into law) that would have eliminated several advisory groups.

### **Mission**

The mission of the Food Safety and Defense Task Force is: (1) coordinate educational efforts regarding food safety and defense; (2) provide advice and coordination to state agencies as requested by the agencies; (3) serve as a source of information and referral for the public, news media, and others concerned with food safety and defense; and (4) make recommendations to Congress, the legislative committees with jurisdiction over agriculture finance and policy, the Legislature, and others about appropriate action to improve food safety and defense in the state. In addition, the Task Force supports the Integrated Food Safety System (IFSS) initiative promoted by the federal Food Safety Modernization Act of 2011 (FSMA) by providing an interdisciplinary response to food safety and defense issues.

### **Task Force Membership list and Membership compensation**

The Minnesota Food Safety and Defense Task Force is comprised of 16 members; the Commissioner of Agriculture, the Commissioner of Health, representatives of the Food and Drug Administration and the United States Department of Agriculture, the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute, the University of Minnesota, a local health food inspection agency, the Minnesota Grocers Association, a local food inspection agency, a statewide general farm organization, a food oriented consumer group, a Minnesota based manufacturer of microbial detection equipment and remediation products, and two health or food professionals.

Nine of the 16 members are appointed by the Governor. The appointed members on the current Task Force represent the following entities: Cargill, Ecolab, General Mills, Hormel, Land O' Lakes, City of Bloomington, Super Valu, Minnesota Farmers Union, and the Minnesota Grocers Association.

Compensation is not provided to Task Force members for their time, but parking for the Task Force meetings is covered. Current membership:

Name	Appointment Type
Michael Dutcher	FDA Member

Ruth Petran	Member of a MN-based manufacturer of microbial detection equipment and remediation products
Jeff Luedeman	Local Food Inspector Agency Rep.
Sarah Geisert	At-Large Member
Dawn Sprouls	USDA Member
James VanDer Pol	Statewide Farm Organization Member
Matthew Wohlman	MDA member
Sara Mortimore, Ph.D	At-large member
Jamie Pfuhl	MN Grocer's Association
Glenn Hill	Food-oriented consumer group member
Joseph Scimeca, Ph.D	Food Professional Member
Ed Ehlinger	MDH Member
Katherine Waters, Ph.D, DVM, MPH, DACVPM	University of Minnesota member
Kevin Myers	At-Large Member
Rod Larkins	Agricultural Utilization Research Institute
Vacant	Food Professional Member
Vacant	At-Large Member

### **Budget**

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) awarded a Cooperative Agreement for 2008-2012 to the Task Force for \$5,000 a year in order for the Task Force to conduct educational programs and workshops and host meetings. The budget covers a small portion of salary for coordination work to organize the Task Force's quarterly meetings and yearly workshops. The FDA has provided financial assistance to the Task Force for a number of years prior to 2008.

In 2013, the Task Force received news of new Cooperative Agreement for 2013-2017. The budget for the next five years is \$9,000 per year for a total of \$45,000. The funding increase allows the Task Force to host more workshops and trainings than previously done in the past. For example, this coming year the Task Force will host workshops on "How to Start a Pet Food Business" and "FDA's Food Defense Builder/Awareness Tool."

The Task Force has hosted one to two training sessions per year for industry and regulators since 2000.

### **Meeting Dates**

Recent meetings: November 15, 2012, March 23, 2013, and May 2, 2013.

Next scheduled meeting: September 17, 2013 at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture .

In July 2013, the Task Force hosted a Labeling Workshop for regulators and private industry. The topics included: the basics of food labeling, current developments in labeling, and a mixed industry/regulatory panel discussion. The workshop reached maximum capacity at 130 attendees. Participant feedback showed the workshop was very positive.

## **Reports or Recommendations Issued**

The Task Force has made recommendations for the proposed revisions to the Minnesota food code. Several Task Force Members participated on the Food Code Advisory Committee formed to review and compare the existing Minnesota Food Code with the proposed adoption of the 2009 version of the Federal Model Food Code.

The Task Force advises the MDA on legislative proposals when requested, most recently on legislation passed into law in 2012 that consolidated the MDA's enforcement authorities into a single statute (MS 34A). Ongoing review of food safety and defense issues by the Task Force is a regular agenda item.

The Task Force is also a vehicle for the MDA to implement the provisions of the Federal Food Safety Modernization Act of 2011 (FSMA) related to stakeholder participation, outreach, education, and training for the new rules for preventive controls, produce safety, and supplier verification. The Task Force plays an important role as the bridge between officials of federal, state, and local food regulatory agencies, industry, academia, and consumers as the nation moves toward implementation of an integrated food safety system.

The Task Force advises the MDA on issues related to its compliance with the Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards, Manufactured Food Regulatory Program Standards, and will provide guidance to the MDA on the implementation of the recently released Animal Feed Program Regulatory Standards.

## **Advisory Group's Website**

A FDA supported website for the Task Force will be released in September, 2013.

## **Minnesota Organic Advisory Task force**

### **Mission**

Per MN Stat Chapter 31.91(c), the Minnesota Organic Advisory Task Force shall advise the commissioner and the University of Minnesota on policies and programs that will improve organic agriculture in Minnesota, including how available resources can most effectively be used for outreach, education, research, and technical assistance that meet the needs of the organic agriculture community.

### **Membership and Membership compensation**

Currently, there are no members as appointments are in process. This task force was reauthorized this year, and vacancies were posted by the Secretary of State in July. The most recent roster is attached; however these members' terms all expired on June 20, 2013.

Statute provides only for travel reimbursement for members of this task force. There is no per diem.

### **Budget**

There is no appropriation to fund this advisory group. Funding comes out of general fund dollars appropriated to the agency for organic agriculture. In FY 13, the expenses for the Organic Advisory Task Force were \$4,503.65

### **Recent meeting dates**

Most recent meetings: The three most recent meetings were November 12, 2012, March 25, 2013, and June 24, 2013. The date of the next meeting will be set once appointments are made.

### **Reports or Recommendations**

On a regular basis, Department of Agriculture staff share this group's recommendations with the Commissioner of Agriculture and Dean of the College of Food, Agriculture and Nutrition Science at the University of Minnesota. Most recent recommendations resulted in creation of a pilot Organic Transition Cost Share Program at the Department of Agriculture, which was announced in July, 2013.

Other recommendations have addressed unmet needs and program priorities (e.g., consumer education, university outreach), program funding (Ag Omnibus budget bill and Ag State Special budget in the Higher Education Omnibus budget bill), emerging issues that impact organic producers (e.g., GMO pollen drift), education and research needs of organic farmers. In addition, this advisory group assists the Commissioner of Agriculture in commenting formally to the USDA in response to national regulatory issues published in the Federal Register.

In 2013, the Legislature extended the Minnesota Organic Advisory Task Force through fiscal year 2016.

### **Advisory Group's website**

<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/en/food/organic/oatf.aspx>

## **Minnesota Noxious Weed Advisory Committee**

### **History**

This commission was created in 2009 to advise the Commissioner of Agriculture concerning responsibilities under the noxious weed control program, and to recommend the ways in which the state's noxious weed laws (among some of the oldest laws on the books) could be modernized and updated. After three years of work, the Committee made recommendations for updating the noxious weed statutes to the Commissioner in 2012. Their recommendations were enacted into law by the Legislature in 2013. In addition, the 2013 Legislature also expanded both the scope of duties of this Committee and its membership.

### **Mission**

MS 18.91, Subd 1 outlines the mission of the Noxious Weed Advisory Committee. The Committee is primarily responsible for the evaluation of species for potential listing as regulated noxious weeds in Minnesota. The Committee also is charged with re-evaluating existing species every three years to ensure that their regulatory status and classification is still justified.

### **Membership list and member compensation**

Membership appointments are outlined in Minnesota Statute; 18.91 Subdivision 2. Members serve two-year terms and are not entitled to reimbursement of expenses or payment of per diem.

The following are current members listed with their affiliation:

Roger	Becker	U of M Extension	U of M Extension and U of M Agronomy
Jeff	Gillman	U of M	U of M Horticulture
Jean-Marc	Versolato	MNLA	Nursery and Landscape Industry
Jim	Calkins	Minnehaha Creek Watershed Dist.	Environmental Organization
Tim	O'Hara	Minnesota Forest Industries	MN Forest/Timber Industry
Steve	Chaplin	The Nature Conservancy	Conservation Organization
Dan	Shaw	MN Board of Water and Soil Res.	Board of Water and Soil Resources
Kerry	Saxton	MN SWCD	Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Laura	Van Riper	MN DNR	MN DNR
Trent	McCorkell	MN Association of CAI's	County Agricultural Inspectors
Ben	Lang	MN Crop Improvement Association	Seed Industry
Gene	Dufault	MN Association of Townships	Townships
David	Chura	MN Logger Education Program	MN Forest/Timber Industry
Anthony	Cortilet	MN Dept. of Agriculture	MDA
Tim	Power	MNLA	Nursery and Landscape Industry
Ken	Graeve	MN DOT	MN DOT
Alan	Perish	MN Farmers Union	Farmer Organization

## **Budget**

All member positions are voluntary and at the expense of the member organization. Staffing costs are absorbed by the Department of Agriculture.

## **Meeting Dates**

The Noxious Weed Advisory Committee holds 4-5 meetings per year. All meetings are hosted at the Department of Agriculture offices at the Freeman building, St. Paul.

The three most recent meeting dates were: December 11, 2012, January 22, 2013, and May 30, 2013. The next NWAC meeting is scheduled for September 30, 2013.

## **Reports or Recommendations**

Every year since its formation in 2009, the Noxious Weed Advisory Committee has sent annual recommendations to the Commissioner of Agriculture for approval of listing state regulated noxious weeds. Annual recommendations will be submitted again in December, 2013.

The Noxious Weed Advisory Committee recently recommended revisions to update the Noxious Weed Law (18.75-18.91). Those revisions were approved by the 2013 State Legislature and signed into law by Governor Dayton.

In addition, this Committee has developed a Plant Risk Assessment Model – based on national and international models – customized for Minnesota. This model serves as a scientific fact-finding tool to evaluate current and potential noxious weed species in the state. Risk Assessments can be found on the NWAC website: <http://mnnoxiousweeds.wikispaces.com/NWAC+Risk+Assessments>

## **Advisory Group Website**

<http://mnnoxiousweeds.wikispaces.com/>

## NextGen Energy Board

### **Mission**

The NextGen Energy Board was created by the Governor and the Minnesota Legislature in 2007. By law, the Board's purpose is to explore policies and opportunities for the state "to most efficiently achieve energy independence, agricultural and natural resources sustainability, and rural economic vitality."

### **Membership and Membership compensation**

The Board is comprised of 20 members, eight of whom (\* by name below) were appointed by Governor Dayton in 2011:

- Senator Dave Tomassoni
- Senator Dan Sparks
- Senator Torrey Westrom
- Representative Jean Wagenius
- Representative Joe Atkins
- Representative Joe Hoppe
- Commissioner Tom Landwehr, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Commissioner Dave Frederickson, Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Commissioner Katie Clark Sieben, Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development
- Commissioner John Linc Stine, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Commissioner Mike Rothman, Minnesota Department of Commerce
- Teresa Spaeth, Agriculture Utilization Research Institute (AURI)
- Lissa Pawlisch\*, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture
- Amanda Bilek\*, Great Plains Institute
- Thom Petersen\*, Minnesota Farmers Union
- Wayne Brandt\*, Minnesota Forest Industries
- Dick Hemmingsen\*, University of Minnesota Initiative for Renewable Energy and the Environment (IREE)
- John Frey\*, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU)
- Neal Feeken\*, The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota
- Paul Stark\*, Minnesota Farm Bureau

No compensation is provided to the members.

### **Budget**

Last year \$271.53 was budgeted for coffee, beverages and lunches for the Biofuels Task Force (which held four meetings), which was a group directed by the legislature to advise the NextGen Energy Board on the issue of including biofuels other than ethanol in the oxygenate



mandate. This year no money has been allocated for the Board meetings themselves, but money likely will be allotted for coffee and cookies at some point.

#### **Recent meeting dates**

July 23, 2013; January 10, 2013; August 16, 2012. The Biofuels Advisory Task Force, which made recommendations to the Board for FY 2013 only met August 20, September 4, October 31 and December 12, 2012.

#### **Reports or Recommendations**

Recommendations and Action Items for 2013 can be found in the Annual Report to the Legislature, pages 28-32:

<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/~media/Files/news/govrelations/nextgenreport2013.ashx>

#### **Advisory Group's website**

<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/renewable/nextgen.aspx>