



Official Publication of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association

Legislature tackles key issues in final days of session

Editor's note: At the time of publication, the legislative session was ongoing.

State legislators returned to St. Paul to open House-Senate negotiations on the state budget, taxes and other issues, including several bills that impact corn farmers and agriculture.

Tax bill

With more than \$1.6 billion in projected budget surpluses in the next two-year budget cycle, legislators want to provide tax relief – the question being how much and from where should the tax cuts come.

The House bill calls for more than \$1.3 billion in tax relief while the Senate measure makes room for \$900 million. With the Governor's budget proposing approximately \$191 million in tax relief, legislators will need to work hard to negotiate a compromise with members of the Dayton administration to craft a tax bill that the Governor will sign.

One important property tax relief provision found in each tax proposal will hopefully survive the negotiating process. The agricultural property tax credit for levies used to fund new schools has bipartisan support again this year.



State legislators meet to discuss several high-profile bills.

Transportation

Legislation passed by the House calls for moving \$450 million in existing taxes and fees from the state's General Fund and placing it into roads and bridges. In addition, the House bill calls for approximately \$1.3 billion in bond financing over the next two-year budget cycle. The Senate transportation bill

continued on following page

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contents

- Legislative news 1
- Buffer law 2
- Legislative spring break 3
- 2016 county highlights 4
- Green Biologics 5
- Project Green 6
- USDA 2017 outlook 6
- EPA on chlorpyrifos 7
- MCR&PC elections 8
- MCGA staff news 8
- MCGA intern 9
- Join MCGA as district manager 9
- Commodity Classic 2017 9
- MCGA and Minnesota United 10
- Allied Partners 10
- TC Road Crew 11
- MCGA new ad campaign 11
- Events calendar 12

Legislative session

continued from page 1

\$400 million in General Fund revenues to pay for transportation needs. Neither proposes any gas tax or other fee increases, and neither provides more support for metro light rail projects.

In contrast, Governor Dayton has said he wants to sign a bill that raises the statewide gas tax and increases vehicle tab fees to help pay for needed road and bridge projects. He also wants to raise the metro area’s sales tax to better fund transit and light rail projects. During

proposes much less debt – \$325 million – but also moves approximately

recent media interviews, however, Dayton has indicated an understanding that a gas tax hike may no longer be viable and, despite his opposition to removing money from the General Fund, he may have to “swallow” the legislation to obtain a much needed transportation bill.

Environment

Another conference committee is working on the omnibus environmental bill that would, among other things, modify the duties of the Environmental Quality Board, enable project proposers to develop their own draft environmental impact statements and prohibit regulators from enforcing unadopted rules. ■

Buffers: Here’s the latest news

Without question, one of the most important topics to farmers during the 2017 legislative session is the buffer law. It was created to protect state water resources

from erosion and runoff pollution. While farmers agree with the intended outcome, many are concerned the current buffer law will not achieve the intended results – and negatively impact Minnesota’s ag sector.

Legislatively, the House and Senate passed an omnibus environment bill that includes delaying the implementation of the buffer law, modified definitions

continued on following page



A farm in De Graff uses a buffer strip to protect water quality.

Buffer law

continued from page 2

unless landowners are given assistance to cover 100 percent of costs to establish buffers.

While Gov. Dayton has said he won't sign any legislation that delays buffer implementation, he was recently quoted saying he will consider adjustments to the law after implementation.

While work proceeds at the Capitol, Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) is partnering with area organizations and state agencies to develop alternative practices that meet water quality goals.

With input from MCGA, the Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) released six alternative practices that offer landowners flexibility in how they meet water quality improvement goals.

of public waters and necessary buffer widths, and forbids enforcement of the law

The options are:

- Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program
- USDA Practice Standard Filter Strip
- Grassed Waterway on Public Waters
- Negative Slope on Public Ditches
- Negative Slope on Public Waters
- Buffer plus Conservation Tillage

For more information on each, visit bwsr.state.mn.us/buffers.

MCGA will continue to work with BWSR, as well as the University of Minnesota, to develop additional alternative practices that are better tailored to each situation.

Be sure to follow Minnesota Corn on Twitter (@mncorn) or Facebook ("Minnesota Corn"), or visit our blog at mncorn.org/blog for updates. ■

MCGA, area farmers make most of legislative spring break

during the legislative spring break (April 10-16), legislators returned to their home districts for a break and an opportunity to connect with their constituents, before returning for the session's final few weeks. For the state's corn farmers, it was an opportunity to make their voices heard.



Harold Wolle, president of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association.

Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) President Harold Wolle crafted an op-ed piece calling on area corn farmers to contact their legislators on three yet-to-be-determined issues: rising

property taxes, the buffer law, and needed transportation funding for rural roads.

Throughout the week, at least 10 Greater Minnesota newspapers published the op-ed, including the Rochester Post-Bulletin, Albert Lea Tribune and the Faribault Daily News.

In addition, a news release was distributed to state-wide media outlets. The release brought attention to the aforementioned issues and invited media to speak with MCGA grower leaders or an area farmer about the importance of property tax relief, acceptable buffer implementation and funding for farm-to-market roads. Outlets like the Owatonna People's Press took the opportunity to inform its readers about the hot-button issues. ■

2016 county highlights

minnesota Corn Growers Association's 52 affiliated county organizations connected with members and the non-farming public in a variety of ways in 2016. From ethanol racing events to community parades, there were many opportunities to learn about the impact of corn farming in Minnesota.

Highlights included 34 field days hosted by counties, a rise in attendance at MN Ag EXPO and Commodity Classic, and several counties offered scholarships to attract young leaders in agriculture. ■

45 counties hosted annual meetings for their members/supporters.

22 counties supported Tasseldega Nights or Jam the Stands race events.

42 counties were represented at MN Ag EXPO.

39 counties were represented at Commodity Classic.

13 counties now have websites and/or Facebook pages.

33 counties provided more than 95 student scholarships totaling over \$130,000.

15 counties sponsored radio programs, radio ads, and print promotional ads.

19 counties were involved with their county fairs.

Lincoln County and Rock County each hosted influencer events, connecting area consumers with local farmers.

30 counties participated in more than 60 parades.

15 counties sponsored fuel promotions to increase sales of E15, E30 and E85.

34 counties hosted field days, plot tours and/or participated in MCGA's Variety Plot Program.

Next-generation green chemicals come off the line at Little Falls plant

Green Biologics, a renewable chemical company focused on green alternatives, recently opened a new, retrofitted facility in Little Falls. The plant processes corn into butanol, renewable acetone, high-protein animal feed and a liquid NPK fertilizer.

Green Biologics uses the produced butanol in its brand name lighter fluid, Green Flame. The low-VOC product is approved for use by the South Coast Air Quality Management District, which governs air regulations in a large section of southern California. The heightened concern for air quality makes southern California a prime market for Green Flame lighter fluid.

Even nail salons in southern California need to keep their carbon footprint in check. That makes Green Biologics' acetone – the main ingredient in nail polish remover – a winner.

For 20 years, the Little Falls plant operated as Central Minnesota Ethanol Cooperative, a farmer-owned ethanol producer. But being on the northern edge of corn country made it hard to compete with more modern plants to the south. Enter Green Biologics.

"This is truly plant number one. No other plant like it exists in the world," says Jonathan Olmscheid, vice president for finance at Green Biologics.

The renewable chemical company processes 5.8 million bushels of corn annually into butanol and acetone, says Olmscheid, who notes that plans are already underway to expand capacity in this facility.



An inside view of the Green Biologics plant, formerly Central Minnesota Ethanol Cooperative.

Green Biologics mills the corn, and the protein and fiber are spun off on the front end of the plant, leaving a raw, high-protein feed that's a hit with local livestock producers. Because the protein and fiber are spun off before fermentation, the bacteria that remain after making the butanol and acetone can be collected in a wet form for use as a liquid NPK fertilizer.

"Our farmers can buy fertilizer from us, grow corn on that field, sell us the corn that we can utilize, and then particles of that corn become fertilizer that goes right back into that same ground," Olmscheid concluded. ■

MCGA members-only sale: Used golf carts and trailers

Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) is selling its used trailers and golf carts exclusively to MCGA members. For additional information, please visit mncorn.org/trailers. All will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis.

Project Green finds common ground between farm and city

minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) has partnered this spring with KARE 11-TV and Great River Greening, an environmental restoration group, to raise awareness about how we can all help the environment.

The project culminated on Earth Day in a major volunteer beautification project in Wayzata, where 700 trees and 900 wildflowers and shrubs were planted along Bushaway Road.

All this spring, KARE has aired 15-second segments as part of the “Project Green” campaign offering practical tips on planting pollinator-friendly plants, planting trees and promoting the Earth Day event.

Each KARE segment has been paired with a message from MCGA about the proactive role

the organization is taking in helping farmers make progressive strides to help protect water quality.

Project Green and MCGA television commercials were viewed by nearly 1 million individuals, primarily from the Twin Cities metro and surrounding areas. Online advertisements for the campaign were viewed nearly 850,000 times. The KARE news team also aired live news segments from the Earth Day event, reaching an additional 120,000 television viewers. ■



MCGA Executive Director Adam Burr and his family joined volunteers on Earth Day.

Planting 2017: Reasons for optimism

If USDA estimates prove true, farmers will plant 450,000 fewer acres of corn in Minnesota while increasing soybean acres by around 700,000 acres. The total state planting in these principal crops will be 8 million acres and 8.25 million for corn and soybeans, respectively.

Harold Wolle, who farms with his son, Matthew, near St. James, plans to somewhat vary from his 50-50 split between corn and soybeans by planting a little more of the latter. Chad Willis, who farms in Wilmar, will stick with a down-the-middle

split, citing the current infrastructure on his farm as best set up for corn.

While 2017 may be a year with fewer acres of corn planted, both Wolle and Willis see a bright future for the crop.

Wolle, who serves as president of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association, points to the convergence of environmental concern and economic sustainability for farmers as a cause for optimism.

continued on following page

MN planting 2017

continued from page 6

and protecting water quality. Experts believe the number of acres planted to cover crops alongside cash crops will continue to increase this year in Minnesota.

The Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC) is funding research on how to best get cover crops established, make them beneficial to

Cover crops, for example, hold great promise in the continued quest for increasing production while preserving soil

cash crop yields and maximize their benefit to the environment by soaking up excess nutrients.

Willis, who serves as chairman of MCR&PC, says research into value-added products continues to be another cause for optimism for farmers and rural development in general.

“We are continually searching for value-added products that could be a homerun like ethanol,” says Willis “We’re investing in many avenues of research, hoping one of them hits. ■



With a later than usual start, corn farmers are ready to get planting.

NCGA applauds EPA decision on chlorpyrifos

National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) applauded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for recently dismissing a petition related to the crop protection tool chlorpyrifos.

“We are pleased with the EPA’s decision to deny a petition against chlorpyrifos and return to the



standard pesticides review process as called for under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act,” said NCGA President Wesley Spurlock. “The overwhelming scientific consensus is that chlorpyrifos is safe for use by farmers, and we are confident that the pesticide review process will reaffirm this.”

In 2015, the Obama administration proposed banning chlorpyrifos, but the decision had not been finalized. Last August, a federal court ordered the EPA to decide by March 31 whether to ban the pesticide. NCGA and its farmer-members have submitted numerous comments to the EPA about this issue. ■

Three newly elected, one re-elected to MCR&PC



brandon Fast, James O'Connor and Brennen Toquam were newly elected to the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC), while Dwight Mork was re-elected. All positions are three-year terms.

Fast, who farms in Mountain Lake, will represent District 7, O'Connor from Blooming Prairie will represent District 8, and Toquam from Claremont will represent District 9. Mork, who farms in Bellingham, will continue to represent Districts 1, 2 and 4.

The MCR&PC administers the efficient and effective investment of Minnesota's corn check-off. ■

MCGA names public relations manager, announces promotions

Change is in the spring air at Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA). Brent Renneke was recently hired as MCGA's new public relations manager. In addition, Meghan Doyle was promoted to communications director and Missy Gilbertson promoted to director of grower services.



Brent Renneke

Renneke's role includes telling the many great stories of Minnesota's corn farmers to the non-farming public, while also spreading awareness of how MCGA is working on behalf of corn farmers.

In her new role, Doyle will now set and execute strategy for communications, marketing and public relations messaging, as well

as collateral that furthers the mission and strategic goals of MCGA.

Gilbertson will lead MCGA's new District Field Managers Program (see page nine for job notice), while continuing to oversee membership, compliance and reporting.

Welcome to the team, Brent, and congratulations, Meghan and Missy! ■



Meghan Doyle



Missy Gilbertson

MCGA selects 2017-2018 intern

mariah Larson, a student at the University of Minnesota, was selected as Minnesota Corn Growers Association's (MCGA) 2017-2018 student intern.

Over the next year, Larson will work on behalf of Minnesota's corn farmers and gain exposure to Minnesota agriculture through office operations, educational and outreach programs, communications, and member engagement.

Look for Larson at MCGA-sponsored events this summer like Farmfest, MCGA Day with the St. Paul Saints, and A-Maize-ing Corn Day at the Minnesota State Fair. She will also receive hands-on experience working on initiatives such as MCGA's Innovation Grant program, as well as standing up and speaking out for corn farming and homegrown biofuels. ■



Mariah Larson

MCGA hiring full-time district field managers

MCGA is seeking candidates to help strengthen the organization's statewide grassroots outreach as part of its new District Field Manager Program. In an ongoing effort to increase membership engagement, MCGA is transitioning from part-time regional representatives to five full-time district managers positions.

District field managers will support local grassroots efforts within their district by assisting with various membership activities

and recruitment needs, fostering strong relationships and communication between county organizations and the state association, and more. This position is based in assigned district areas and will require significant travel. District field managers will also spend approximately four days per month at the MCGA office in Shakopee.

For more information and to apply, visit mncorn.org/careers.

Commodity Classic 2017 draws crowd

Commodity Classic 2017, held March 2-4 in San Antonio, is America's largest farmer-led, farmer-focused convention. It brings together the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA), American Soybean Association, National Association of Wheat Growers, National Sorghum Producers, and the Association of Equipment Manufacturers for meetings and more.



Red River Farm Network's Don Wick chats with MCGA Board Secretary Tim Waibel.

The show attendance for 2017 was estimated at more than 9,000 individuals, with at least 4,000 of those attendees being farmers.

Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) fielded 14 delegates to the NCGA annual resolutions meeting, and hundreds of other Minnesota farmers attended to absorb the huge trade show, educational sessions, and all that Classic has to offer.

Mark your calendar for Commodity Classic 2018, Feb. 27-March 1 in Anaheim, California. ■

Minnesota Corn takes the pitch with MN United

minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) has partnered with MN United, the state's Major League Soccer team located in the Twin Cities, to share the conservation efforts of Minnesota's



Maizey made friends before the game.

corn farmers. The season-long partnership is an opportunity to reach a young, engaged audience and includes in-stadium signage, TV advertisements and other promotions.

On April 23, MCGA was also the presenting sponsor as MN United took on the Colorado Rapids at TCF Bank Stadium. Corn-focused festivities kicked off on the plaza outside the

stadium prior to the game, as the TC Road Crew, along with Maizey, interacted with fans. More than 5,000 MCGA rally towels were handed out.

One dollar for each single game ticket sold to the April 23rd match was donated to the Soil Health Partnership, which brings together diverse organizations and environmental groups to help farmers improve soil health and water quality.

Throughout the game, MCGA and its conservation campaign were featured on stadium video boards and also mentioned numerous times during the broadcast. Overall, the evening was a great opportunity to reach a diverse audience and share a positive message about Minnesota's corn farmers. ■



MCGA and MN United partnered to donate \$5,000 to the Soil Health Partnership.

Thanks to our Allied Partners



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May 2017**

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320-235-4452

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Gerald Tumbleson of Sherburn
507-639-6938

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507-951-0363

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651-201-6219

TC Road Crew brings farming, fun to schools

A crowd of 100 school kids roared with excitement when Maizey, the lovable and always happy Minnesota corn mascot, joined in the fun and dancing with the Twin Cities Road Crew.

The group rocked the house at L'Etoile du Nord French Immersion school with the latest radio hits. But there was an audible gasp of surprise when the TC Road Crew started to tell the story of corn: "Did you know that Maizey is more than 5,000 years old...?"

With support from MCGA, Maizey and the team at TC Road Crew visited the St. Paul-based school for a corn-themed assembly filled with dancing, prizes and all sorts of farm-related fun. Plus, the students and teachers learned a whole lot about the importance of corn farming and agriculture.

"Did you know there are three kinds of corn in Minnesota?" one of the TC Road Crew team members asked the attentive crowd of students.

Popcorn and corn-on-the-cob (sweet corn) easily came to mind. But the crowd needed some fun Q&A prompting to identified the third one: field corn! This led to another game where students learned about everyday



The TC Road Crew engaged students in "a-maize-ing" corn facts.

products made from field corn – from corn flakes to crayons, and even ethanol.

School assemblies like this are just one way MCGA brings a positive message about corn farming to urban youth and their families. ■

New ad campaign focuses on conservation

Meet the new "first couple" of conservation: Bob the Cob and Minnie-sota. The two characters are part of a new Minnesota Corn Growers Association campaign that brings a conservation message to consumers in a bright and friendly way on billboards, at venues and on the radio throughout the state. ■



Watch for Bob the Cob and Minnie-sota in upcoming promotions.



Calendar of Events

May 29

MCGA office closed

June 11

MCGA and TC Road Crew at
 Open Streets Downtown
Minneapolis

June 13

MN Soybean Biodiesel Open
North Mankato

June 13

MN Soybean
 Bean Blast Tournament
Courtland

June 19

19th Annual Minnesota 4-H
 Foundation Golf Classic
Roseville

June 19-20

CommonGround Workshop
Minneapolis

June 20

CommonGround Farm Dinner
Dundas

June 20-21

Minnesota 4-H State Science
 of Agriculture Challenge
St. Paul

June 28

MCGA and MCR&PC
 joint meeting
Shakopee

July 3-4

MCGA office closed

July 11-12

Minnesota State
 Cattleman's Association
 Summer Beef Tour
Canby

July 12

Nicollet/Sibley County
 Corn & Soybean Growers
 Pods & Cobs Golf Tournament
Winthrop

July 17-21

NCGA Corn Congress
Washington D.C.