

# Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine



Activities, Issues, and News—Winter 2016



## Maine Specialty Crop Block Grants Awarded to Commission for University of Maine in Orono Research

The Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine collaborated with University of Maine Orono research faculty to submit two Wild Blueberry Integrated Pest Management (IPM) research proposals for the 2015 Specialty Crop Block Grant program. The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF) coordinates this competitive grant program on behalf of the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Agriculture Marketing Service that serves as program administrator and distributes funds to the states. Commissioner Walt Whitcomb of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry outlined specific priority area for Maine grants including: “Enhancing integrated pest management research and education for programs for specialty crops.”

In the spring of 2015, Wild Blueberry Commission staff worked closely with University of Maine researchers Drs. David Yarborough, Seanna Annis and Frank Drummond from the Wild Blueberry Research and Extension program to submit two proposals to study Wild Blueberry IPM for researching weed, pest and disease control. These IPM areas are the most important crop production management issues facing growers today.

One block grant in the amount of \$99,434 will address the following disease and pest IPM research and Extension objectives that were initiated during 2013-14 and will continue to

through 2015-16. First: Use web-connected weather stations to provide real time forecasts for mummy berry blight and Botrytis blossom blight and to evaluate their use to forecast emergence of spotted wing Drosophila (SWD) and Blueberry Maggot fly. Second: Develop a model to predict Monilinia pseudosclerotia germination and spore release as the first inoculum for causing mummy berry disease. Third: Improve control of leaf spots diseases by improving timing of treatments and evaluating treatments with new modes of actions to prevent resistance developing in fungal pathogens. Fourth: Determine the effect of high input programs on sap feeding insects — a continuation of an experiment initiated in Spring 2015 and continued through Summer 2016. Fifth: Develop IPM program for blueberry tip midge — a continuation of an experiment initiated in Spring 2015 and continued through Summer 2016. Sixth: Begin a new project that will field test a biological control for SWD.

The second Wild Blueberry IPM proposal in the amount of \$46,571 is to conduct IPM weeds research with the following objectives. First: Evaluate different timing and combinations of treatments to suppress weeds, prevent herbicide resistance, improve efficacy and increase crop safety in wild blueberry fields. Second: Develop and deliver an educational program on Weed Resistance Prevention (WRP) practices.

Over the last few years industry representation from the Advisory committee, a Commission committee that recommends research and industry priorities to the University for Wild Blueberry studies, have been working with UMaine Wild Blueberry researchers to pursue competitive grants. For 2016, a Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) pre-proposal titled *Building Sustainable Solutions for Wild Blueberry Management* was submitted for review early in December. This USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture grant program panel of peer reviewers will decide whether a full proposal is submitted. The University of Maine researchers will await the decision and be prepared to submit a full proposal upon request. These SCRI projects are longer in duration and are required to include economics and social science aspects along with scientific studies about production and/or food science and food safety, whereas the state funded block grants are only a couple of years in duration and often need to be continued in order to complete the 4-6 years of IPM research results necessary to prove that a practice works consistently. The Commission will continue to work with the UMaine Wild Blueberry research and Extension team on conducting much-needed research to understand best management practice for this unique North American crop. 🌿

### Special points of interest:

- \* Check out [www.wildblueberries.com](http://www.wildblueberries.com) Wild blueberries for all holidays!

### Inside this issue:

WBANA Asia Export program	2
Big E 2015	3
EPA rules defining water use	3

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## WBANA Promoting Maine Wild Blueberries in S. Korea and China

### A Surprising SuperFruit — U.S. Wild Blueberries

**Wild blueberries grown in the harsh cold and glacial soil of the U.S. in the state of Maine are premium blueberries grown by Mother Nature.**

**They are a gift of nature, unlike ordinary blueberries grown in other parts of the U.S. This super fruit with the wild mystery of 10,000 years of history has surprising flavors and effects that you can now enjoy in Korea.**

— From Korean *Essen Food and Healthy Lifestyle* advertisement, September 2015

Patricia Kontur represented the Wild Blueberry Association of North America – U.S. (WBANA) export program when she traveled to Seoul, S. Korea in August and Guangzhou, China in November 2015 to promote Maine Wild Blueberries. In Korea, a Food Export Northeast focused trade mission to Seoul provided an opportunity for WBANA to participate in one-on-one meetings with Korean businesses, and attend USDA-Foreign Agricultural Service market research presentations and retail tours in Seoul. The prime August Wild Blueberry event in Seoul was hosted by the *Essen Food and Healthy Lifestyle* magazine. The menu tasting and blogger event including an introductory WBANA educational presentation, a product application training, and menu promotion took place at Maison de Blanc, a local indoor/outdoor café and bakery in Seoul. *Essen*, the popular online and hard copy Korean lifestyle magazine, published WBANA advertisements for U.S. Wild Blueberries in their September and October editions. *Essen* marketing staff coordinated and produced the interactive Korean food bloggers event and cooking show that was presented online via the *Essen* Korean website. Well known pastry chefs Jio Cheon, Chef at French restaurant Wil in Korea, and Gregoire Michot, owner chef of Maison de Michot, developed and demonstrated how to make Wild Blueberry bakery/ desserts recipes including Wild Blueberry galette, cheesecake, and tiramisu. The menu tasting and cooking demonstration were well received by the bloggers. Dessert products developed



*Pastry Chefs Jio Cheon, Chef at French restaurant Wil in Korea, and Gregoire Michot, owner chef of Maison de Michot work on Wild Blueberry desserts at Maison de Blanc cooking demonstration at the Seoul Blogger Event*



*Above: Hey Yo! Bakery Aoyuan Mall, Guangzhou, China. Below: Hey Yo! U.S. Wild Blueberry products – Wild Blueberry Mousse Cake and Wild Blueberry Walnut Bread on display during the chef's demonstration.*



by the chefs were sold from the Maison de Blanc dessert café during the summer months.

In Guangzhou, China a WBANA presentation at Aoyuan Mall introduced U.S. Wild Blueberries to consumers and media who

attended the launch of a U.S. Wild Blueberry menu promotion in partnership with Hey Yo! Yogurt and bakery shop. During the November 21 schedule of activities at the Mall, Hey Yo! marketing specialists coordinated a cake decorating training for customers and their children using dried Wild Blueberries. Hey Yo! Bakery shops in Guangzhou offered specialty U.S. Wild Blueberry products including muffins, yogurt drink, Wild Blueberry walnut bread, and mousse cake for the promotion. 🍌

## Maine Agriculture and New EPA Rules Defining Water Use

In May 2015, the EPA announced a final rule that defines the extent to which surface water is protected under the Clean Water Act. That rule has since been challenged in Federal court and has been stayed (not implemented) while the litigation is pending. The rule is controversial because while the EPA asserts that the protected waters are now “more precisely defined, more predictably determined, and easier for businesses and industry to understand,” many have found the rule to be exactly the opposite: confusing and potentially expanding the EPA’s jurisdiction over private property. Many in the agriculture community are concerned that EPA’s definition

of “navigable” waters under the rule could potentially subject ditches, stream beds and self-made ponds on farms to new oversight. This could result in farmers paying for costly engineering and environmental assessments, as well as spending time and money on additional permitting efforts.

Maine is a water-rich state and the Wild Blueberry industry is familiar with the regulatory requirements by Maine Department of Environmental Protection, US Army Corps of Engineers, USDA and others when it comes to obtaining permits for activities that may impact water. Wild Blueberry growers support the protection of our nation’s natural resources, and clean water benefits everyone.

However, given the potential impacts of the new rule, the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine has been working with Senator Angus King’s office to communicate its concerns directly to the EPA. The Commission was invited to meet with EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy in November 2015 when she visited Maine to discuss the rule. The EPA has agreed to try and provide greater clarification as to when, and under what situations or conditions, the rule may apply to agriculture. The Commission will continue to communicate with the EPA and Senator King’s office as these efforts to clarify the rule evolve, and will keep Wild Blueberry growers informed of any new developments as they arise. 🌱

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## Eastern States Exposition Wrap Up – The Big E 2015

Participating in the 17 day Eastern States Exposition (the Big E) in W. Springfield, MA is a huge undertaking for exhibitors in the Maine Building on the Avenue of States. Attendance at the Big E has continued to grow over the years, and in the last decade it began to regularly draw 1 million people plus through the gate. In 2016, the Eastern States Exposition plans to mark the 100 year anniversary and celebrate what began as a regional agricultural fair early in the 20th century.

The “Avenue of States” is a special address at the Big E that showcases each New England state’s building. The buildings were built to replicate architecture of respective state houses of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont and Maine. Each state celebrates a “State Day” during the 17 day Exposition. The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation



*From left: Maine Wild Blueberry Queen Rachel Pease, Maine Governor Paul LePage and Maine Wild Blueberry Princess Mallory Conary.*

and Forestry manages the Maine building including supervising on site facilities management and determining the approach for the Maine building and the exhibitors who will participate during the course of the Big E. The Wild Blueberry Commission has exhibited at the Big E for 35+ years. Half of the Wild Blueberry Commission exhibit is dedicated to foodservice that provides Wild Blueberry ready

to eat specialties; the other half of the exhibit is to educate the fair going public about Wild Blueberry agriculture in Maine.

Maine Day on the last Saturday of the Fair this summer was well attended. Governor Paul LePage, and Commissioner Walt Whitcomb were two of the special guests at the Big E. The Wild Blueberry Queen, Rachel Pease of Appleton, who was selected at the Union Fair and State of Maine Wild Blueberry Festival in August, came to the Maine building on Maine Day in her regalia. The Maine Wild Blueberry Princess, Mallory Conary, also chosen during the State of Maine Wild Blueberry Festival, stayed for photos with the Governor and the Commissioner. Queen Rachel and Princess Mallory also provided IQF wild blueberry samples to fairgoers who came to “Maine” to enjoy entertainment and Maine foods and crafts on Maine

*continued on page 4*

## Maine 4th Annual Farm to School Conference October 2015

On October 16th the Maine Farm to School network together with a partnership of representatives from agencies, organizations, school nutrition programs, growers and educators presented the Maine Farm to School Conference at Kennebec Valley Community College in Clinton. Farm to School Networks in Maine and other states are linked with school nutrition programs as well as consumer driven “buy local” and “real foods” movements that are occurring across the U.S. In Maine, Farm to School regional coordinators represent 8 public health districts and healthy community efforts to get locally grown foods into school nutrition programs from kindergarten to colleges and universities. The National Farm to School Network, the USDA Food Nutrition Service (FNS) and Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS) provide technical assistance services and funding to support state and local efforts to bring more healthy foods to school children.

A full day of workshops was presented at the Maine Farm to School conference to address a variety of topics from menu ideas and hands on training to policy discussions about initiatives to support Farm to School efforts locally, statewide



and at the national level. School Nutrition program directors at a district or local school level must know or learn procurement guidelines and rules in order to develop menus that source local foods. Nationally, 80% of food used in school nutrition menus is purchased with support from the federal government. Twenty percent of foods are so called “brown box commodities” sourced directly from a pool of USDA procured foods. A driving factor for choices of recipe items or inclusion on a school nutrition program menu is cost. At times School Nutrition program directors prefer to use and purchase local foods but their budgets constrain their options. USDA-FNS data indicate that elementary to high school meals maximum reimbursement per “free” meal is around \$3.00 for schools if federal requirements for family income eligibility and percentage of meals served by school nutrition program are met. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/rates-reimbursement>. Additionally, the USDA-FNS Fresh Fruit and Vegetable – Snack Program

provides schools with \$50 to \$75 per student in funding that does not come from the School Nutrition program budget. The schools must participate in the National School Lunch program and meet percentage requirements based on family income to be eligible for the program. Snack program funds are capped at \$5,000 for the school year.

In the last few years Maine Wild Blueberry growers have been interested in selling berries directly to schools when they are in session or for the Harvest Lunch week, which is the first week of September. Harvest Lunch week is open to any school that wishes to participate. In June each year, the Maine Department of Education, School Nutrition Services and the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry communicate with School Nutrition programs and farmers who may be interested in participating in Harvest Lunch week. Farmers may want to contact their local School Nutrition Director to talk about Farm to School opportunities in their area. The Commission is happy to provide local School Nutrition Director contact information to those interested in learning more. 🍓

### *Eastern States Exposition Continued from Page 3*

Day. All other Avenue of States building staff and all over the Big E fairgrounds came to visit “Maine” and enjoyed their fill of Wild Blueberry crisp and other Maine samples. If you are interested in a giant, Big E sized event check out the vast entertainment offerings and exhibits at the Fair at the website at [www.thebigE.com](http://www.thebigE.com).

In 2015, the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine wrapped up another successful Big E in the Maine building. Our new Foodservice managers, retired caterers from nearby Wilbraham, MA plan to return for 2016. Our aim is to showcase something special for the 100 year anniversary of the Big E and provide fairgoers with the best customer service and quality Wild Blueberry products grown and produced in the state of Maine. Fifteen

to twenty volunteer growers and their friends and family staff the Public Education information booth at the Fair each year. As always we appreciate growers taking time out to come to the Fair, and talk to people about the special Maine wild blueberry. We thank those who made 2015 such a successful year! We invite veteran and new volunteers to join us at the Big E in the Fall of 2016, a notice will be distributed in the spring! 🍓