Human Power on the River for Locally Grown Grain

Contributed by Wheat Fleet
10 August 2010

On August 19, 2010 a fleet of twenty human powered boats will leave Eugene, Oregon to pick up locally grown grain and beans in Harrisburg and carry them to Corvallis. This is a nod to the history of using the river as transportation and distribution for the products grown in the valley as well as a promotion of the rich variety of grain and beans raised today in the Willamette Valley.

Here is the schedule:

Harrisburg River Front Gazebo, Thursday August 19th 10:30 - 11:30, Grain & Bean Pick-up.

Corvallis Farmers' Market, Saturday August 21st 10:00-1:00, Grain & Bean Delivery

The interest in history & promotion germinated with Paul Cauthorn telling friends that he had recently purchased locally grown wheat, barley & oats and felt like he was getting back to his roots. Paul's Great-Grandfather James A Cauthorn owned and operated a grain warehouse at First & Jackson in Corvallis at the site of the present day Farmers' Market. Talking about the surprising abundance or variety of grain and beans grown in the valley, Paul and his friends brainstormed a fun way to promote local farmers' products as well as the rich history of the area and importance of the river.

Approximately twenty human powered boats will make up the "Wheat Fleet" and take off from Eugene to arrive in Harrisburg between 10:30 and 11:00 a.m. on Thursday August 19th to pick up grains & beans at the Harrisburg Riverfront Park Gazebo. Mary Ann Jasper, Will Carey, and members of the Pioneer Trail of the Oregon Country Trails will be on hand to promote agricultural tourism trail sites in the area including local museums and heritage farms. They will distribute the donations made by more than ten area farmers including:

A2R Farm (flax), Paul Harcombe (barley), Horse Creek Farm (oats), Hunton Family Farm (wheat, teff), Matt-Cyn Farms (beans), Lonesome Whistle Farm (beans, corn), Open Oak Farm (rye), OSU Barley Project (malting & food barley), J & D Farming (wheat), Stalford Seed Farms (wheat, flour, oats), and Sunbow Farm (triticale).

The Harrisburg Area Museum will have at the gazebo a full size freight wagon (full size) like those that were used to transport goods to and from market, a seed cleaner (hand operated), and local grain and feed bags.

There will be a refreshment table with ice water, iced tea and lemonade. Also there will be locally made bread and jam for people to sample.

From Harrisburg, the Wheat Fleet will travel 30 river miles to arrive at Michael's Landing at 10 a.m. in Corvallis on Saturday August 21st, where they will trundle the wheat along the riverfront path to the Corvallis Farmers' Market, the very site of James A. Cauthorn's grain warehouse in the late 1800's. Rebecca Landis, director of the Corvallis-Albany Farmers' Market, will have a booth for the grain and beans to be displayed as well as historical information and a recipe card for Paul's

Buttermilk Pancakes. Ten Rivers Food Web and Corvallis Sustainability Coalition's Food Action Team will also have tables nearby with information as well as how to purchase locally grown grain and beans.

At the turn of the century Corvallis was a shipping hub for river transport. Sternwheelers could navigate to Corvallis fairly easily, but only seasonally if at all to Eugene. People would bring grain to Corvallis and it would be shipped to San Francisco and beyond via Portland. It was also sent on the Oregon Pacific Railroad to Yaquina (near Newport) and then onto San Francisco. A sack of wheat during the 1800's was a form of currency with limited paper and coinage.

Event Goals:
- Have an uplifting event for everyone involved
- Educate people to the availability and uses of fresh, local wheat, grains and dry beans
- Educate people to the rich agricultural history of our area
- Move us a few steps forward in having a more localized food economy

For more information, contact:

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