Meet the Team

**Jason Kaye**

Jason Kaye is a soil scientist and ecologist who arrived at Penn State in 2005. Most of his research focuses on nitrogen cycling in soils. In the past, he has worked in forests, lawns, grasslands, and row crops throughout the world. On our project, Jason oversees soil monitoring to quantify surface soil nitrogen availability and nitrogen leaching from deeper soils. With so many different weed, rotation, and cultivation strategies being used in the experiment, there are sure to be some interesting changes in the nitrogen cycle. Jason hopes the monitoring will reveal which management strategies positively impact fertility without leading to nitrogen leaching losses.

Jason also teaches at Penn State, and many of his experiences with organic farming get incorporated into his undergraduate class called “Environmental Sustainability”.

Prior to arriving at Penn State, Jason moved through a stream of universities in Arizona, Colorado, and Virginia. Jason, his wife Margot, son Linus (8), and daughter Luly (5) live a few blocks from campus and can often be seen biking to and from the creamery.

**Jeff Moyer**

Jeff Moyer is the farm manager at the Rodale Institute in Kutztown, PA. Jeff is an expert in organic crop production systems including weed management, cover crops, crop rotations, equipment modification and use, and facilities design. He has helped many farmers make the transition from conventional, chemical-based farming to organic or sustainable farming methods.

Throughout his career, Jeff has brought a farmer’s perspective and approach to vitally important issues in organic agriculture. For example, he chairs the National Organic Standards Board, which assists the USDA Secretary of Agriculture in developing standards for materials to be used in organic production. Jeff also provides expert advice on other aspects of implementing the National Organic Program.

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**We're on the Web!**
http://TransToOrg.cas.psu.edu

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**Advisory Board Meeting!**

- The date for the Advisory Board Meeting has been set for Friday, March 27th from 10am to 3pm.
- We will send a letter with the location, directions, and meeting agenda.
- Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

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**Thinking back, looking forward...**

*Highlights from the PASA Conference 2009*
By Tara Pisani Gareau

Several members from our team held three hands-on workshops at PASA’s annual Farming for the Future conference at the University Park campus. The workshops dealt with weed management, biological control of insect pests, and the relationship between habitat diversity in the landscape and beneficial insect communities. The feedback from participants was that the workshops were extremely relevant, informative, and appreciated. In this issue of The Rock Springs Rotation we are highlighting the outcomes of the weed management workshop. Outcomes from the other workshops will be highlighted in subsequent issues.

**Weed School**

On February 4, 2009, a diverse group of farmers, educators, and other agriculture professionals came together at Penn State’s Snyder Agriculture Arena for an all day workshop on weed management. The workshop provided hands-on instruction on weed identification, demonstrations of tillage equipment used in weed management, and opportunities to share weed management experiences with fellow producers. The workshop began with a presentation by Penn State professors, Bill Curran and Dave Mortensen, on weed ecology and identification. Dave Mortensen demonstrated how a weed seed’s internal biological clock regulates germination in response to moisture, temperature, and light conditions. Dave explained that by understanding the conditions under which weeds will germinate, producers can time crop planting to occur when crops will have the competitive advantage over weeds.

Bill Curran used live microscope images projected on a screen to show attendees the anatomical characteristics of different weeds. Bill walked participants through identification keys for both grass and herbaceous weeds. Then with complimentary copies of *Weeds of the Northeast* and identification keys in hand, participants set to work to identify twenty weeds commonly found in Pennsylvania farmlands. At each weed station, there were samples of the weed at the seedling and adult stage along with a jar of the weed’s seeds. Participants were very enthusiastic about this activity (some even forgoing the break period to continue working).

The afternoon session involved innovative tillage strategies for weed management. Participants viewed clips from a documentary film, produced by Dave Mortensen and his son, Christian, of four Pennsylvanian farmers’ philosophies and approaches towards weed management. The highlight of the afternoon session for many participants was the demonstration of the different tillage implements. These included a tine tiller, a basket weeder, and the “Eco Weeder”, to name a few. Organic farmers, Jim Crawford and Roy Brubaker, talked with the group about how they use these different tillage implements to effectively manage weeds in their vegetable fields.

Evaluations from the workshop were extremely positive. Seventy-eight percent of participants reported that they were very likely to make changes to their practices based on the information they learned in the workshop. Many people commented that they would invest more time in managing their weeds before they emerge...Sounds like the workshop was a success!