

**Naturally Meramec
Washington County Meeting
May 22, 2015–4 p.m.
Edg-Clif Farms and Vineyard 10035 Edg-Clif Dr., Potosi, MO**

Attendees: Steffie and Stephen Littlefield, Debby Bust, Chad Villmer, T.R.Dudley, Rick and Virginia LaChance, Andrew Dodenhoff and Haley Tebbe.

Welcome: Connie Willman, MRPC, welcomed attendees, introduced Maria Bancroft and thanked hosts Steffie and Stephen Littlefield and Cyndy Keese.

Edg-Clif Farms and Vineyards: Steffi Littlefield shared information about Edg-Clif Farms and Vineyards. The farm is a third-generation farm, originally purchased by Steffie and Cyndy's (Keesee) grandfather, a St. Louis entrepreneur. Andrew Knapp developed his own lines of pure bred Hereford cattle and made the ranch one of the largest in the Midwest. Steffie and Cyndy inherited the farm from their father who had continued to show cattle all over the country. The sisters created the Vineyard on the farm in 2007-2008 to add value. The buildings have been remodeled and a new tasting room will be built in the near future along with a new microbrewery on the property. Steffi is interested in creating a brochure with a map that includes farm tours. The annual farm tour and dinner have been very successful in bringing people back into the area and should be advertised even more.

Introductions: Attendees were asked to introduce themselves and tell a little about their businesses or entities involved with agriculture/tourism

Debby Bust has been working for the past few years on the farm tour/dinner event. This is a self-guided tour that includes a progressive dinner. Her interest in Naturally Meramec is to see how the program might enhance the farm tour event and other agriculture/tourism activities in Potosi and Washington County.

Rick and Virginia LaChance own and operate Farmhouse 1807. The farm, featured in Country Living Magazine, features a 19th century general store filled with folk art, antiques, birdhouses, handmade sweaters, scarves and hats made from sheep' wool and spices and seasonal produce. The farm currently includes three alpacas, 20 sheep and one goat. They also sell produce at local farmer's markets. They are interested in history, food production and art.

Chad Villmer works with the Food Train Farmer's Market and has received funding from DRA and USDA Rural Development to start a community food kitchen. The food kitchen will be set up in Caledonia. The tent, purchased with grant funds, is being made available to other groups who might need it. He is in need of a location for equipment storage. He would like to provide produce to schools. He raises his own beef, poultry and produce. Chad is interested in establishing a focal point for local products and would also like to see more community-wide public education for locally and organically grown products.

T.R. Dudley, Mayor of Potosi, noted that the area has a lot of hidden gems that need to be exposed. He suggested that an alternative to a brochure may be a newspaper publication with the map and articles featuring each business. This would be more cost effective and easier to keep updated.

The group discussed how local producers can come together to build on each other's successes and use and market each other's products. Some participants are interested in information on legal aspects that will allow more opportunity to eat locally-grown foods. The group discussed programs in which the elderly may get vouchers to buy locally grown food from farmers markets. It was suggested that MRPC display local products at its annual dinner for attendees to learn about the agriculture and tourism businesses in the region.

Naturally Meramec Background: Connie Willman reviewed the Naturally Meramec project. Staff have been working to finance the project for about four years, following a discussion of the MRPC Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Advisory Committee presentation by Peter Hofherr. The need for a consortium of agriculture/tourism businesses that crossed "silos" was identified. The project was funded this year by the USDA Rural Development Farmer's Market Promotion Program and the Delta

Regional Authority. The purpose of the project is to provide a forum for agriculture and tourism businesses to meet together to discuss ways they can use and market each other's products/services.

Needs: Staff asked the group to share the top three needs of their agriculture or tourism based business, with which Naturally Meramec may be able to help. Responses follow:

1. Food-service regulation information
2. Marketing
3. Financing
4. Sustainability
5. Education of consumers on agriculture processes connecting consumers with producers
6. Raising funds and getting volunteers to assist with the businesses

Agriculture/Tourism Database: Staff distributed a list of agriculture and tourism businesses in Washington County and asked participants to review the information for accuracy and to check the list for any other corrections or missing agriculture/tourism businesses. They were asked to contact Connie with any changes or additions.

Adjournment: Following an invitation to continue conversations while Edg-Clif wine-tasting, the meeting adjourned.