

# in the MARGINS

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AND APPLIED ECONOMICS

## Faculty Profile: Matt Andersen

By Matt Andersen, Assistant Professor

When I started as an assistant professor at the University of Wyoming in 2007, a colleague told me that the many demands of the position would initially feel like trying to drink water from a fire hose. And he was right. However, living in Wyoming and working at UW has been a rewarding experience on many levels. The university has been very supportive and my family has already established many close ties to the community.



My position in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics involves an even split between teaching and research. The opportunity to teach and research at UW is a privilege that I do not take lightly.

I currently teach all or part of three courses in our department, Agricultural Finance (AGEC 4500), Quantitative Methods for Economists (AGEC 5320), and Econometric Theory (AGEC 4230 / 5230). I am not sure if it is a result of the fact that many of my undergraduate students grew up on farms and ranches in Wyoming, but there seems to be strong work ethic and a “get ‘er done” attitude among my students, which contributes to a good teaching environment. The graduate students in our department have also been exceptional since I have been in this teaching role.

The courses I teach are all very quantitative and provide the students with valuable tools to make informed business decisions and apply economic principals to a wide variety of agricultural and natural resource issues. I believe that issues related to food security and natural resource use are the most important issues confronting society, and will continue to be important for the next 50 years. How do we continue to feed the world’s expanding population and protect our natural resources for future generations? These are the questions that motivate me in my profession.

My current research is focused on the measurement and interpretation of productivity trends in US agriculture.

Productivity growth in US agriculture has been remarkable in the last 50 years, allowing the United States to become the largest exporter of agricultural products in the world. Much of this success can be attributed to research and development (R&D) activities conducted at various land grant universities such as UW. Investments in R&D at universities and government agencies like the USDA translate into large increases in productivity over time, and are critical to meeting future demand for food. These productivity increases also represent a measurable economic benefit generated from public investments in agricultural R&D.

In the United States public expenditures on agricultural R&D are currently in the neighborhood of \$5 billion per year, and my research indicates that these investments are well worth the expense, generating large rates-of-return of approximately 20 percent per year. Another way of communicating this return is that \$1 spent on R&D generates approximately \$30 in benefits. The economic benefits from R&D typically take years to fully emerge, but it is definitely worth the wait as they generate very high rates-of-return and are critical to food security in the future. ■

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## Winter Seminar Series

The Department is continuing its presentation series to feature its work. This seminar will allow researchers and professors in the department to present part of their research. The series is organized by Graduate Student Liaison Trent Roberts, [trober21@uwyo.edu](mailto:trober21@uwyo.edu).

Each seminar will be from 3:10 to 4:00 in the John A. Hill Conference Room. ■

**November 18:** Steve Smutko—What Makes Community Food Systems Work (or Fail)? Economic, Social and Political Drivers

**December 2:** Kristi Hansen—A Hydro-Economic Model of Northern California



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Department of  
Agricultural  
and Applied  
Economics

# Head's Column

Roger Coupal, Head and Associate Professor

Hello, It has turned into a very enjoyable autumn in Laramie. We only recently received our first real snow as of this writing (November 1). The College is doing well, with the highest number of new freshman we have ever had. At the department level we are also doing well. Our undergraduate program is holding steady and our graduate program has more students than we have had in decades.

Our students are moving on to careers and graduate school even in the midst of a severe recession. We feel that this is a good sign that our students are top of the line. A recently celebrated Alumnus told our students that an Agriculture degree comes with it in the minds of employers a realization that Ag students come to work early and know how to work hard.



Current research and extension projects among faculty range nutrition economics to energy economics as well as agricultural studies. These studies include economic analyses of oil and gas reclamation, energy development and carbon sequestration, drought management, managing agricultural risk, and more. We try to include our students in these projects any time we can.

Dr. Larry Held will be retiring next summer and moving permanently to Fort Collins. Larry has been an extremely important intellectual presence in this department for a long time and he will be missed. But we wish him well in his new adventure and deserved rest. If you are in town please stop by and congratulate him.

As you talk to family, neighbors, colleagues please remind them that a degree in Agribusiness can be an important path to a rewarding career, a career that spans agriculture, finance, main street business, and public service.

Sincerely, Roger Coupal  
Department Head

## Recent MS Thesis Presentations

**Mandy Kauffman**  
Effects of Elk Feedground Closure on Demand for Guided Elk Hunts in Northwest Wyoming

**Xiaojia Yao**  
A Dual Economic Analysis of Multi-factor Productivity and R&D Lags in U.S. Agriculture

**Yoshiyuki (Zen) Igarashi**  
Optimal Bonding System for Land Reclamation in Oil and Gas Development

**Mikol Christensen**  
An Economic Analysis of the Jim Bridger Power Plant CO<sub>2</sub> Mineralization Process

**Heath Van Eaton**  
US Excess Demand for Selected Plastic Goods: 1994-2003

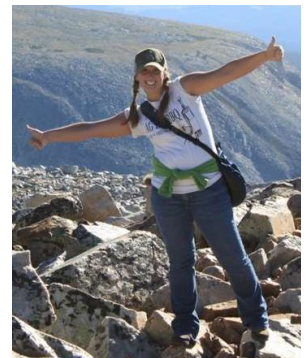
# Medicine Bow Peak Climb



The annual AgEcon Medbow Peak Climb and Cookout was a success — the weather cooperated and we had good food, good fun and of course, plenty of good people.

During the four-mile hike (to an altitude of over 12,000 feet) attendees saw moose and excellent views. Tom Foulke has put a slide show on the PastureCam page. ▣

Left: Group photo at the Medicine Bow Peak summit.  
Top Right: Kendall Eisele celebrates the climb.  
Bottom Right: Mina Hejazi with two moose.



See more photos at <http://agecon.uwyo.edu/EconDev/PastureCam.htm>



# Nagler Travels to Mongolia to Teach Agricultural Economics

This spring Amy Nagler, a research associate in AgEcon, traveled to Inner Mongolia, an autonomous region in North Eastern China, to teach a course in agricultural economics. She was invited by Professor Xiu

Nagler taught an introduction to Agricultural Economics to 32 undergraduate students. “The students in my class were excited to have an American teacher. They were interested in agricultural markets, food systems, agricultural policy, and technology to increase production of food crops, Nagler said. Students cited China’s growing population and migration from rural farms to urban areas as big concerns when thinking about food production and distribution. They were also eager to improve their English skills.

“During my visit I was able to visit a large Chinese dairy. Hohhot is considered the “Dairy Capital of China” with two industrial dairies just outside of town: China Mengniu Dairy Company Limited and Yili Group,” Nagler said. The Mengniu Dairy toured housed 11,000 Australian Holsteins and produced a wide range of milk beverages, yogurt and ice cream. She also toured two Buddhist temples built in Hohhot in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The temples were quiet, contemplative spots amidst the bustle of a rapidly growing city.

“My trip to Hohhot was educational for me as well,” Nagler said. “It was interesting to see a part of the world that I knew very little about. The enthusiasm of the students to learn made it fun to teach. IMAU welcomes collaborations with American researchers and teachers.” ■



Students in Hohhot. Nagler has crown and is celebrating her birthday.

Changbai, who was a visiting professor to AgEcon in 1999 and has now become the head of the Economics and Management Department at the Inner Mongolia Agricultural University (IMAU). IMAU is located in the town of Hohhot which is considered a mid-sized city in the region, having 1.52 million people.



Milking barn at the Mengniu Dairy outside of Hohhot, in which 500 cows are milked twice a day by one dairyman.

## Recent AgEcon Publications

- Ehmke, Mariah & Jason Shogren. Forthcoming. “The Experimental Mindset within Development Economics: Proper Use and Handling are Everything.” *Applied Economics Policy and Perspectives*. Commissioned Paper.
- Hewlet, John, Cole Ehmke, Trent Teegerstrom, Jeff Tranel & Randolph Weigel (2010). *Profiling the Evolving Characteristics and Needs for Risk Management Education of Commercial Agricultural Producers in the Intermountain West: Preliminary Results*. University of Wyoming.
- Rashford, Benjamin, Thomas Foulke & David Taylor. (2010) “Ranch-level Impacts of Predation in a Range Livestock System.” *Rangelands* 32(3): 21-26. [Profiled in *The Wildlife Professional* magazine, 4(3) – Fall 2010].
- Rashford, Benjamin, Milton Geiger & Natalie Macsalka. (2010) *The Effect of Altitude on Small Wind Turbine Production*. Bulletin B-1207. Cooperative Extension Service, College of Agriculture, University of Wyoming, Laramie. August 2010.1.
- Ritten, John, W. Marshall Frasier, Chris Bastian & Steven Gray. (2010) “Optimal Rangeland Stocking Decisions Under Stochastic and Climate-Impacted Weather.” *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 92(4): 1242-1255.
- Ritten, John. (2010) “Does it pay to Background Calves?” *Wyoming Livestock Roundup*, 22(15): Page 2, 6, August 28, 2010.
- Ritten, John, Christopher Bastian, Steven Paisley & Michael Smith. (2010) “Long Term Comparison of Alternative Range Livestock Management Strategies Across Extended Droughts and Cyclical Prices.” *Journal of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers*, 73(1): 243-252.

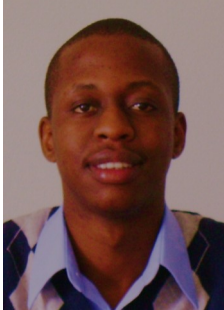


# My Summer Internship

Darlington Sabasi, UW AgEcon Graduate Student

*Editors Note: Darlington Sabasi is a second year graduate student, coming to us from Zimbabwe. He participated in an interesting and well-traveled internship this summer, and we asked him to share his experience.*

The internship started on June 7 when I flew to Des Moines, Iowa for two weeks of training. After two weeks of training, both theoretical and practical, I was ready for the job. The internship was about inventory auditing for Crop Production Services (CPS).



From Iowa I went to Missouri, Washington, Oregon, North Dakota and Kansas. During the ten weeks I spent doing this internship, I gained a lot of mixed experience, learned a lot, interacted with a lot of people, travelled to different places and had a lot of fun.

## About the company, CPS

CPS is a company that buys agricultural inputs like chemicals, fertilizers, seed and packaging material from large producers or dealers and sell directly to farmers in whatever quantities the farmers want the inputs. In addition, CPS also offers services like applying some of the chemicals and fertilizers at the farmers' fields. From 300 locations, CPS managed to buy out UAP and increased locations to 1,300 nationally within two years. As the company expanded, more employees were needed and this was reflected by the increase in the number of interns in 2010, 46, compared to 23 in 2009.

## Duties of summer interns

As the company gets bigger, there is need to increase transparency and ensure that the growth does not bring about the death of the company. The interns are hired so that they go to different locations known as farm centers owned by CPS throughout the US. The interns go to the locations, count the inventory at the location and use a program called Axes to enter their physical counts. After they are done, the program is prompted to produce a preliminary report that contains in a spreadsheet format: the beginning balance, the cost of the product, any product movement, any products that may be committed, any manual adjustment that would have been made, how much is supposed to be available, how much was physically counted and how much is short or long along with the dollar amount of either long or short.

In a nutshell, as an intern I had to count inventory, enter the counts to the axes computer program, print the preliminary, give it to the manager and sometimes go and recount some products to make sure. In order to be able to finalize the report, all the costs had to be entered as well as all physical counts for all the products. Once finalized, that was to be the end of the game. The final step was to get reports to the supervisors, which involved printing and signing them and leaving the copies for the location and the ones to send to the division office.

## Final Thought

The experience I gained working with different people from different

parts of the country, the exposure I got and experience in travelling arrangements is second to none. Additionally, having a company credit card and basically being in charge of my spending added to the experience. Given that all the expenses were paid for, I was doing the internship largely to get out-of-class experience; the remuneration paid was very much satisfactory and motivating. Finally and most importantly, I got the experience that I was in search of when I was searching for an internship. It is through being out in the field working that I got to appreciate the education I am getting in the department. ■

## Program Wins Award

The Ag In Uncertain Times program has won the Outstanding Electronic Media Education Award from the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association. The program's aim was to prepare Extension educators, agency representatives and agricultural producers for the difficult economic times unfolding across the United States. It addressed five topics: Operating in the face of uncertain credit; Operating in the face of uncertain markets; Families facing uncertainty in agriculture; Operating in risky environments; and Managing ag enterprises in uncertain times.

Starting in June of 2009 through the end of the calendar year, 17 individual webinars were hosted by the team. A roster of 40 speakers provided the presentations and materials to populate the project Internet pages. In addition to the live webinars there were video postings, RSS feeds and a program wiki for resources.

Farm and Ranch Extension Special John Hewlett was one of the program's primary organizers.

Across each of the five topics, three essential questions were addressed by the speakers: 1) Where are we? 2) Where do we want to go? and 3) How do we get there? The recordings and resources are available at <http://aginuncertaintimes.farmmanagement.org>. ■



# 2010 Wyoming State Champion Farm Business Management Team

**Bryan Wilson, UW AgEcon Graduate Student**

Supply and demand, production function, and resource substitution are all phrases commonly spoken in the classrooms and halls of the Agricultural and Applied Economic Department. Yet, how many of us knew what these meant in high school? There is a group of high school students who understand these concepts and can apply them to an actual Agricultural Business setting. I have had the privilege to coach the Farm Business Management Team for the local FFA chapter the last two years. Competition consists of a three-hour exam covering economic, accounting and marketing principles. In addition to an exam the students must complete a team activity in which they analyze a real agribusiness and provide strengths and weaknesses of the business. Concepts learned through this competition are the same concepts which freshman and sophomores in college learn.

Laramie FFA has been successful in this competition the last two years. In 2009 the students won the state competition. Winning this competition gave them the opportunity to represent Wyoming FFA at National Convention. These students all received silver emblem awards competing against 50 other state champion teams. Currently, I am preparing the 2010 State Farm Business FFA Champions for this year's National Convention. These students will spend a week in Indianapolis, Indiana competing. This year's farm to be analyzed is a tobacco farm which is unknown territory to both the students and me.



2010 state champion team coached by AgEcon grad student Bryan Wilson. They are, top row: Heather Honkin, Bryan Wilson (Coach), Sadey Sapato bottom row: Hunter Trabling and Courtney Yelton.

Having this opportunity to be a leader and coach has been very rewarding. Being able to help students succeed and reach their goals has shown me the impact one person can have on someone else's life. These students have found that hard work and dedication will help you in any aspect of life.

Many of the students aspire to go on to college and study Agricultural Business. I know, with the things they have been taught and their work ethic they will succeed in college. In addition to their success, they have given me the ability to be successful as well. As a coach I have received a deeper understanding of these concepts, which has aided me in my graduate endeavors. ■

## Vanvig Award Presented to Trent Roberts



The Vanvig Fellowship was awarded to Trent Roberts. The Vanvig Fellowship is made possible by the generous donation of Andrew and Connie Vanvig (Andy was Department Head from 1957-1982). The Fellowship is a \$5,000 award given to the top agricultural economics graduate students to assist them in their scholarly endeavors for a year. One is awarded each year. Trent is from Walsenburg, Colorado and got his Agribusiness degree here.

This year it was especially difficult to choose because we have many very qualified students this year. However, the committee was forced to choose one, and it was Trent. Trent has shown an innate desire to understand concepts at deeper level, takes initiative on his own to get done what needs to get done, and has shown leadership in representing graduate students in Department affairs. ■



# Panama Research Focus of Summer Class

**Natalie Macsalka, UW AgEcon Graduate Student**

*Editors Note: Natalie Macsalka is a second year graduate student who participated in a class which brought her to Panama, and we asked her to share her experience.*

This summer I participated in a graduate class offered by The Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources titled *Ecosystem Services in Panama*. This trip was fully funded by an Erivan Haub scholarship to conduct research in a developing country.

The project was the Agua Salud Project (which translates to water health). It is a collaborative effort through the Smithsonian Tropical Research Station to research and quantify ecosystem services provided by tropical forests in the Panama Canal Watershed.

This watershed's water is crucial to operation of the Panama Canal. The Panama Canal works through a system of three locks and each lockage uses approximately 197 million liters of water. It also provides hydroelectric power for both the canal and the surrounding areas and is the drinking water for the large cities of Panama City and Colon. Currently the watershed

is about 50% deforested and in varying land uses such as pasture, plantation and forest. The movement, storage and thus availability of water vary depending on the land use and the Agua Salud Project has obtained a large

study area representative of these different land uses. For the next 20 years scientists will perform research completely inventorying water and carbon processes across these study sites as well as quantifying other ecosystem services.

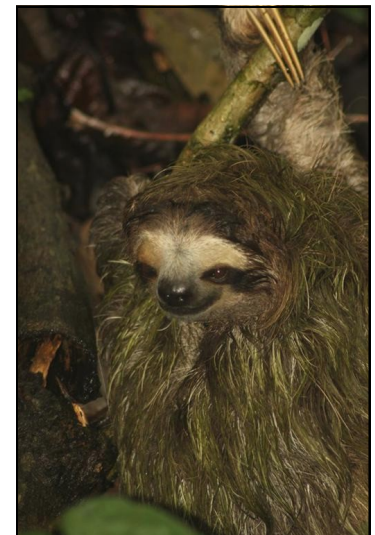
Our work weeks were spent conducting hydrological studies in the experimental field sites that surround the rural town of El Giral. I spent time in native species and Teak plantations examining water movement and hiked forest covered streams to their origins. We often stayed with a local family in the nearby town

and other times camped near our remote field sites under bohios to protect us from the rain – those mornings I was lulled awake by the sound of howler monkeys.

We were there in the wet season, so the bugs weren't bad but the rain created mud like I have never experienced before—we were covered in mud, and slipped often. That brings me to the other surprise, who knew rainforest land was so steep—I do now. I encourage everyone to do a little field work, it's not often economists get to do experiments, so participating in one that results in data that we will analyze is AWESOME.

But the trip didn't end there. As a nature enthusiast the ecosystem service I was most interested in was biodiversity, and I was not disappointed. We spent our weekends as ecotourists visiting the capital city, old port towns, and my two favorites: Smithsonian's longest running tropical research station, Barro Colorado Island, and the world renowned birding area the famous Pipeline Road. I was overwhelmed with the diversity of animal and plant life. I saw the monkeys, toucans, sloths, and butterflies I hoped to see and the ants, spiny trees and poisonous snakes I didn't expect.

This class is a great example of the opportunities that are available to leave the confines of the building and assist fellow scientists in the field. The opportunity to work in a developing country and experience tropical ecosystems is what drew me to the area, but the people and the science is what would take me back. Perhaps someday I will come across the data I helped collect. 📍



*Clockwise from upper left. 1. UW research group 2. Macsalka entering the experimental teak plantation 3. Local fauna: Leaf-cutter ants, Three-toed sloth 4. Traveling to remote field locations 5. Examining the canopy, Barro Colorado Island 6. A bohio at one of the Smithsonian's remote field camps.*



# Graduate Program Update

**Ben Rashford, Asst. Professor and Graduate Student Coordinator**

The AGECS MS program continues to grow. This Fall semester we admitted six new graduate students. The new students have diverse backgrounds and interests that are sure to enrich our program. Combined with last year's class, we have a total 17 enrolled graduate students representing six countries (US, Zimbabwe, Latvia, Iran, Uganda and China) and five US states (WY, NE, CO, PA and UT). Thanks to the unrelenting effort of our faculty, every one of our students is currently receiving full funding to support their graduate education. Additionally, thanks to a generous alumni donation, we have updated two of our three graduate student offices.

In addition to growth, the AGECS graduate program continues to produce outstanding students whom exceed expectations at every turn. Over the last year, our students have co-authored four peer-reviewed journal articles, two extension bulletins and presented their research at seven professional meetings around the country and world, including two presentations at the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association meeting in Denver, and one at the European Association of Agricultural Economists meeting in Germany. Our students also continue to excel outside the classroom. Darlington Sabasi (a second-year graduate student from Zimbabwe), was selected from a national pool of applicants for a summer internship with Crop Production Services. Darlington is also president of the Wyoming African Student's Association, a member of the UW club soccer team and the host of a weekly African music radio show on UW radio.

## **AGECS Class of 2012**

**Alex Gorski** – Alex was born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA. He received his BS in Environmental Science with a minor in Economics from Allegheny College. He is interested in resource and environmental economics and plans to combine his MS in Agricultural Economics with a dual MS in Environment and Natural Resources.

**Brian Lee** – Brian, from Imperial, NE, received his BS in Agribusiness from UW with minors in Statistics, Economics, and Banking/Financial Systems. He is interested in issues at the intersection of agriculture and the environment.

**Tanya Madden** – Tanya received a BS in Agribusiness from UW, where she received the College of Agriculture Brand of Excellence scholarship. She will be working with Larry Held while pursuing the Plan B Agribusiness Option. Tanya is from Potter, NE and plans to pursue a career in agricultural lending.

**Abby Mellinger** – Abby grew up in Cody, WY. She received a dual BS in Economics, and Environment and Natural Resources from UW. Abby is interested in resource and environmental economics with an interest in centralized versus decentralized resource management. She hopes to pursue a career in policy research and outreach.

**Moses Owori** – Moses joins us from Tororo, Uganda. He received a BS in Agriculture from Makerere University. Moses worked for the World Food Programme before coming to UW. He will be working with Dannele on a US-AID funded project exploring the economics of sustainable agriculture in east Africa.

**Jordan Steele** – Jordan, from Sundance, WY, received his BS in Agribusiness from UW and was a member of the rodeo team. He is interested in agricultural production and hopes to pursue a career in outreach.

**Wenxing Song** – Wenxing received a BS in Economics from Shanxi University where she received the Outstanding Student Scholarship for three consecutive years. She grew up in a rural area of southern China, which is her motivation to study agricultural policy and rural development.

# Did you know that UW is ranked as a very good value for your dollar?

**Chris Bastian, Asst. Professor**

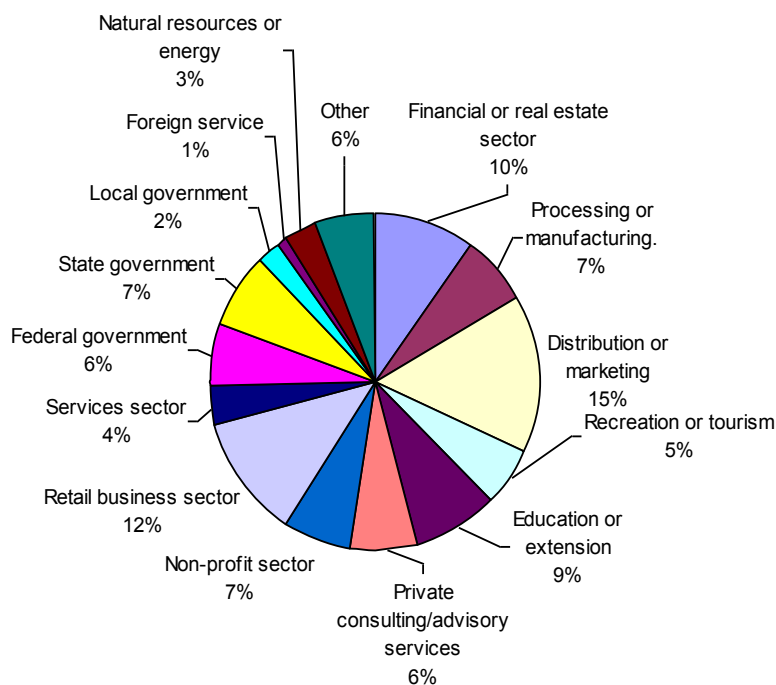
In 2009, UW was ranked 17<sup>th</sup> by *Forbes* in its America's Best Public College List and 5<sup>th</sup> in its America's Best College Buys List. In 2010, *US News* ranked UW 81 out of 1400 higher education institutions in the US.

For students who are Wyoming residents, annual tuition and fees at UW are 80 percent less than the average for nonresident rates at neighboring institutions. Nonresident students, who are children of alumni, annual tuition and fees at UW are 15 percent less than the average for resident rates at neighboring institutions.

The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at UW offers nearly \$400,000 of scholarships with less than 1,000 students competing for these funds. This funding is in addition to the up to \$3,200 a year that may be provided to Wyoming residents by the Hathaway Scholarship Program.

And did you know that our undergrads are prepared for a wide range of career opportunities?

A recent survey shows the kinds of careers our graduates are involved in. many fields.



So the next time you have a conversation with a potential student let them know UW is a great value and agbusiness is a great degree choice! ■

## Conference Sessions Available

The video-taped sessions from the recent Living and Working on the Land conference will soon be available. See noted value-added farmer Joel Salatin and the many other speakers discuss ideas for acreage and venture management at the conference website: [www.blocksofsuccess.org](http://www.blocksofsuccess.org). ■



Living & Working on the Land  
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# *In the Margins*

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## AgEcon Spring 2010 Graduates



Wesley Anderson	Riverton, WY	Patrick Jacobsen	Cheyenne, WY
Lyndi Apolius	Paxton, NE	Chase Johnson	Loveland, CO
Jessie Berry	Cheyenne, WY	Douglas Jolly	Hugo, CO
Nicholas Brauer	Sidney, NE	Sabrina Lamb	Mountain, WY
Shannon Brophy	Yuma, CO	Brian Lee	Laramie, WY
Ashley Butler	Castle Rock, CO	Jessica Leetch	Glendo, WY
Peter Burgess	Wyarno, WY	Tanya Madden	Laramie, WY
Mikol Christensen	Rock Springs, WY	Nigel Miller	Elizabeth, CO
Colton Cowdrey	Worland, WY	Jillian Moore	Boulder, CO
Eric Cropper	Salt Lake City, UT	Chad Nelson	Buffalo, SD
Taylor Engum	Laramie, WY	Kyle O'Donnell	Ten Sleep, WY
Brittany Epler	Veteran, WY	Amber Phillips	Dubois, WY
Carla Gefroh	Douglas, WY	Jordan Schroeder	Hot Springs, SD
Daniel Greet	Ten Sleep, WY	Tyler Snyder	Yampa, CO
Elizabeth Griesse	Crawford, NE	Jordan Steele	Sundance, WY
Charles Holden	Thermopolis, WY	Matthew Strand	Akron, CO
Garrett Horton	Riverton, WY	Heath Van Eaton	Torrington, WY
Jonathan Huss	Iliff, CO	Michael Wallace	Waltham, MA
Yoshiyuki Igarashi	Raleigh, NC	Zebadiah Whipp	Lander, WY
		Xiaoja Yao	St Paul, MN

## New Arrival



Eric and Betsy Cropper are announcing the birth of their first child Lucy. She was born Saturday, October 16th at 6:28am. She was 6 lbs 14 oz and 19 inches long. Congratulations!

We want your news! Alumni, faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students are welcome to submit news and photos. Send them to the In the Margins editor, Cole Ehmke at [cehmke@uwyo.edu](mailto:cehmke@uwyo.edu).

In the Margins is published each semester by the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at the University of Wyoming. Past editions are at [agecon.uwyo.edu](http://agecon.uwyo.edu).

# *Congratulations!*