



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



Photo courtesy of John Groh/The Produce News.

Board Votes to Move Forward with Assessment Increase

The National Watermelon Promotion Board met February 24th, in Scottsdale, AZ, in conjunction with the National Watermelon Association Annual Convention. Most notably, following a favorable report on industry support, the Board voted to move forward with Option 2 – or a 3 cent per hundredweight increase – to the Board’s assessment level. This change means a total assessment of 9 cents per hundredweight. This amount is split between growers and shippers and paid in total by importers. The Board staff, overseen by the Executive Committee, will work to submit all necessary documentation to the USDA for the Rulemaking Process which includes a 60-day comment period. During the comment period, industry members are encouraged to share their opinions on the potential assessment increase. Look for updates in future Watermelon Update newsletters.

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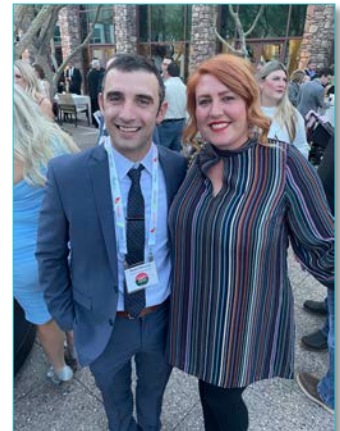
Board Moves Forward Continued

In addition to the Assessment Increase topic, [new board members](#) had an orientation and were sworn in by USDA. The USDA and NWA provided updates to the Board, a Redistricting Committee was appointed (a mandatory five-year evaluation process), and the 2024/2025 budget was approved. Additional information for the 2024/2025 fiscal year (April 1, 2024-March 31, 2025) programs will be available in future editions of the Watermelon Update.

New Leadership at the NWPB

Executive Committee members and officers were elected as a part of the NWPB February Board Meeting. **The new leadership includes:**

- Lee Wroten, President (District II)
- Christopher Dyer, First Vice President (Importers)
- Jill Barton (District I)
- Matt Moore (District III)
- Blake Mouzin (District IV) (pictured)
- Jason Van Groningen (District V)



Blake Mouzin and NWPB Senior Director of Communications Stephanie Barlow

The Executive Committee meets monthly to discuss Board initiatives and activities.



NWPB at the National Watermelon Association Annual Convention

The NWPB sponsored and attended the NWA Annual Convention to spend more time with the watermelon industry. The receptions, education sessions, queen competitive elements and more offered great one-on-one time with the watermelon family. To note, Sr. Director of Communications Stephanie Barlow was on the panel (participants pictured) for the first Women's Session. The Board also hosted an industry Town Hall: Supporting the Promotion of Watermelon on the potential assessment increase. Following a presentation from Ex Officio Christian Murillo and Interim President Lee Wroten (at that time) the room was **full of support for the increase**, both qualitatively and quantitatively. These results were used during the Board Meeting the next day.



Panelists Jordan Carter, Stephanie Barlow, Samantha Kilgore, Rachel Syngo and Olivia Johnson

Wrapping Up Watermelon Association Convention Season

Board directors along with Ex Officio Christian Murillo and Board Member James Sharp covered the February and March Association Conventions. In addition to connecting with many industry members, **Christian and James presented on the Potential Assessment Increase**. NWPB Directors Stephanie Barlow and Juliemar Rosado both attended MarDel Watermelon Association Convention. Executive Director Mark Arney was also in attendance at the Gulf Coast Watermelon Association Convention and North Carolina Watermelon Association Convention.



Julimar Rosado, Christian Murillo, Olivia Johnson, Haley Keenan and Stephanie Barlow at MarDel Watermelon Association Convention



Mark Arney, Olivia Johnson and Christian Murillo at Gulf Coast Watermelon Association Convention



James Sharp and Mark Arney at North Carolina Watermelon Association Convention



NWA Nook: Thanks for a Great National Convention

Thanks to all the members of the watermelon industry who were able to attend, sponsor, and support the industry at NWA's 109th National Convention this past February in Scottsdale, AZ. Highlights from the convention include:

- The crowning of the 2024 National Watermelon Queen, Jules Singley of Wicksburg, AL- the 2023 Gulf Coast Watermelon Queen (pictured with 2023 National Queen Olivia Johnson)
- The confirmation of a new slate of NWA Executive Committee Members, including Chairman Hamilton Dicks IV, President Bob Gibson of Gibson Produce and VP Jordan Carter of Leger & Son
- A successful live and silent auction



Make sure to mark your calendar for next year's convention, in Texas for the first time since 2013, February 19-23 in Austin, TX.



Double Delight: Watermelon Wins Big at Region 5 NAMA Awards

At Region 5 of the National Agri Marketing Association (NAMA) awards, not one but **two consumer communications campaigns won first place recognition in the Consumer Audiences category**. *The Slice of Happy Project* was awarded first place in the “Company or Producer-Funded PR Campaign directed to Consumers” which was 2023’s signature campaign still active now in the first quarter of 2024. The campaign elements included the landing page (sliceofhappyproject.com) with the watermelon slice cursor design element, an integrated Spotify playlist, blog post at The Slice, Happiness Toolkit email sign ups, social posts utilizing research and survey stats, influencer content, programmatic google ads about comfort foods, user generated content and grower stories, as well as in-house custom Instagram and Facebook Reels and TikToks.



Another first place win was *Stay Hydrated on National Watermelon Day Stanley* giveaway in the category of “Social Media campaign directed towards Consumers” and was more specific on the tactic. The Watermelon Moonshine Stanley Cup giveaway happened on Instagram and earned 6,909 post interactions with a reach of nearly 52,000.

Both of these first place wins advance to the National NAMA Awards happening late April 2024. Stay tuned for news of any national wins or merit awards on our LinkedIn page. Our agency partner, Curious Plot, that works on these campaigns with NWPB staff are dedicated, passionate and so creative when it comes to watermelon! Congratulations to us all!



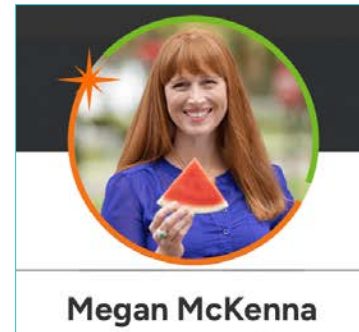
Flavor Forays Offers Intimate Connections with Foodservice Decision Makers

New this year was the Board’s sponsorship of Flavor Foray in Charleston, SC. From their website, “Stir the pots. Meet the characters. Listen to the stories. Flavor Forays plans, organizes, and executes *extraordinary culinary adventures* that bring together the top leaders in the restaurant and hotel industry and suppliers for immersive, unforgettable experiences in food meccas all over the globe. Our goals are education, inspiration, and appreciation of culinary cultures.” Considering the event’s goals include the foodservice program’s goals of education and inspiration, it was meant to be. Watermelon was highlighted in two different salads during the event with one chef commenting on its now year-round acceptance. The two day event offered an intimate look at the food scene in Charleston but also **great networking** with foodservice contacts from Ritz Carlton, The Cheesecake Factory, Whole Foods, Stanford University, Restaurant Associates, and others.



Megan McKenna Competes in Viva Fresh's Clean Eating Challenge

Senior Director of Marketing & Foodservice, Megan McKenna is trying to “walk the walk, not just talk the talk” by **participating in Viva Fresh's Clean Eating Challenge**. From the website, “The Clean Eating Challenge represents the basic idea that a diet rich in fruits and vegetables is widely accepted as a tool to improve health. As fruit and vegetable producers, marketers, and industry advocates, we hold the very tools to improve the lives of millions. It is our hope that our industry can do more than champion the consumption of fruits and vegetables but model the very lifestyle behaviors that will be critical to change the health and wellness of a nation.”



In addition to eating clean and eating more fruits and vegetables, McKenna has enjoyed team support from others in the challenge, monthly dietitian coaching and shared her experience via monthly blogs on the CEC website. McKenna wanted to compete for the grand prize, a Peloton, for personal and professional reasons. Personally because she turns 40 this year and feels like she and her family were in a fruit and vegetable rut! Professionally, she wanted to **connect with other health-minded leaders in the industry** and work on her writing skills as a part of the required blogs. Cheer her on as she completes the last month of the challenge!



Board Nominations Forms Due March 15

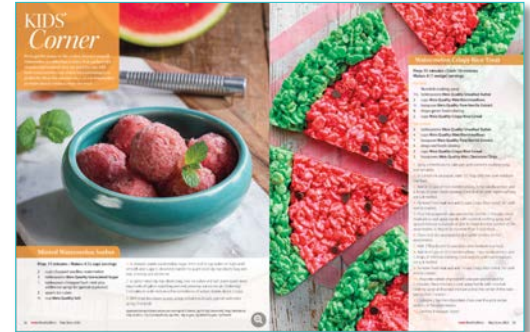
The Board conducted successful Nominations Teleconferences on February 14th for Districts 2, 3, and Importers, resulting in complete slates. If you are a nominee, kindly **submit your nomination forms by March 15th**. These forms will be sent to the USDA for the Secretary of Agriculture to appoint board members from these **districts** to serve from 2025 to 2027. If you have questions or comments regarding nominations, please contact Rebekah Dossett at rdossett@watermelon.org or Andrea Smith at asmith@watermelon.org.



Retail Review Corner

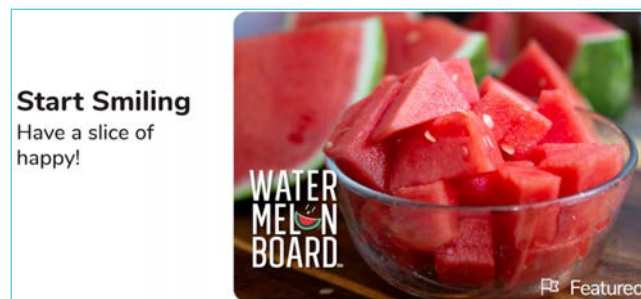
Weis Markets “Healthy Bites” Magazine

Weis Markets is a retailer that currently operates 199 stores in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, West Virginia, Virginia and Delaware. NWPB partnered with Weis Markets to be included in their May/June issue of “Healthy Bites” magazine. Watermelon was featured in their “Kids Corner” section with a full page recipe and image of minted watermelon sorbet as an additional half page ad. In total, 80,000 magazine were distributed in all stores and over 1,500 visits were made to the magazine website in May and June.



Kroger “Search and Browse” Program

This year, NWPB participated in retailer Kroger’s “search and browse” program that ran from July 6 – July 31. Promoting watermelon as a “slice of happy” on banner ads, the program was able to achieve 45% ROAS, move over 87,000 units, and achieved over 895,000 impressions!



Costco “Quick & Easy”

NWPB had the opportunity to participate in another Quick & Easy video by retailer Costco Wholesale. The 90 second video – titled “Watermelon Salad & Lemonade Soda” – educated Costco members and viewers on how to cut and prepare two watermelon recipes using Costco products. The video, which featured the watermelon and pistachio salad and the watermelon rosemary lemonade soda, was posted to a variety of social media platforms including Costco.com and Costco’s Facebook and Pinterest channels from June 29 through July 27. In total, the video had over 769,000 views, 1,500 loves/likes and 164 Comments!



Social Media Marketing World: A Watermelon Board Perspective

Recently staff from NWPB including Stephanie Barlow, Juliemar Rosado and Summer Walker attended the SMMW Conference that touts itself as the world's largest event for social media marketers, offering dozens of presentations on trends, tools and how to market our product, watermelon, in an ever-changing and evolving digital landscape. Opportunities included:

1. **Industry Insights:** The conference offered valuable insights into the latest trends and best practices in social media marketing, specifically emphasizing how to use various AI tools to engage and amplify with efficiency to create content for YouTube, TikTok and the other major digital platforms. This knowledge will be crucial in staying ahead of the curve and crafting engaging content for our target audiences.



2. **Paid Advertising Strategies:** As the watermelon industry heavily relies on effective marketing campaigns, the sessions on paid advertising strategies were particularly insightful. Learning how to optimize campaigns behind the scenes, changes to the targeting tools from Meta and how to maximize reach with paid budget will allow us to get the most out of our social media advertising budget.

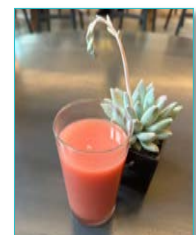
3. **Networking Opportunities:** The event provided excellent opportunities to connect with fellow marketing professionals and industry experts. These connections will be invaluable for bouncing ideas off each other, staying updated on industry trends, and potentially collaborating on future initiatives.

The knowledge gained and connections made will undoubtedly contribute to our ongoing efforts to **effectively promote watermelons through engaging and targeted social media marketing campaigns**, including testing out effective AI tools and garnering more popularity for watermelon through owned user generated content.




Watermelon on the Menu

Provisional in San Diego, CA is currently offering a cold pressed juice consisting of **fresh watermelon, jicama, strawberry, mint and lime**. The "Quench" beverage is on their brunch menu, known for seasonal fare.

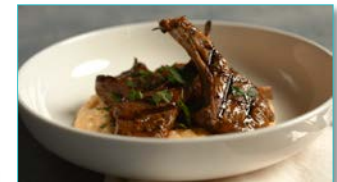


Culinary Institute of America Helps Tell the Watermelon Story

The Board has ongoing partnerships with influential foodservice organizations to help keep watermelon top-of-mind in any season. The Board's partnership with the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) is available

24/7 at ciaprochef.com/watermelon  for any chef looking for watermelon education and inspiration. This year's partnership included new recipes, photos, and videos, featuring Chef Magnus Young Chef de Cuisine and Culinary Manager at the Bruschettaeria Food Truck for Clif Family Wines in St. Helena, CA. New recipes include:

- Sabich with Watermelon Salad and Watermelon Rind Amba
- Grilled Lamb Chops with Watermelon Molasses and Sofrito
- Watermelon Stack Cake
- Melonchelada Cocktail

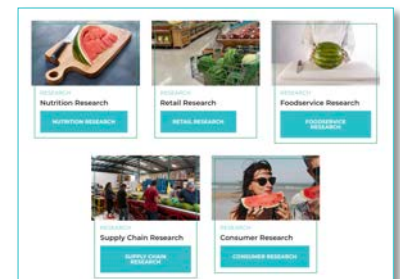


The CIA shares this and other watermelon content through social media as well as the CIA SmartBrief newsletters. Since the program launched, there have been more than half a million video views!



Watermelon Research Resources

The Watermelon Board offers many [research resources](#) for the industry. In addition to the Consumer Attitudes & Usage Study is the [NEW Marketing Guide](#) which offers actionable recommendations to move more watermelon. Retail and Supply Chain Research offer reports updated weekly and monthly looking at overall movement and specifically retail movement and price but also offer an opportunity for custom reports for your business. Lastly, Foodservice Research can help equip foodservice with the education needed to menu America's favorite melon. Please explore The [Research](#) section of the website to learn more.



NWPB Connections

Southeast Produce Council Southern Exposure – Tampa, FL – March 7 – 9

Tastemaker Conference – Chicago, IL – March 14 & 15

