



## Sokol Blosser Winery | 2004 Sustainability Report

*By Susan Sokol Blosser, President*

2004 SAW MORE PROGRESS IN OUR QUEST TO MAKE OUR WHOLE BUSINESS MORE SUSTAINABLE. WE ARE STARTING TO BECOME MORE ACCUSTOMED TO CONSIDERING SUSTAINABILITY AS PART OF OUR DECISION-MAKING AND 2004 SAW SOME GAINS IN EVERY ARENA. HERE IS MY RECAP.

### **GENERAL**

- 1) We joined the top sustainable business organization in Oregon, Natural Step of Oregon, and I was promptly asked to be on the Board of Directors. One of my goals is to introduce sustainability by using Natural Step system conditions and principles to local wineries who are interested.
- 2) We did not have any formal sustainability training sessions in 2004 but we have an all-staff session scheduled at the winery in early 2005, taught by the director of the Natural Step of Oregon.
- 3) We signed up for renewable power (wind) through PGE.
- 4) We patched the leaks in the winery roof but it wasn't enough and we had to replace the winery roof. There were no sustainable options and the PVC membrane roof was less than a third of a standing seam metal roof. The white membrane will reflect the light and help keep the winery cooler in summer. We hope someday to have solar panels on the roof.
- 5) We remodeled our offices to accommodate our larger staff and used Herman Miller office furniture, made with recycled and/or recyclable materials. We donated our collection of used office furniture to YCAP (Yamhill Community Action Program).
- 6) Our copy paper is now 100% post consumer waste recycled content and we recycle all toner cartridges.

## VINEYARD

- 1) We finished our second year of transitional organic certification and hope to receive full certification fall 2005. That will allow us to label our estate wines "made with organic grapes".
- 2) We started in January using only 20% biodiesel in our tractors. It was \$.50/gallon more expensive than regular diesel, and I hope that as its usage increases, the price will go down. We had no problems with it in our equipment, but it doesn't flow as well as diesel and we will need to buy a pump to get it from our tanks into the tractor, rather than using gravity flow. Nothing is easy.
- 3) We had about 200 gallons of used hydraulic and engine oil, collected over the years which our vineyard manager, Luis, was able to start recycling, 5 gallons at a time. He worked his way through half of it, as 5 gallon containers became available. He plans to recycle the rest of it in 2005.
- 4) We had a collection of old pesticides, herbicides and other vineyard chemicals that had been sitting around for years. We participated in a licensed disposal collection and Luis delivered it all last May to the designated site. It cost several hundred dollars to have it all safely disposed of. Why did we ever use this stuff anyway?
- 5) We entered an intense program in 2003 focused on building the humus content of the soil in the vineyard, recognizing soil development as the basis for a healthy vineyard ecology. The program involved compost on the vines, soil-building cover crops, straw mulch in the phylloxerated part of the old vineyard, and discontinuing rototilling and switching to machines that do not destroy the soil structure. We have realized that over the years we have depleted the soil and we are trying to rebuild it. We did base soil tests in several parts of the vineyard for both microbial activity and nutritional elements. Soil tests done one year later, in the fall of 2004, showed significant improvement in microbial activity.
- 6) We built our biggest compost piles yet after the 2004 harvest, using organic straw, organic cow and horse manure, pomace from crush, and organic rock phosphate. The piles stretch about a hundred feet along the road up to the winery.
- 7) In 2004, the Prescott Western Bluebird Recovery program assigned us new bluebird monitors, Marion and Marilyn Van Dyk, who were here every week and gave me regular reports. I helped with the banding and can report that cupping a baby bluebird in my hand is a spiritual experience. We had at least 2 clutches hatch and now have a resident flock of about 25 bluebirds keeping the insect population under control.
- 8) We continue our efforts to increase species biodiversity, both with wildflowers in and around the vineyard and our plantings of lavender, Echinacea, rudbeckia, Russian sage, and yarrow.
- 9) We started farming our Pinot Gris blocks (7 acres) biodynamically. In 2004, we hired a consultant and followed his advice.

## **PRODUCTION:**

- 1) We made tangible progress in the label arena this year, after educating our label printer. Our first success was getting clear, recyclable backing on our pressure-sensitive labels. This happened late enough that we were only able to do it for the bottling of Meditrina, but it was a start. We will print all our labels on clear backing for our bottling in spring 2005.

Beginning with the spring 2005 bottling, all labels will be printed on 30% post consumer waste recycled paper with vegetable based ink. The metallic paper has been eliminated. This includes the 2002 Pinot Noir, the 2004 Pinot Gris, Evolution 9th Edition and Meditrina II.

- 2) We recycled all our shrink wrap from bottling in 2004 and passed on our info to other wineries that started doing the same. We are ordering kraft cases for our wines whenever possible.
- 3) All pomace generated at harvest is composted and returned to the vineyard.

## **TASTING ROOM**

- 1) We are trying to move towards organic products to sell in our tasting room. We sell organic chocolate from Dagoba, including our proprietary Noir Bar and the new M (Meditrina) Bar. We have organic T shirts and sweat shirts and are always looking for appropriate new products.
- 2) Our brochures are printed on 100% post-consumer content, process chlorine-free, using soy-based inks.

**For more information: [www.sokolblosser.com](http://www.sokolblosser.com) | 1-800-582-6668**