MONSON FRUIT PICKING POLICY

(Revised 2009)

GENERAL POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and standards in order to process, pack and market cherries of the highest quality, to achieve maximum profit for the members of Flathead Lake Cherry Growers, Inc.

PRIOR TO HARVEST

Annual Meeting:

The annual meeting will be held at the Yellow Bay Community clubhouse on a date to be determined by the Flathead Lake Cherry Growers, Inc. board of directors. The latest information, starting dates, etc., will be covered at this meeting by a Monson Fruit Co. representative.

Spray Records:

Spray record forms must be submitted to the FLCG office by the member or sprayer prior to picking up bins. FLCG members are expected to apply legally approved chemicals in accordance with the specified application rates. Cherries with fruit fly infestation, obvious fungus, overripe condition, or similar defects, will not be accepted. Spray records are to be reviewed by Monson’s fieldman.

Bin Issue will be according to fieldman records of per acres, harvested.

A. Bin allotment should be determined by estimating per acre tonnage prior to harvest, between the fieldman and grower’s estimates. (Acres to be harvested are to be agreed upon with grower.)

B. Monson will deliver bins prior to harvest; 30# lugs will be delivered at the same time. Burlap bin covers will also be available.

C. Individual growers are responsible for the bins and lugs checked out. If not returned, grower will be assessed a fee at the current replacement value.

D. Special consideration will be given on lugs and bin amounts for harvesting operations that involve more than one orchard.
PICKING AND FRUIT HANDLING

When to Pick: The fieldman will determine with grower.

Fruit color is the most consistent and reliable indicator for ripeness in sweet cherries. Since most of FLCG packed fruit is sent to distant markets, cherries should be picked when the majority of the fruit is dark red to mahogany in color. Begin by picking the most advanced trees of sections of the trees (top and south sides), or areas of the orchard which ripen earlier. Then gradually work your way through the orchard.

Gibberellic Acid (GA): Required

Fruit color changes very quickly during harvest. A grower usually has 2-3 days to pick the fruit from a given tree with the optimum color. Monson Fruit requires GA on your orchard to maximize firmness for market arrival and to reduce the chance for fruit adjustments. This treatment is applied at the straw color stage which is about three weeks prior to harvest and extends the ripening time by 3-5 days. This process is used extensively in Washington and is widely accepted by fruit brokers.

Fruit Quality:

All cherries for fresh and brine markets need to be picked with the stems attached. Growers are cautioned not to send in fruit that is damaged, soft, overripe, under-sized, or stemless. Different varieties of fruit must not be mixed in the same bin. The warehouse will inform the growers about any of these problems as soon as possible. Graded cull samples that are over 25% will be saved for growers to see. Growers will be called personally if their cull rate is over 25%. Grower is to perform 100 counts to determine feasibility of harvest when questionable conditions arise. Orchards with questionable or below standard horticultural practices should be noted to the FLCG board by the Monson fieldman. Appropriate actions in early spring shall be taken with orchard owners to improve horticulture practices.

Rain Conditions: Check with Fieldman.

Cherries must be firm and dry if picked after a significant rain period. Where splitting has occurred, a minimum of 24 hours must elapse before resuming harvest and the warehouse must be consulted prior to resuming harvest. Where damage has occurred, it would be preferable to start with a small crew until quality and damage factors have been evaluated. If Monson management considers that rain has caused significant damage to the crop, cherries picked after the rain will be put in a separate “rain pool.” Growers
should be aware that rain-damaged fruit may not meet grade at the sales point, resulting in considerable price adjustments. In extreme conditions, Monson and the FLCG assessment team shall make determinations on how to proceed.

**Fruit Handling:**
Cherries should be harvested only when dry. Pick cherries in the cool part of the day. Fruit must be delivered to the warehouse prior to 2:00 p.m. the same day that it is picked, unless prior approval from the Monson field representative has been received. Frequent delivery during the day is advised. Picked fruit should always be placed in the shade while waiting for transport to the warehouse. To reduce bruising of the fruit, stress gentle handling of the cherries while picking and dumping into the lugs and bins. Burlap bin covers are also provided. These covers should be damp to help cool the cherries while the bins are in the orchard and in transit to the warehouse.

**Weight:**
Cherries have a long 7-8 hour ride to Washington State and must not exceed 300 pounds net weight per bin. Please monitor this at the orchard (weighing will only be done at Finley Point if requested). However, the weighing of all fruit may become prohibitive in order to expedite the process of fruit through the hydrocooler. Your fruit will be weighed at Monson’s plant prior to processing. Be aware that additional weight can cause damage to the fruit. For this reason, bins that exceed 300 pounds may require unloading weight to meet requirements prior to shipping.

**Grower’s Number Tags:**
Each grower will be given bin tags; the grower shall mark the grower number in indelible ink and place on bins prior to delivery. The tags will be color coded to variety.

**RECEIVING**

**General:**
The receiving supervisor will inspect each bin of fruit as it is delivered. The supervisor is authorized to reject any cherries not meeting current market standards or expected conditions upon delivery to the sales
point. Each lot of bins will be visually graded according to the degree of ripeness, size, GA spray.

**Time:**
Normal dock hours will be from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Special situations or conditions could dictate changing these hours. Growers will be advised of the current telephone number for the voice mail system at the warehouse. Extended hours for receiving fruit will only be granted by Monson’s representative. If you require extended hours, YOU (THE GROWER) MUST make prior arrangements with Monson’s representative. (The quality of fruit remains the grower’s responsibility, so if high temperatures and/or soft fruit occur by delivering fruit late, you risk the chance of it being rejected.)

**Fruit Receipt Form:**
1. The receiving clerk will prepare the Fruit Receipt Form, which will include the grower’s name, number, and the number of bins issued; the grower will receive the yellow copy of this form.
2. As the fruit is processed, the bin weights and sample information will be added to the copy of the Fruit Receipt Form accompanying each bin. A copy of this information will be available to each grower after the fruit is processed, and may be picked up at the Finley Point warehouse office. (See attached examples of completed Fruit Receipt Form and processing information.)

**Orchard Run Briners:**
Fruit of size and/or variety (normally pollenizers) picked specifically for processing into maraschino cherries. The market varies each season and growers will be advised of market situations prior to harvest.

Please sign this policy and return it to the Flathead Lake Cherry Growers office. It will be necessary to have this on file prior to receiving your bin allocation. Have a great cherry season. Call the Monson representative or a FLCG board member if you have questions.