

National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board

REE Advisory Board Office
South Building Room 3901
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250-2255

Mailing Address:
STOP 0321
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20250-2255
Telephone: 202-720-3684
Fax: 202-720-6199

DRAFT MINUTES Executive Committee Conference Call

Friday, January 7, 2011 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. EST.

Executive Committee Members Present: Jean-Mari Peltier (Chair), Dr. Nancy Cox, Dr. Steve Daley-Laursen, Dr. Dennis Heldman, Leo Holt and Terry Wolf.

Executive Committee Members Absent: Dr. Mary Wagner (Vice Chair), Dr. Carrie Castille and Dr. Nancy Childs.

NAREEE Board Staff: Rob Burk (Executive Director) and Shirley Morgan Jordan (Program Support Coordinator).

Others Present: Dr. June Henton, Carol Keiser-Long and Dr. Charles Perrings



I. Roll Call of Executive Committee Members and Attendees, and Previous Meeting Minutes

- Rob Burk (Executive Director) conducted a roll call of the Executive Committee as members signed on to the conference call.
- By unanimous consent the members present approved the December meeting minutes of the committee.

II. Comments and Welcome

- Jean-Mari Peltier (Chair) provided welcoming remarks to the Board.

III. Comments from the Under Secretary of REE (if available)

- Dr. Catherine Wotecki, Under Secretary was unable to attend the Executive Committee Conference Call as she had a conflicting meeting with the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology.
- Jean-Mari Peltier extended thanks to everyone that participated with the December 16th meeting with Dr. Wotecki. Jean-Mari Peltier indicated she thought the meeting was a success, that Dr. Wotecki is genuinely interested in working with the Board, and that she has some clear cut plans on how to do that.
- The Committee members present related the Board's interest in meeting with stakeholders to organize a united effort to expand the budget for REE activities.
- Terry Wolf noted that he felt Dr. Wotecki was open and honest with the Board and didn't hold anything back. She seemed to be interested in working with us and he was pleased with the discussion.
- Dr. Steven Daley-Laursen noted that he felt it was a well run meeting. He was happy with the seriousness of the discussion and he was excited by the point that it was unusual for both the Under Secretary and Deputy Under Secretary to be in the same meeting with stakeholders and to meet for over an hour.
- There was a discussion related to intra and inter agency collaboration.
- Jean-Mari Peltier noted that REE is in the process of developing several white papers that identify the work being done by REE agencies on different areas of concern, and the funding currently dedicated to those programs. Dr. Wotecki asked her staff to draft five to six papers. Five of the papers would address the broad based research of all REE activities, and an additional sixth paper would cover the foundational programs. The papers would be supplied to the Board, for review by the Relevancy and Adequacy Committee. She has suggested that the Board could evaluate the relevancy and adequacy of the programs/funding and set recommendations on what adequate funding could be to address these topics. The papers are going to be completed mid-March.
- The five topics to be addressed by the white papers are: bio-energy, climate change, food safety, international food security, and child nutrition.
- Members of the Executive Committee felt that this would be an appropriate project for the Board. However, they expressed their frustration with the lack of response from NIFA on the comments on the NIFA AFRI RFA process released by the Board on September 15, 2010. The members noted that a lot of time and effort was put into the report. The members felt it would be fair to discuss their frustration with Dr. Wotecki. Some members noted that they understand that the 2011 NIFA ARFI RFA will be different, and that perhaps a response may be coming soon. (*Addendum: Following the January 7, 2010 Executive Committee Meeting, members were able to review the 2011 NIFA AFRI RFA and felt that a number of their concerns had been addressed in the latest release. Additionally, Dr. Roger Beachy offered to prepare comments in response to the September report if the membership felt it relevant following the 2011 release.*)
- The Executive Committee felt that a letter should be drafted to be sent to Dr. Wotecki, expressing their willingness to work on the white papers, however Committee Members also wanted the letter to express the frustration of the Board over the lack of response to previous reports.

- Members questioned whether Dr. Woteki responded to the white paper developed by the Board evaluating the roadmap? Rob Burk noted that Dr. Woteki genuinely thanked the Board for its remarks and she validated that good points were made in the Boards review.
- Jean-Mari Peltier noted that Dr. Woteki is on a mission to expand the competitive grants program and that she understands and appreciates that there is a need for continued agricultural production research.
- Jean-Mari Peltier noted that stakeholders need to hear Dr. Woteki’s voice more clearly in the REE Roadmap. She referred positively to the presentation by Dr. Woteki to the APLU. Dr. Bartuska indicated that they are working on that point. Jean-Mari Peltier felt that Dr. Woteki has a balanced approach to the USDA research mission. During the meeting there was a discussion related to models of research collaboration. Drs. Woteki and Bartuska have expressed that they would like to evaluate models of collaboration with the industry both internal and external to the USDA. One suggestion was that “cooperatives” related to the forest service be evaluated. A few members suggested that models developed for NSF should be evaluated, as the funds put forward by the agency for competitive grant were matched by industry collaborators. . The Department of Defense has models that Dr. Woteki has referred to on numerous occasions as well.
- Members discussed the potential impact that the advice of the Board could have on drafting of the next Farm Bill, and the importance of increasing the budgeted funds for research for all REE agencies.
- Jean-Mari Peltier stated that clear commentary needs to be made that the Board supports the expansion of competitive grant funding but not at the expense of intramural capacity and foundation programs, nor the funding of Land Grants through formula funds.
- There was a general belief that the Farm Bill will not be completed until FY13.
- One member questioned whether there are any benefits of restoring Hatch Act funds and other programs that require states to match the funding, and whether any leverage as far as competitive funding would be lost.

VI. Updates on Committee Activities and/or Reports

Specialty Crop Committee

- Dr. Walter Armbruster (Committee Chair) was not available to attend the meeting.
- Rob Burk reported that the Specialty Crop Committee (SCC) report is close to completion. The draft of the report was distributed to the full Board for review this morning with a due date of 1/19/11.
- Tom Bewick is conducting an internal review and will supply the report to NAREEEAB. Jean-Mari Peltier questioned whether the SCRI funding will be extended beyond 2012. Rob Burk stated that he guessed that funding would not expire under a continuing resolution, but he stated that he would look into it further.

Renewable Energy

- Carol Keiser-Long welcomed the possibility for the Renewable Energy Committee (REC) to review any white papers produced by REE concerning energy.

- She noted that she felt the committee had a good meeting in December. Dr. Steve Schaffer (ARS), Dr. Robert Fireovid (ARS), and Carmela Bailey (NIFA) provided some direction on how the committee could be most useful in the future.
- Carol Keiser-Long reported that the committee received an email from Dr. Beachy about the recommendations from their most recent report.
- Carol Keiser-Long expressed her desire to have a site visit and meeting of the REC in the future and some definitive guidelines and framework prior to the next NAREEE Advisory Board Meeting.
- She reviewed the Biomass Research and Development Initiatives Technical Advisory Committee meeting. She believes the next meeting of that group would be in June. The program will be centered on bio fuel and bio based products in the next NIFA solicitation.

V. Updates Work Groups and/or Subcommittees

Competitive Grants

- Dr. June Henton (Chair) noted that she did some background work and had a conference call with Rob Burk. She requested clarification on some questions that the agency did not respond to related to peer review panels. She is trying to gauge the purpose and direction of the committee.

March Meeting Planning Committee

- Rob Burk requested for a small working group to be established to select topics and speakers for the meeting. He reported that the staff of the Board is currently looking into a location for the event. They have excluded a number of locations as the hotel conference rooms would not accommodate the meeting. The current schedule would require the meeting to start early on the morning of the March 30th, members from outside the Washington D.C. area would need to arrive by the previous evening, and the meeting would last all day and include an evening session. On March 31st the meeting would start early in the morning and last for a ½ day. Members would then be able to return home by that evening. The committee members felt that this was a good plan and that the majority of members should be able to attend the entire meeting.
- Members discussed some potential topics for the meeting including:
 - 1.) Models of collaboration used in different agencies with a variety of stakeholders such as forestry, and floriculture. Bringing in individuals from outside of the USDA. Potential agencies/collaborations include: DOD, NSF, ARS projects, the “forestry initiative,” and the “initiative for floriculture.”
 - 2.) A discussion on the 2012 Farm Bill. It would be interesting to bring in United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association and/or The National Cotton Council, National Corn Growers, and APLU, for instance, and host a roundtable. Also, the NAREEE Board should learn about the current congressional perspective on Farm Bill talks. Jean-Mari Peltier noted that Krysta Harden (USDA Congressional Affairs) would be critical to pulling this together. In particular, she could discuss with the NAREEE Board how to organize the message on the justification for expansion of the REE budget.

- A discussion ensued related to the last topic. Members indicated that the challenge is that agricultural research is not a top priority for most farm groups. What we need to do is see what their challenges and priorities for Farm Bill legislation are. The rest of the world is moving towards investment in agricultural research. The topic of research in the Farm Bill is not a top priority for most agricultural lobbying organizations. A discussion with key groups in March would be a great opportunity for the Board to listen and talk. The Board needs to figure out how funding for research programs could be a priority for farm groups. The way to expand the agricultural research program is not through the support of the scientific societies as they are not the audience. The audience is the farm organizations as they will be the ones most involved in lobbying. It would have to be a new initiative for food and agricultural for them to support it.
- Jean-Mari Peltier requested for Dr. Steven Daley-Laursen to work on putting together relevant discussion panels.

October Meeting Report

- Dr. Charles Perrings reported that Rob Burk had distributed an email to the full Board requesting edits to the Report on Agricultural Productivity and Agricultural Research.
- Jean-Mari Peltier felt that the Board needed to clarify the audience for the report. Dr. Nancy Cox, Terry Wolf, and Dennis Heldman noted that they will review the document further.
- Terry Wolf saw that there was a fair amount of ecosystem / environmental information in the report and it comes across as European oriented. He felt that it should have much of that information edited before it is released, but he stated that he would defer to the majority opinion. He questioned whether some of the information in the report was presented at the October meeting. Dr. Daley-Laursen indicated that it was included in the discussion at the October meeting.

Relevancy and Adequacy

- Refer to the discussion in section III Comments from the Under Secretary of REE.

VI. Executive Director's Report

- Rob Burk reported that according to the records supplied to him the Board is well within budget for the current fiscal year. As of December 16, 2010 the Board had spent approximately \$92,000, well within the \$500,000 appropriation.
- He discussed the future meetings of the Board, and recommended that the SCC meeting be held in the summer as opposed to the spring. Senator Stabenow has invited the SCC to hold the meeting in Michigan, and Dr. Armbruster will be in discussions with Michigan State University about the details of the meeting.
- Rob Burk noted that the spring meeting of the Board is still tentatively set for March 30-31, 2011. The Advisory Board office will have this solidified in advance of the next Executive Committee Conference Call.

The next Executive Committee conference call will be February 4, 2011 at 10:00 a.m. Eastern Standard Time.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Morgan-Jordan

Jean-Mari Peltier
Chair

Rob Burk
Executive Director

APPROVAL BY ADVISORY BOARD:

Date

Initials
Chair

Initials
Executive Director