



NGRAC Meeting – January 18, 2023, Meeting Minutes

National Genetics Resources Advisory Council Members Present: Dr. Jim McFerson (Chair), Mr. Preston Hardison, Dr. Paul Gepts, Dr. Terrence Tiersch, Dr. Sarada Krishnan, Dr. John Buchanan, Dr. Stephen Kresovich, Dr. Margaret Smith, Dr. David Butruille, and Dr. Steven Kerns – (10)

Members Absent: Dr. Chad Dechow, Dr. Amir Ibrahim, and Dr. Katherine Rainey – (3)

Ex-Officio Present: Dr. Peter Bretting (1)

Ex-Officio Absent: Dr. Harvey Blackburn (1)

NAREEE Board Staff Present: Ms. Kate Lewis, NAREEE Board Executive Director/Designated Federal Officer (DFO) and Ms. Danielle Farley, Program Analyst, Michele Simmons, Program Support Coordinator

Guests Present: Dr. Deirdra Chester, Acting Director, Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) and Gayle Volk, Plant Physiologist, ARS

I. Welcome, Roll Call, Quorum Check, and approval of December 2022 meeting minutes Call for a motion to approve meeting minutes from December by Michele Simmons, moved, and all in favor. None opposed.

DFO Lewis: Welcomed Dr. Deirdra Chester, Acting Director, OCS (Office of the Chief Scientist) and Gayle Volk, Plant Physiologist, ARS, to the meeting.

Dr. Volk: Thanked everyone for allowing her to participate in the meeting. She is shadowing Dr. Bretting, who invited her. As an ARS scientist within the National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS), her research focuses on plant physiology and cryopreservation. Dr. Volk looks forward to hosting NGRAC at the in-person meeting April 2023 at the ARS laboratory in Fort Collins, CO.

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Dr. Chester: Thanks for allowing me to be at the meeting today. She is aware that one of the items of concern from the NGRAC is the delay in NGRAC work products being cleared for broader release. Dr. Chester reassured the Council that REE leadership is working hard to clear the reports. She indicated she will work to make sure we clear the items that need to be approved. Dr. Chester explained the process of clearing reports. She thanked the Council for all the work they do.

Dr. McFerson: Welcomed Dr. Chester. Noted that NGRAC's four reports are now posted on the NAREEEAB website. The reports might be a little out of date and may need updates. He's looking forward to moving ahead with the reports and the NGRAC response to the USDA-ARS NPGS Strategic Plan.

DFO Lewis: Reviewed the status of current Council members. Four slots expired in FY2022 but were extended to the end of January. Two members have requested to be reappointed: Dr. David Butruille and Dr. Stephen Kresovich. The nomination packages are currently with Under Secretary Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young. After her review/approval, the packages will be forwarded to the Secretary. Hopefully, the Secretary will make his final selections by the end of January. DFO Lewis will give updates when they become available.

Dr. McFerson: Thanked Dr. Amir Ibrahim and Dr. Katherine Rainey for their contributions and their time.

II. Update on NGRAC Reports

Dr. McFerson asked for DFO Lewis to elaborate on the current status of the four NGRAC reports as well as the NGRAC response to the USDA-ARS NPGS Strategic Plan.

DFO Lewis: We're moving the four reports forward through REE leadership and then will forward to the Secretary. DFO Lewis received an update that once the Board submits their reports and recommendations, they can be uploaded to the NAREEEAB website at that time. There will be no review or clearance needed and will be recognized as NAREEE deliverables.

The NGRAC response to the NPGS Strategic Plan has been acknowledged by Dr. Bretting and his team from ARS.

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Dr. McFerson: It's good to hear the reports are moving forward for clearance. He has reached out to the USDA Federal Advisory Committee office for an explanation on the process and steps for clearing reports.

Dr. Bretting: Once the NPGS Strategic Plan is finalized, they will not need to be reviewed or edited. He learned that OGC, OBPA, and OCR may need to make changes in the plan but, not the NGRAC recommendations. Then after review/approval from Office of the Secretary, the Strategic Plan will go to Congress as mandated in the 2018 Farm Bill.

Dr. McFerson: Thanked Danielle for adding the four reports and meeting agendas and minutes on the NAREEE website.

Moved to next agenda item of three brief presentations, or "elevator pitches" for topics to be discussed at the April strategic planning session. As we get closer to the meeting in May, the Members will vote to determine what the key strategic items are. Gave update on where we are with the Ft. Collins trip such as hotel reservation, flights, and transportation.

III. Brief Presentations on Important Issues for Upcoming Meeting in Ft. Collins

Dr. Bretting: Briefly discussed: 1. Adoption of a New Global Biodiversity Framework – Key Takeaway: Global Biodiversity Framework has potential to change how we go about conserving and providing access to resources. 2. Summary of the UN Biodiversity Conference 7-19 December 2022.

Noted that a tornado hit the USDA-ARS Griffin site last week. No one was hurt and no germplasm was lost. The USDA-ARS Griffin Plant Genetic Resources Conservation Unit is one of the gene banks where 90% of its holdings are backed up in Ft. Collins. It's important to have a backup location.

Dr. Gepts briefly discussed proposals for potential NGRAC strategic actions: 1. A position paper on crop vulnerabilities, resilience, and opportunities for conservation and utilization; 2. A scientific synthesis of the NPGS report (Bretting report); 3. A "Germplasm Hall of Fame"; and 4. A web page for NGRAC

Dr. Volk mentioned a similar initiative as in 3. under way at NLGRP.

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Dr. Gepts submitted his presentation file for further reference, as well as a recent document from the Netherlands as an example of topic 1.

Dr. Hardison: Would advocate the global biodiversity issue for a discussion topic. For future food security we have to pay more attention to local food production systems.

Dr. Kresovich: There was a story on NPR about genetic resources which highlighted the gene bank and what was going on in Lebanon and Syria. It highlighted Mariana Yazbek, Scientist and Genebank Manager at the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA). He would like to see that these types of stories and ideas get out as well (under topic 4).

IV. Final Remarks and Adjourn

Dr. McFerson: Due to time, we will move Dr. Kresovich's presentation to the February NGRAC meeting.

Ms. Farley: In your networks, do you see people going to the NGRAC website to search for information? Do you think it's a place that people would want to go to?

Dr. McFerson: We haven't had a viable website for some time. Suggest we explore the best pathway for disseminating information. We will follow up on this question.

Ms. Farley: We are working on having the NGRAC webpage updated with the four reports. Our Web team needs to put a date associated with the reports. What date would the Board like to see on the website for the reports? Dr. McFerson will follow up. Dr. Tiersch suggests showing the date that NGRAC approved them and also the date that NAREEEAB approved the reports.

Dr. McFerson thanked everyone on the call for the work that they do.

The meeting adjourned at 2:01p.m. ET

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 15th.

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