



NGRAC Meeting – April 19, 2023, Meeting Minutes

National Genetics Resources Advisory Council Members Present: Dr. Jim McFerson (Chair), Dr. John Buchanan, Dr. David Butruille, Dr. Chad Dechow, Mr. Preston Hardison, Dr. Margaret Smith, Dr. Terrence Tiersch – 7

Members Absent: Dr. Steven Kerns, Dr. Sarada Krishnan, Dr. Paul Gepts, Dr. Stephen Kresovich -- 4

Ex-Officio Present: Dr. Peter Bretting, Dr. Harvey Blackburn – 2

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

Guests Present: Claire Coyne, USDA-ARS (On a detail shadowing Dr. Bretting)

I. Welcome, Roll Call, Quorum Check, and approval of March 2023 meeting minutes.

DFO Lewis welcomed everyone, took roll call, and noted that the quorum was met.

DFO Lewis welcomed Ms. Coyne. She suggested that Ms. Coyne visit the NGRAC website and review prior meeting minutes to bring her up to speed regarding NGRAC.

DFO Lewis asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from March. Mr. Hardison moved to approve the minutes. All was in favor. No opposed. Michele will work with the web team to get the March minutes posted to the website.

DFO Lewis stated that five of the FY23 Member’s terms will expire the end of September FY2023. The Members are Dr. John Buchanan, Dr. Chad Dechow, Mr. Preston Hardison, Dr. Steven Kerns, and Dr. Margaret Smith. If they wish to be reappointed, we are accepting applications from now until May 31, 2023. Further details on how to apply are posted on the NAREEE Advisory Board website under the Applications page. She asked if there were any questions. There were none.

DFO Lewis asked Dr. Bretting to provide an update on the ARS National Plant Germplasm System Plan (NPGS) and the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA)/National Science Foundation (NSF) germplasm cooperation.

Dr. Bretting – He met with the liaison person from the Office of Management Budget (OMB) to discuss the NPGS Plan. Dr. Bretting thanked the NGRAC for compiling the 2-page document he used at the meeting. It was a quick way to introduce the plan to OMB. He spent a lot of time explaining the plan’s significance because it wasn’t a

budget document. They did look at the budget on the document. If you tolled up over 10 years of the budget increases we're proposing, if fully funded, it would result in additional \$160m-\$260m a year depending on how much funding was available for genetic enhancement. USDA's Office of Budget Program Analysis (OBPA) was also on the call. They were quite supportive of the approach and the plan. The OMB liaison person will present the NPGS Plan to their supervisors and get back with me. Dr. Bretting doesn't have a date when OMB will respond.

Dr. Bretting asked if there were any questions.

Dr. Butruille – Is the 2-page NPGS document allowed to be shared publicly?

Dr. Bretting – The NPGS document will remain at the ARS and the Department until we hear from OMB or the Secretary.

Dr. Butruille – Were you able to share with folks at the meeting the interest to have the document released as soon as possible?

Dr. Bretting – Yes – The folks that have these responsibilities have to follow the process.

Mr. Hardison –For some year-to-year policies where administrations like to have single control, it seems like we're now getting in an area where we have to have continuity and long-term commitments. How are we set up to have long term commitments?

Dr. Bretting – With comments from the OMB we pointed out in 2011, Congress did something similar with a long-term plan. They charged ARS with compiling a Capital Investment Strategy (CIS) which showed the aging of ARS facilities. If they were going to pass their lifespan, how many dollars would it take to renovate? The CIS is long-term. Every year since 2011, the Congress appropriates millions of dollars for the next hierarchy on the list for the CIS. The ARS budget person equated our NPGS plan to the CIS plan and would hope that Congress would do the same for NPGS.

Dr. McFerson – Thanks Dr. Bretting for the NPGS update. We will keep this topic on the agenda for next month's meeting.

Dr. Bretting – The good news is the NPGS plan is moving through the process.

Dr. McFerson – Do you have an update on the NIFA/NSF germplasm issue?

Dr. Bretting - One of the topics at the annual meeting was mechanisms for ensuring that collections aren't lost when Principal Investigators (PI) retire or if institutions are redirected away from certain research and discarded the collections. There is language in the Agriculture Food and Research Initiatives (AFRI) grants that's specific for plants if germplasm is generated under the support of the AFRI grant. The PI needs to consult early in the process with the NPGS curator about the desire that the germplasm be generated in the NPGS grant. The germplasm generated might have some value but may have not risen to the level where the NPGS could make a long-term commitment for conserving it. At the end of 5 years, if it's still relevant, germplasm will be

distributed until it runs out.

I asked NIFA colleagues if there's a compliance mechanism. They said no- once a grant is awarded, there wasn't authority to check for compliance. I also contacted NSF on the language for their grants. There is some general language. It's part of the required Data Management plan. In inquiring how data that's generated by research will be conserved, there also needs to be information on how germplasm that's either acquired or generated would be deposited in an established collection.

NSF does have a compliance mechanism. They review the final report for the grant covering the last year of the project. During the post panel discussion, they ask if they can monitor the dissemination of these products. If the Principal Investigators (PIs) haven't provided the information, they would classify the annual report as overdue. When a report is overdue, the IT system installs an automatic block preventing NSF awarding institutions from receiving necessary funds from the current award or new funding. The conversation during the annual meeting was - How can we ensure that germplasm that was generated or acquired be conserved?

Dr. McFerson - Thanked Dr. Bretting for the update. It seems that between the two agencies, NSF has more resources than NIFA.

Dr. Butruille – As the germplasm receiver, on the gene bank side, it would be concerning to be entrusted with too many materials. There needs to be a balance to conserve what's worth preserving while being able to say no to what's easy to recreate without putting the PIs in a non-compliance position in the eyes of the funding agencies.”

Dr. Bretting – With the NIFA grants, the PI establishes those instructions and mechanism with the curator whether the gene bank can handle it. NSF isn't a part of that language.

II. Remarks from Dr. Jim McFerson, NGRAC Chair

Dr. McFerson – He thanked Gayle Volk, Jennifer Kendall, DFO Lewis, and Michele Simmons for their help in making the NGRAC meeting a success. Dr. McFerson stated it was good to see everyone in person. He asked if there were any questions from the meeting? There were none.

III. Discussion and next steps from face-to-face meeting (April 10-12, 2023)

DFO Lewis posted the list of next steps on the screen which was created during the April NGRAC Meeting in Ft. Collins. The Council talked through all nine steps and discussed who would take the task on the topics which was noted below.

POSSIBLE PROJECTS / NEXT STEPS / PRIORITY ORDER?
(“coalition of the willing” -- Tiersch)

1. Tribal report (Hardison, draft, July 2023) – Hardison confirmed 4/19 (date is same for all updates below)
2. CVS (Crop Vulnerability Statements)-Quad Report – McFerson to follow-up
3. Discontinued programs, all life forms (background data gathering work needed)
4. Deployment Strategy Position Paper, all life forms (Butruille can get ball rolling here, will schedule meeting) – Butruille update, Dechow will assist (Dr. McFerson stated that expertise outside of the Council is welcome)
5. Refereed Publication on NPGS Strategic Plan (Gepts, will defer until NPGS Plan release)
6. Plant Germplasm Operations Committee swat team visit/Plant Breeding Coordinating Committee outreach (McFerson in the lead here, Kresovich, advisory committee, and the Crop Germplasm Committee.)
7. Evaluation of differing values (economic, cultural, etc.) of genetic resources – Hardison considering after tribal report development/delivery
 - a. Maybe start by developing factor list
 - b. Develop trial memo for USDA – AMS/ERS as contributors to eval?
8. Outreach/Comms -- Gathering breeding success stories/germplasm Hall of Fame
 - a. NGRAC Website improvement suggestions
9. Other federal family Ex-Officio members? (Tiersch, McFerson, Lewis -- NAREEE DFO)
 - a. Read statute to see if there's runway here

Dr. McFerson – Any other questions or comments regarding the list? There were none. He reiterated to the Members who are up for renominations to submit them early if they're reapplying. Also think about folks we can encourage to apply.

DFO Lewis - Dr. McFerson and Dr. Kresovich gave her a list of 10-12 organizations that the Council felt was important to contact for outreach for applications. DFO Lewis gave the list to Sage last week. Sage has reached out and has already heard back from one of the organizations.

The American Genetic Association also let us know that they are sending application information to their Council and Members.

Dr. McFerson welcomed Claire Coyne again.

IV. Wrap-up/Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:49 p.m. EDT.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 17, 2023, 1 p.m. EDT.

Acronyms: DFO: Designated Federal Official; NLGRP: National Laboratory for Genetic Resource Preservation; NAREEEAB: National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board; NPGS: National Plant Germplasm System; OBPA: Office of Budget & Program Analysis; OCS: Office of the Chief Scientist; OGC: Office of the General Counsel; OCR: Office of Congressional Relations