



NGRAC Meeting – July 26, 2023, Meeting Minutes

National Genetics Resources Advisory Council Members Present: Dr. Jim McFerson (Chair), Dr. David Butruille, Dr. Paul Gepts, Mr. Preston Hardison, Dr. Sarada Krishnan, Dr. Margaret Smith, and Dr. Terrence Tiersch – 7

Members Absent: Drs. John Buchannan, Chad Dechow, Steven Kerns, and Stephen Kresovich – 4

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. Michele Simmons, Program Support Specialist

Guests Present: Drs. Gayle Volk, USDA-ARS and Brian Irish, USDA-ARS

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

DFO Lewis welcomed everyone, took roll call, and noted that the quorum was met. She asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from June 21st. All were in favor. No one opposed. Michele will work with the web team to get the June meeting minutes posted to the website.

Dr. McFerson asked Dr. Irish to introduce himself. He is a USDA ARS Scientist serving as Curator, Forage Legumes, in Prosser, Washington. Dr. Irish is doing a virtual detail with the office of National Programs shadowing Dr. Bretting.

DFO Lewis provided an update on the FY23 new/reappointed Council Members. The nomination package with the candidate slates for the Board, Committee, and Subcommittee vacancies are with the Office of the Secretary. DFO Lewis will provide an update to Dr. McFerson as soon as we are made aware of the selected candidates. Once the new Board Members, Committee, and Subcommittee folks are onboard, we will send them an Onboarding Toolkit to help integrate the new Members to our work and get them engaged as soon as possible.

DFO Lewis gave the Members an update on the FY24 nomination package. The package is being cleared by the Director of the Office of the Chief Scientist and will then be routed to the REE Under Secretary for her review and clearance. Once completed, the package will go to the Secretary's office for review. The Secretary should have about a month to review and select the new Members, so they are hopefully on Board by the end

of September 2023.

Dr. McFerson asked DFO Lewis if we can provide the Onboarding Toolkit prior to the new members being sworn in to give them a jumpstart for orientation.

DFO Lewis stated we will have to wait until we receive the names of the candidates that are selected by the Secretary before we can provide the Onboarding Toolkit.

Once selected, Dr. McFerson would like to call the new/reappointed Council Members to congratulate and welcome them.

DFO Lewis - She will make sure to inform Dr. McFerson once the candidates are selected. DFO Lewis thanked him for offering to make the calls to welcome the new Council Members.

DFO Lewis gave an update on the NGRAC reports. The reports are also at the Secretary's office. She is continuing to inquire about the acknowledgment from the Secretary's office on the status of the reports.

Dr. Bretting gave an update on the NPGS plan. He heard several weeks ago that the NPGS plan is with the Secretary for his review and signature. He hasn't been asked to provide any additional information. Hopefully, the plan will be made public soon.

Dr. McFerson is in touch with the American Seed Trade Association. He stated they also check on the NPGS Plan bi-weekly

DFO Lewis asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

II. Remarks from Dr. Jim McFerson, NGRAC Chair

Dr. McFerson - As a consequence of attending the NAREEE Advisory Board in-person Meeting in June, he was asked by the NAREEE Advisory Board to provide feedback on USDA's Science and Research Strategy that the REE leadership team presented. Dr. McFerson is pleased to be able to work with other NAREEE Members to make a contribution and highlight the great work that is happening.

Dr. McFerson gave an update on the National Association of Plant Breeder's Annual Meeting that was held in Greenville, SC, hosted by Clemson University. Dr. Stephen Kresovich was one of the organizers. There were about 350 folks present with approximately 40% being students. The meeting highlighted regional food. There were Chefs in the area that gave presentations on what they are looking for in improved crop varieties. The effects of climate change and water issues were evident on what was driving the presentations. It was a vibrant meeting with many early career, well-trained scientists. Dr. Butruille, the Deployment White Paper you're working on is timely as it fits in with what a lot of the plant breeders in the audience were addressing.

At our April Meeting in Ft. Collins, CO we discussed and supported an initiative suggested by Margaret Smith and David Butruille focused on identifying and creating guidelines to rescue endangered germplasm collections. There has also been a similar effort by the Plant Breeding Coordinating Committee, currently led by Mikey Cantar,

Univ Hawaii. Dr. McFerson will follow up with PBCC to ensure we have a coordinated approach. Yet another potential collaborator is Julie Dawson, Univ of Wisconsin, who was a scientific contributor to a report from the Agricultural Marketing Service that responds to an Executive Order by President Biden seeking to assess competition within the seed industry. As background, there is also an ongoing legislative effort in Congress on a bill known as Seeds and Breeds that encourages the development of regionally adapted cultivars and genetic materials. Dr. McFerson will follow up to enhance a collaborative approach on the endangered collections issue.

Dr. Tiersch gave an update on the Aquatic Species/Aquaculture Meeting that was held last February. People from NOAA and private sectors discussed where they are with genetic resources of aquatic species and how they will address problems around climate change. USDA put up some funds to bring a small group of people together for a meeting that was held July 2023 in Ft. Collins, CO. They talked about planning a larger meeting this September to address a national blueprint for interagency cooperation to address climate change, aquatic, and genetic resources. The deployment document is an interesting component regarding how to identify the populations and deploy them as needed. The way to address climate change, aquatic, and genetic resources is through interagency cooperations. Folks that are career government employees are coming onboard with this cross-agency mission. The meeting will be held this September at the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, MD.

Dr. Bretting thanked Dr. Tiersch for the updates on the Aquatic Species/Aquaculture meetings.

Dr. McFerson – It sounds like it's a broad number of stakeholders that will participate at the meeting in September. The 2023-2026 USDA Science and Research Strategy Plan has a call out for interagency cooperation for development. Do you see a role in the existing NGRAC Reports for references in your blueprint effort?

Dr. Tiersch – Yes. Algae and crop species are directly slotted in the NGRAC Report. This is a national blueprint. Most of our problems are with deployment. We're not trying to bring in every researcher to the meeting. We're bringing in people to plan a structure of capabilities that are needed. This is more of an implementation.

Dr. McFerson asked if there were any questions or comments for Dr. Tiersch. There were none.

III. Next steps on initiatives and action items identified at NGRAC FY23 annual meeting

- Tribal document
- Deployment document update
- NPGS Crop Vulnerability Statements

Mr. Hardison provided an update on the tribal document. The document briefly reviews major policies, programs and initiative of the Federal Government and the U.S. Department of Agriculture relevant to Tribal rights and interests in the U.S. National Plant Germplasm System. The report also addresses key associated activities within the Department of Interior, including the Bureau of Land Management, the Department of Defense, and other inter-agency processes that involve the Department of Agriculture and that impinge upon Tribal rights and interests of

Tribes. Mr. Hardison pointed out three of the recommendations of the first initial report that are still relevant today and relate to the tribal issues.

1. Importance of Genetic Resources for Adaptation
2. Monitoring and Assessing Genetic Diversity of Crops in the Field
3. Assessment of Germplasm Resources in a Broader Context

Dr. McFerson asked Mr. Hardison where he is timewise with the tribal draft document.

Mr. Hardison stated that he will have the 1st draft in 1-2 weeks. He welcomed the Council Members to provide suggestions and is offering to continue to work on the tribal document after his term expires.

Dr. Tiersch thanked Mr. Hardison for the update on the tribal document. He sees this document as a funnel. Documents can start out as massive and then that funnel brings it down to some real actionable issues.

Dr. Smith asked is it useful for us to read it now and comment or wait?

Mr. Hardison – Either way is fine. He's happy to receive any kind of comments.

Dr. McFerson thanked Mr. Hardison for his updates.

Dr. Butruille gave an update on the deployment document. He invited folks to be on a call. He will send the latest version of where the Committee is with the document. Dr. Butruille encouraged the Committee to submit a chapter or a paragraph that they would like to write with some recommendations specific to their area. A paragraph that relates to Aquaculture and its needs and how does it think about deployment would be a great addition for us to consider in the final document.

Dr. McFerson thanked Dr. Butruille for the update. Dr. McFerson will be in contact with Drs. Gepts, Krishnan, and Smith for further work on the NPGS Crop Vulnerability Statement.

Dr. McFerson thanked the guest for participating. He asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

IV. Wrap-up/Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2.00 p.m. EDT

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 16, 2023, at 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.