



United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education, and Economics (REE)

National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics (NAREEE) Advisory Board

NGRAC Meeting – June 21, 2023, Meeting Minutes

National Genetics Resources Advisory Council Members Present: Dr. Jim McFerson (Chair), Dr. John Buchanan, Dr. David Butruille, Dr. Paul Gepts, Mr. Preston Hardison, Dr. Stephen Kresovich, Dr. Sarada Krishnan, Dr. Margaret Smith, Dr. Terrence Tiersch – 9

Members Absent: Dr. Chad Dechow and Dr. Steven Kerns – 2

Ex-Officio Present: Dr. Harvey Blackburn and Dr. Peter Bretting - 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: Dr. Gayle Volk, USDA-ARS and Dr. Clarice Coyne, USDA-ARS

I. Welcome, Roll Call, Quorum Check, and approval of May 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 May 17th. Dr. Volk suggested changing the minutes to include the title Dr. Clarice Coyne, which was corrected. DFO Lewis asked if we could approve the May minutes after the edit was incorporated and that there were no other significant changes. Dr. Smith moved to approve the minutes. No one opposed. All was in favor. Michele will work with the web team to get the May minutes posted to the website.

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 (C/S) vacancies are still 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.

DFO Lewis stated that five of the FY23 Member's terms will expire the end of September 2023. The Members are Dr. John Buchanan, Dr. Chad Dechow, Dr. Preston Hardison, Dr. Steven Kerns, and Dr. Margaret Smith. We had 5 vacancies for FY24, but we didn't receive enough applications to fill all of the slots. We did receive an application from Dr. Margaret Smith to be considered for reappointment.

DFO Lewis asked if there were any comments or questions.

Dr. McFerson- Will you be sharing the nominees with us?

DFO Lewis stated she's unable to provide the names until the Secretary makes his selections but can let the Members know the nominations we received in FY24 and in what categories.

DFO Lewis - We have no updates on the four Agricultural Research Service (ARS) reports and the National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS) recommendations. There was a high-level meeting held June 14th with the Secretary's senior advisor and some of the leadership from REE. As soon as DFO Lewis receives any information from the outcome of the meeting, she will let you know. If there are no additional questions or comments, I'll turn it over to Dr. Bretting.

Mr. Hardison had a question- We recently discussed having a tribal representative as a dedicated category for NGRAC. Are there any updates?

DFO Lewis – I will have to go to the legislation that outlines the membership ratio and categories. In order to do this, it would take modification of the Farm Bill legislation. It most likely will not happen in the next rendition of the Farm Bill. DFO Lewis will look into this.

Dr. Bretting – At last month's NGRAC meeting, I reported that myself and other folks from ARS briefed the Office of Management Budget (OMB) about the NPGS Strategic Plan. They had questions about the budgetary figures. The OMB replied to us and asked that we insert a statement that the discussion of budgets in the plan were not budget requests but rather budget estimates. I went through the 4 documents and where there was a significant mention of budget, I inserted the statement that “the plans are estimates and don't constitute a USDA request for funding”. The edited document was returned to OMB and the OMB has approved the NPGS plan. The plan is now with the Department. We are told that the process is 85 % complete. I don't have a date when the plan will be 100% complete, but we are making progress.

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

II. Remarks from Dr. Jim McFerson, NGRAC Chair

Dr. McFerson gave an update on the June 2023 NAREEE Advisory Board meeting that he attended in Washington, DC. Dr. McFerson shared a PowerPoint presentation to the Board that showed them who NGRAC is, what NGRAC is currently doing, and what some of the plans are going forward. He was able to communicate with Drs. Jacobs-Young and Chester about some frustrations that the Council has that the NGRAC reports seem to still be sitting and not moving forward. Dr. McFerson was informed that the reports should be considered to be cleared sometime soon after the June NAREEE Advisory Board meeting.

Dr. McFerson noted at the Ft. Collins meeting Council members had voiced a strong interest in face-to-face meetings two times a year. He will work with DFO Lewis to determine the possibilities. He also expressed gratitude to USDA and Colorado State University scientists and staff for a smooth and efficient event. Finally, he thanked the

Council for the active and forward-looking discussions in Ft. Collins and the promise of upcoming initiatives.

DFO Lewis thanked Mr. Roe and Drs. McFerson and Goins for providing updates and their participation at the June 2023 NAREEE Advisory Board Meeting.

Dr. McFerson – Dr. Bretting and I attended a Plant Germplasm Operations Committee (PGOC) Zoom meeting. We provided complementary presentations on the NGRAC role and responsibilities and the NPGS Strategic Plan. About 55-60 folks participated in the two-day meeting.

Dr. Bretting thanked Dr. McFerson for attending the meeting. The participants came away with a better understanding of what NGRAC does and its importance.

DFO Lewis – Will you share the name of the Chair of the PGOC

Dr. Bretting – The Chair is Dr. Claire Heinitz, ARS Research Leader in Davis, CA. Attending the PGOC meetings are a very good way to develop leadership in our younger career scientists.

Dr. McFerson – It was a pleasure to see lot of talented young scientists who gave great presentations at the PGOC meeting. The background of the next generation that's coming up is really impressive. They know what they're doing and where they want to go.

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

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

- **Deployment document update**
- **Other initiatives**

Dr. Butruille – Gave an update on the Deployment initiative. The Deployment Team met again this month with Dr. Bretting, Dr. Blackburn, Dr. Dechow, and Dr. Butruille. We have made progress and need to decide what we want to focus on and zoom in on in order to complete the white paper. Members are welcome to assist with ongoing efforts. Dr. Butruille asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

Dr. McFerson inquired about 2 other initiatives.

Mr. Hardison – I will turn in a draft within a month to complete it and will continue to work on the paper even if my term expires.

Dr. McFerson mentioned the initiative for the Crop Vulnerability Statement Report. He will meet with Drs. Smith and Krishnan to move the initiative forward. Dr. Gepts stated that he would also participate in the initiative.

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

Dr. McFerson stated that the next NGRAC meeting is scheduled for July 19th.

DFO Lewis mentioned that there is a meeting scheduled to be held at Clemson University the 3rd week of July. What meeting is taking place?

Dr. Kresovich – There's a National Association of Plant Breeders Annual Meeting taking place with about 300 people in attendance including students, the public, and the private sector. He and Dr. McFerson are scheduled to attend.

DFO Lewis requested that the NGRAC July 19th meeting be moved to July 26th so that a quorum can be met for July's NGRAC meeting. There was a consensus from the Council to move the NGRAC July 19th meeting to July 26th @ 1pm.

Dr. McFerson asked if there were any questions or comments.

Dr. Blackburn wanted to make the group aware of a meeting that will be held on the Aquatic side. It is clear that there's a need to pay more attention to climate change and genetic resources. We need to bring various agencies together to try to address these issues. We're planning to have a Steering Committee meeting this July with a larger meeting coming together in September.

Dr. McFerson recommended that the Council read the USDA Science and Research Strategy Plan. It emphasizes cross agency connections with not just USDA, but also working with other federal agencies.

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

IV. Wrap-up/Adjourn

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

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 26, 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. PGOC: Plant Germplasm Operations Committee