



NGRAC Meeting – January 17, 2024, Meeting Minutes

National Genetics Resources Advisory Council Members Present: Dr. Jim McFerson (Chair), Dr. David Butruille, Dr. Paul Gepts, Dr. Stephen Kresovich, Dr. Sarada Krishnan, Dr. Mike Lomas, Dr. Margaret Smith, Dr. Troy Ott, and Dr. Terrence Tiersch – 9

Members Absent: – 0

USDA Ex-Officio Present – Dr. Gayle Volk - 1

Ex-Officio Absent: Dr. Harvey Blackburn – 1

Guest: Tyler Ellis, Lawyer, Office of General Council (OGC), USDA

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

I. Welcome, Roll Call, Quorum Check and Updates

DFO Lewis welcomed the group, took roll call, and noted that the quorum was met. She reintroduced the Council to Dr. Volk, who is assuming the role of Ex-Officio. She is replacing Dr. Peter Bretting, who retired January 2024.

Ms. Simmons asked if there were any revision to the December meeting minutes. There were a few revisions and additions. She will make the suggested changes. Ms. Simmons asked for a motion to approve the minutes. All were in favor. She will post the December minutes to the NGRAC website.

II. Remarks from Dr. Jim McFerson, NGRAC Chair

Dr. McFerson noted the new format for the meeting agenda. This new format will inform the Council of the status of their work products and where they are in the review/approval process. He was interested in hearing what Tyler Ellis had to discuss with the group.

III. Discussion with Tyler Ellis, Lawyer, OGC

DFO Lewis introduced Mr. Ellis to the Council. He gave a quick overview of the Farm Bill (FB) process and the impact of continuing resolutions. Mr. Ellis stated that the NGRAC and some other federal advisory committees governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) receive their legislative authority from the FB. The authority expired September 30, 2023. Once that date passed, all advisory committee work came

to a stop. However, the Continuing Resolution passed on November 15, 2023, extended the FB through FY24 (September 30, 2024). This allows the NGRAC, a committee under the NAREEE Advisory Board that receives its authority from the FB, to keep operating. DFO Lewis thanked Mr. Ellis for his insight and attending today's meeting. She asked if there were any questions.

Dr. Gepts asked why the NAREEE Advisory Board, and their Committees, and Subcommittees were not authorized to continue their work, but other Subagencies or Committees within the USDA were able to continue their work? Mr. Ellis said he wasn't quite familiar with that but will follow up with DFO Lewis with an answer.

Dr. Smith asked if the NGRAC was listed as one of the federal advisory committees that received the extended FB authority to work until the end of FY24? If so, does that mean every single governmental Board and organization in the extension had to be listed under the authority? Mr. Ellis stated that is correct.

DFO Lewis stated that if the FY24 budget or a Congressional Continuing Resolution isn't approved by January 19, 2024, federal employees will not be able to work. This would pertain to Mr. Ellis, Ms. Simmons, and Ms. Lewis. Mr. Ellis stated that's correct. Dr. McFerson said that if the NGRAC can't officially meet with DFO Lewis and Ms. Simmons, they will meet informally as working groups, as they have done in the past to keep their work products moving along. DFO Lewis asked if there were any more questions. There were none. She thanked Mr. Ellis again for his time and addressing the Council.

IV. Old Business

DFO Lewis welcomed new NGRAC Members Drs. Mike Lomas and Troy Ott, to their 1st NGRAC meeting. Dr. McFerson stated we would do a roundtable of introductions later in the meeting.

DFO Lewis gave an update on the status of the FY24 NAREEE Advisory Board, Committees, and Subcommittee's candidate slate. The slate is being reviewed by the REE Under Secretary's office. We expected those Members to be appointed by October 31st. Once selected by the Secretary and all are onboard, we will be almost fully staffed.

Dr. Butruille asked if Members can be nominated and appointed out of cycle, or can they only be nominated once a year? DFO Lewis stated she will look at information related to membership vacancies and will follow up with his question.

Dr. Tiersch stated that in the past, for example, we brought Dr. Lomas from outside of the NGRAC to assist in generating documents using his expertise. This is a great way to develop solid documents.

Dr. Butruille gave an update on the Deployment document. The document is in a final draft. He emailed the document to the Council January 16th for another review. Dr. Butruille has received a few comments from some of the Council Members but would like some of the members that haven't reviewed the document yet, to provide comments

in order to provide a final document within the next couple of months. Dr. McFerson stated that Dr. Butruille et al. have made tremendous progress and encouraged Drs. Lomas and Ott to review the Deployment document and also provide comments.

Dr. McFerson gave an update on the NPGS Crop Vulnerability project He stated that Drs. Gepts, Krishnan, Smith, and I have made progress on the NPGS Crop Vulnerability draft. He will be sharing the final draft for further discussion at February's NGRAC meeting. Dr. McFerson would like some of the other Council Members to review the document and provide their feedback with suggestions or comments.

Tribal Document update – Dr. McFerson informed Dr. Lomas and Dr. Ott that Dr. Preston Hardison was the lead on the Tribal document which addresses issues of indigenous knowledge. He stated that Dr. Hardison's term ended September 2023, but Preston had indicated that he would continue to assist in completing the final document. Dr. McFerson stated that scientists with expertise in indigenous knowledge from outside the council would welcome to participate in developing our work products/reports as they have done in the past. He will continue to try and contact Dr. Hardison for updates on the document. Dr. McFerson asked if there were any question or comments? There were none.

Dr. Tiersch gave an update on the Aquaculture Initiative, moving ahead with three principal agencies: USDA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They're having a special session in San Antonio at the World Aquaculture Society meeting February 2024. A final agenda is in place. He will provide details of the meeting at the March NGRAC meeting. Mr. McFerson asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

V. **New Business**

Dr. McFerson welcomed Drs. Lomas and Ott again. He asked them to provide a brief background of themselves and also had the Council and the NAREEE staff to introduce themselves as well.

Planning the FY24 in-person public meeting – Drs. Gepts (Davis, CA) and Tiersch (Baton Rouge, LA) previously volunteered in hosting at their locations. Dr. Ott also suggested that Penn State University could be an option for the in-person meeting. Dr. Tiersch asked what the group would like to accomplish, what's the mission, and what are the goals of the in-person meeting.

Dr. Ott asked what's the purpose of the in-person meetings?

Dr. McFerson stated to have an opportunity to review and discuss our ongoing projects. We have an opportunity to discuss ideas and future initiatives. This is also an opportunity to see ongoing management of genetic resources at a given location.

DFO Lewis suggested that prior to NGRAC's next meeting in February that an overview document should be developed that list some of the objectives for the in-person meeting. She recommended that the document be sent out prior to next month's meeting so the Council can discuss the objectives and come to a consensus.

Dr. McFerson agreed with DFO Lewis and will think of some objectives for discussion at next month's meeting.

VI. Wrap-up/Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:03pm ET.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 21, 2024, at 1 p.m. ET.

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.