



Research, Education, and Economics (REE)

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

NGRAC Meeting – July 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. Troy Ott, Dr. Margaret Smith, and Dr. Terrence Tiersch – 8

Members Absent: – Dr. Mike Lomas - 1

Guest: Dr. Sarah Bodenstein, Postdoctoral Researcher, Louisiana State University

USDA Ex-Officio Present – Drs. Harvey Blackburn and Gayle Volk - 2

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.

Ms. Simmons asked if there were any revisions to the June minutes. There were none. The minutes from the June 2024 meeting were approved after a motion and a second motion. All approved the minutes, and none opposed. The June agenda and minutes will be posted to the NGRAC website.

II. Remarks from Dr. Jim McFerson, NGRAC Chair

Dr. McFerson discussed some of the current terms of the NGRAC members, the processes of recruiting, and what’s needed to recruit eight members in FY25. DFO Lewis displayed the PowerPoint that showed the process and timeline for recruiting new NGRAC members. The slides consisted of:

NGRAC Member Strategy

- Goal: Recruit and foster a deep bench and a pipeline of diverse members committed to working collaboratively to develop the most actionable animal, plant, insect, and microbial genetic resources recommendations for USDA

NGRAC Member Status as of June 2024

- 13 members when fully staffed (currently 9)
- Need to recruit 8 members in FY25 for FY26 appointments

Ex-Officio Recruitment – Next Steps

- Discuss which members at right are most important to recruit and when given

- NGRAC Vision and near- term plan for developing recommendations
- Develop outreach process, timeline, and responsibilities

Member Recruitment – Next Steps, and Member Recruitment – Process & Timeline

The slides will be forwarded to the Council after a few changes are made. There will be time added to the August agenda for further discussion on the process and timeline for recruiting new NGRAC members. Dr. McFerson requested that the Council reach out to their networks to inquire who might be interested in applying for an NGRAC vacancy.

III. Current Business

NPGS Crop Vulnerability Report

Dr. McFerson gave an update on the Crop Vulnerability Report. He will attend the NAREEE Board meeting in August via Zoom to address their recommendations for the Crop Vulnerability Report and to discuss the revised draft that incorporated some of their recommendations. If the Board approves the report, it will then be routed to REE for review/approval, and then to the Secretary's office for their review/approval.

Deployment Document

Dr. Butruille gave an update on the Deployment document for version 17. He received comments and edits from Drs. McFerson and Smith prior to the July NGRAC meeting. Dr. Butruille went through the comments and edits with the Council. There were a few additional edits that were made during the meeting. It was also suggested that an appendix be added to the document. Dr. Butruille suggested that he would need volunteers to provide their expertise, for example on algae, animal, or with crop, plant or perennial species. Dr. Bodenstein said she would assist in working on the appendix to provide an example for aquatics. Dr. Gepts will provide an example for plant species. Dr. Butruille asked if there were any additional comments or questions. There were none. He will provide version #18 to the Council before the next meeting in August with the hopes that the report will be approved by the majority.

Tribal Document

Dr. McFerson has been in contact with Edwin Kitzes, a new NAREEE Board Member. He works at a tribal technical college in Bismarck, North Dakota. He is in the process of setting up a virtual meeting with Mr. Kitzes and some of his colleges to discuss the tribal document to make comments or edits before finalizing the draft document for the NGRAC's review/approval. Dr. McFerson asked if anybody else would like to assist with the Tribal document. Drs. Bodenstein, Gepts, and Smith said they would like to help with finalizing the draft document.

IV. New Business

Council work product/recommendations follow up

Dr. McFerson mentioned the 2 work products that the NGRAC worked on and

completed which are the FY22/23 – NGRAC’s recommendations for the National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS) Plan and the FY22/23 – NGRAC’s 4 reports on Algal; Animal; Microbial; and Native Crop Wild Relative Genetic Resources. Once the work products are acknowledged and approved by the REE Under Secretary and the Secretary of USDA, what are the next steps to see that the recommendations and reports are being implemented? Is there a way we can track the status?

DFO Lewis stated we’re taking that acknowledgment making sure that the reports and recommendations are being forwarded to the correct offices within the REE mission area. She has been reaching out to the appropriate Administrator, Deputy Administrator, and National Program Leaders to facilitate a conversation on the status of the reports and recommendations.

Dr. Volk suggested that we should receive a written response from the REE mission area on how they will go forward with the reports and recommendations.

Dr. McFerson stated that if the NGRAC provides written reports it would be good if the NGRAC can receive written responses.

Dr. Smith stated she would like an acknowledgment that the NGRAC reports were received. Did the recommendations and reports make a difference, what was done because of them, were the suggestions good ones, and reasons that they possibly can’t be implemented?

Dr. Sarada mentioned that DFO Lewis did send the acknowledgement letter to NGRAC on September 19, 2023, on the four reports regarding the Algal; Animal; Microbial; and Native Crop Wild Relative Genetic Resources. She noted that the acknowledgment letter had been forwarded to the appropriate Agriculture Research Service leaders for their consideration and implementation.

Dr. Volk also stated that DFO Lewis did forward the acknowledgement letter to some of ARS’ Deputy Administrators. They are calling a meeting, but it hasn’t been scheduled yet.

DFO Lewis stated that she and Ms. Simmons will work on a process to make sure that once the Secretary’s acknowledgment has been completed, the feedback cycle to NGRAC is being implemented.

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

Annual meeting: Virtual/Timing

Dr. McFerson asked DFO Lewis is there any new information about the budget to have an in-person meeting.

DFO Lewis stated that she doesn’t have any pre-information about the Federal budget for FY25. She should have more information once the FB is passed. DFO Lewis said that we could have a virtual meeting for 1 ½ days before the end of FY24 if the Council is interested.

Dr. McFerson asked the Council if they were interested in a virtual meeting. Drs. Gepts and Smith expressed that they would like to have an in-person meeting. Dr. Smith stated that she would like to meet with some of the relevant National Program Leaders in-person to discuss the NGRAC's suggestions on the recommendations and reports. Dr. Gepts stated that he would also like an in-person meeting to discuss some of the curatorial issues with Curators.

DFO Lewis stated that she will work with Dr. McFerson to draft an agenda for an in-person meeting to take place sometime in November or December 2024. It was suggested that the meeting should take place in Beltsville, MD or Washington, DC.

Dr, McFerson asked if there were any more questions. There were none.

V. **Wrap-up/Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:01 pm ET.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 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.