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Research, Education, and Economics (REE)

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

NGRAC Meeting – August 21, 2024, Meeting Minutes

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

**Members Absent:** Dr. Stephen Kresovich, Dr. Troy Ott – 2

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

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

**USDS Ex-Officio Absent** - Dr. Harvey Blackburn

**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 July minutes. There were none. The minutes from July’s 2024 meeting were approved unanimously and will be posted to the NGRAC website.

**II. Remarks from Dr. Jim McFerson, NGRAC Chair**

Dr. McFerson reminded the Council that there will be a National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS) webinar regarding tribal issues on August 22, 2024,

Dr. McFerson noted that Dr. Margaret Smith had information to share to the Council. She informed the Council that a Federal Register Notice (FRN) open to the public to consider eight questions on the current state of the experimental use exception related to agriculture, seeds, and patented germplasm. Dr. Smith stated that comments on the FRN will be accepted until September 26, 2024.

Dr. Gepts asked is the FRN about a research exemption?

Dr. Smith stated that the Patent Trademark Office is interested in collecting the public's views on the impact of a research exception on patented plant germplasm. Ms. Simmons will email the FRN and NPGS webinar information to the Council to access and review.

**Current Business**

**NPGS Crop Vulnerability Report**

Dr. McFerson gave an update on the Crop Vulnerability Report, which has been approved by both the NGRAC and the NAREEE Advisory Board for submission to the Secretary's office. DFO Lewis indicated she reached out to the Agricultural Research Service's leadership to see who the point of contact is to address NGRAC's recommendations on the Crop Vulnerability Report, as well as previous NGRAC reports and the response to the NPGS Plan. She will follow up on the suggested contacts. DFO Lewis also mentioned that the submission process includes finalizing a report by NAREEE staff before transmission to the REE Under Secretary's office and then the Secretary's office.

### **Deployment Document**

Dr. Butruille presented version 20 of the Deployment document. He asked the group to look at the latest edits and comments he received from some NGRAC Members as he scrolled through the document. After some edits and additional details were discussed and added from the group, it was decided that Dr. Butruille will update the Deployment document (version 21) to be voted on in the next NGRAC meeting in September. DFO Lewis stated that once the Council approves the document, it might be a couple of weeks to have it be approved by the NAREEE Executive Committee and the NAREEE Board after which it will be routed to the REE Under Secretary's office and then the Secretary's office

### **Tribal Document**

Dr. McFerson discussed a working group meeting that took place to discuss the Tribal document. He stated that the group is making progress on revising and updating the draft report, with significant help from Edwin Kitzes, a new NAREEE AB member and faculty member at the United Tribes Technical College, Bismarck ND. The group seeks to condense and sharpen the report, while still capturing the content that Dr. Preston Hardison, prior NGRAC Member, had developed as lead author. They are also reaching out to generate more input from a tribal perspective. Dr. McFerson will make sure Drs. Sarah Bodenstein and Terrence Tiersch are also included in the working group meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for September 9<sup>th</sup>.

## **III. New Business**

### Annual meeting: Virtual/Timing

Dr. McFerson pointed out that some of the recurring questions and discussions at NGRAC meetings could be effectively addressed at the proposed NGRAC annual meeting, including report outs from federal agency representatives on NGRAC report recommendations, interactions with new ex officio members, and developing strategic targets for FY2025. there wasn't enough time to discuss the annual meeting further, but DFO Lewis and Dr. McFerson will work to draft a tentative agenda for a fall 2024 meeting.

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

## **IV. Wrap-up/Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 1:56 pm ET.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 18, 2024, at 1 p.m. ET.

**Acronyms:** DFO: Designated Federal Official; NLGRP: National Laboratory for Genetic Resource Preservation; NAREEE AB: 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.