



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

NGRAC Meeting – January 15, 2025, Meeting Minutes

National Genetics Resources Advisory Council Members Present: Drs. Jim McFerson (Chair), David Butruille, Paul Gepts, Stephen Kresovich, Mike Lomas, Troy Ott, Margaret Smith, and Terrence Tiersch – 8

Members Absent - Dr. Sarada Krishnan – 1

Ex-Officio Members Present - Drs. Harvey Blackburn, Neha Kothari, and Gayle Volk – 3

Guests: Dr. Sarah Bodenstein, Postdoctoral Researcher, Louisiana State University - 1

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

I. Welcome, Roll Call, Quorum Check and Updates

Lewis welcomed the group, took roll call, and noted that the quorum was met. She also welcomed Dr. Neha Kothari, National Program Leader in the Office of National Programs, Crop Production and Protection, USDA, Agricultural Research Service. Kothari will also be an Ex-Officio Member for NGRAC. Lewis asked Kothari to say a few short words about herself.

Simmons asked if there were any revisions to the September minutes. After one minor edit, the minutes from the September 2024 meeting were approved after a motion and a second motion. All approved the minutes, and none opposed. She will post the September agenda and minutes to the NGRAC website.

Lewis informed the group that the Board, its committees and subcommittees have the authority and the legislative backing to remain active until the end of September 2025. The continuing resolution is valid until mid-March. She will keep the NGRAC informed about the FY25 budget as updates become available.

Lewis informed the Council that the NGRAC is currently has nine members and 3 Ex-officio members. There should be 13 members on the Council. At the end of FY25, the Council will lose Gepts, Krishnan, McFerson, and Tiersch because their terms will end, so there will be 8 vacancies to fill. She stated that it would be helpful if the Council could reach out to their networks to make them aware of the upcoming vacancies. Lewis will create a one-pager for the Council that shows the background of the vacancy categories. She will make the NAREEE Advisory Board, the Committees, and Subcommittees aware when the NAREEE website will be updated with instructions for the application process.

II. Remarks from Dr. Jim McFerson, NGRAC Chair

McFerson welcomed the group. Because there were several items to discuss, he had no remarks this month.

III. Current Business

NPGS Crop Vulnerability Report

Simmons gave an update on the NPGS Crop Vulnerability report. The report with the recommendations and briefing memo was routed to the Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) for review September 2024. OCS advised the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) to have crop/genetic subject matter experts review the report and address the nine recommendations that the NGRAC provided.

Volk had a question on how the routing of the Crop Vulnerability report is processed. Lewis will follow-up with a meeting to explain the process in detail.

Simmons asked if there were any more questions. There were none.

Deployment Document

Simmons stated that the Deployment document was approved by the NGRAC during their August 2024 meeting. The NAREEE Executive Committee approved the document via Microsoft Forms September 2024. The next step is to have the entire NAREEE Board discuss and vote on the Deployment document at their meeting in February. Lewis will send the document to the Board prior to their February meeting for their review. McFerson will attend the Board meeting to summarize the report and answer any questions.

Simmons asked if there were any question or comments. There were none.

Tribal Document

McFerson stated that the Tribal Working Group has been meeting to continue development of the Tribal document. They are now on version number 6. He would like the Council to look at the document to review it and provide input so that it can move forward to a final draft for the NAREEE Advisory Board.

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

Patent and Trademark Office request for information on Experimental Use Exception

Smith gave an update on the request for information on Experimental Use Exception. She stated that the comment period to respond to Federal Register Notice closed on the 26th of September 2024. Smith hasn't received any updates about the request. McFerson has been in contact with Julie Dawson, Professor, Department of Plant and Agroecosystem Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison, to see if there any roles for the NGRAC to process moving forward. He is planning to talk with Dawson again. McFerson asked if any on the Council wanted to join the conversation. Smith and Lomas stated that they would like to be included in the conversations.

Lewis asked if the comments for the Experimental Use Exception could be summarized in a couple of paragraphs and why it's important for the Council's work? Smith stated that she would provide that information to Lewis.

FY22/23 – NGRAC Recommendations for National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS) Strategic Plan

Volk stated that a five-page document has been drafted that addresses the NGRAC's recommendations on the NPGS strategic plan. Kothari is currently reviewing the document. Once she reviews it, the document will be routed to the ARS Deputy Director for their review, which could take one or two months.

McFerson stated that the NGRAC hasn't received official responses on any of their reports and recommendations for the NPGS Strategic Plan or for the FY22/23 NGRAC reports on Algal, Animal, Microbial, and Crop Wild Relative Genetic Resources. Volk stated that Kirk Broder, ARS Culture Collections Curator is preparing a response for the Microbial report. Broder or Kothari can attend the NGRAC meeting in March to give a short presentation to address the NGRAC's Microbial report. They can also give a short presentation to go along with the written document for the NPGS Strategic Plan.

McFerson asked Blackburn if he knew of any response to the Algal and Animal reports. Blackburn stated that the Animal report is somewhat outdated and the NGRAC may have to draft a new Animal report maybe in the Spring.

McFerson stated that he is interested in responses or what actions have been taken from USDA to the NGRAC's reports. Who from ARS should be responsible to address the Algal and Animal reports? Blackburn said that he will follow-up on who the ARS leads should be.

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

IV. New Business

Annual meeting, Timing, Location

There was discussion amongst all NGRAC Members about an annual meeting. McFerson put together a 3- day draft agenda. At prior meetings, the Council discussed that they would like to have their annual meeting in Washington, DC. That would allow the NGRAC to meet with representatives from USDA who could present their responses to the NGRAC reports. He asked the Council if they had any suggestions or recommendations to the agenda which he had shared on screen during the meeting.

Lewis mentioned that Gepts, McFerson, Krishnan, and Tiersch's terms are expiring the September 2025. It would be good if they can share some historical knowledge and best practices with the Council before they leave. She suggested that this topic be added to the NGRAC annual meeting (TBD) agenda or maybe discussions can take place at the group dinner.

Simmons will email the draft agenda to the Council for their suggestions and comments.

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

V. Wrap-up/Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:09 pm ET. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, February 19, at 1 p.m. ET.