



United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Research, Education, and Economics (REE)

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

NGRAC Meeting – March 19, 2025 Meeting Minutes

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

Ex-Officio Present: Drs. Harvey Blackburn and Neha Kothari – 2

Guest: Ms. Jaime Adams, Senior Advisor for International Affairs, USDA and Dr. Sarah Bodenstein, Postdoctoral Researcher, Louisiana State University

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.

Simmons asked if there were any revisions or comments to the February 2025 minutes. There were none. She asked for a motion and a second motion. All approved the minutes, and none opposed. The February agenda and minutes will be posted to the NGRAC website.

Lewis welcomed Jaime Adams and asked her to give brief remarks about her job duties.

II. Remarks from Dr. Jim McFerson, NGRAC Chair

McFerson welcomed the group. Because there were a lot of topics to discuss, he requested to move to the next agenda item.

III. Current Business

National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS) Crop Germplasm Committee (CGC) Meeting

Kothari stated that she and McFerson attended the CGC meeting which meets annually and includes all CGC Chairs. McFerson gave an overview of the NGRAC. Kothari gave an overview of what the NPGS leadership is looking to achieve in the upcoming years. Kothari recommended that someone from the NGRAC should attend the meeting every year so that the Chairs can receive updates on the NGRAC and the NPGS. McFerson stated that presentations from the meeting will soon be available.

People's Republic of China (PRC) - Export Controls List Publication

Lewis showed the PRC publication on the screen for all to view. McFerson stated that the document was being discussed for information purposes. He mentioned that

a small portion of the publication might be related to the NGRAC. McFerson stated that it might be beneficial to have Bert Cramer, Homeland Security, USDA and Jaime Adams attend another NGRAC meeting to discuss the publication in more detail.

A member mentioned that medicinal plants were not highlighted in the publication.

McFerson stated that maybe NGRAC can submit comments to have the publication updated.

Adams mentioned that the PRC is not a party to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. She provided a link that gave more details which can be found >> [here](#).

New member recruitment, vacancies, timeline

Lewis showed a timeline document of the recruitment process on the screen for all to view. She informed the Council that posting Federal Register Notices to make the public aware of the recruitment process is still on hold. Lewis mentioned that the NAREEE application website page has been updated to show what vacancies are open for people to apply for. The website page notes that the application solicitation period is currently paused. The page will be updated with additional application information when it becomes available.

McFerson requested for Lewis to send the recruitment timeline document to the NGRAC.

Annual meeting timing, location, agenda

McFerson stated that he did not receive any feedback on the draft annual meeting agenda that was discussed last month that's tentatively scheduled to take place in Washington, DC. A Council member suggested that day 3 on the agenda include briefings from stakeholders and maybe a visit to the National Science Foundation.

Smith noted that it would be good to have key curators join via Zoom to give reports in their particular areas.

It was suggested that maybe each Council member bring in a stakeholder to speak at the meeting.

McFerson stated that they might be able to visit a genebank in DC. He asked if there were any more comments or suggestions. There were none.

Animal Germplasm Resources Information Network (GRIN)

Lewis showed a statement on the screen that Tiersch provided regarding GRIN. Some of GRIN's work includes managing animal and aquatic species resources. Tiersch stated that due to their probationary status, the only person that had programming and IT capability for the Animal GRIN is no longer at the USDA. Because of this, the database cannot be updated or maintained. The NGRAC should write a letter to the USDA Secretary to inform them of the crisis this is causing. Tiersch stated that this letter needs to be expedited.

The NGRAC voted and approved for a letter to be drafted for quick submission to the USDA Secretary.

National Plant Germplasm System (NPGS) Crop Vulnerability Report and Deployment Document

Lewis stated a transmittal package for both reports is being processed for routing approval. She mentioned that she needs the responses back from ARS on the NPGS recommendations that NGRAC provided.

Kothari stated that she will work with Volk on the responses for the NPGS Crop Vulnerability report.

Tribal Document

McFerson stated that this is the last call for suggestions or edits to the Tribal document. He would like to have the final version ready for the submission process before the next NGRAC meeting in April.

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

FY22/23 – NGRAC Recommendations for the NPGS Strategic Plan

Kothari gave an update on the NPGS Strategic Plan. Due to staff changes, she had to hold off on working on the responses to the recommendations. She would like to provide an informal verbal response soon on the recommendations followed by a formal report in a few months.

McFerson thanked Kothari for working on the reports while going through some staffing transitions. He asked if there were any comments or questions. There were none.

FY22/23 – NGRAC reports: Algal, Animal, Microbial, and Crop Wild Relatives

Kothari gave updates on the Algal, Microbial, and Crop Wild Relatives reports. She stated that the response to the Microbial report is complete and is now being reviewed by leadership. Kothari said that it should be about a 2-week turnaround before the report goes to leadership. She is working on the responses for the Crop Wild Relative and Algal reports. It might be about 4-weeks before they go to leadership for review.

McFerson thanked Kothari for working on the reports while going through some staffing transitions. He asked if there were any comments or questions. There were none.

IV. **Wrap-up/Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:02 pm ET.

The next meeting is Wednesday, April 16, 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.