

# NERA Business Meeting Minutes

## June 04, 2019 - Washington, DC

In attendance: Jody Jellison (Chair-MA), Jan Nyrop (NY), Adel Shirmohammadi (MD), Eric Wommack (DE), Ted Andreadis (CT-New Haven), Fred Servello (ME), Matt Wilson (WV), Gary Thompson (PA), Brad Hillman (NJ), Carol Thornber (RI), Doug Steele (APLU), Rick Rhodes (NERA), David Leibovitz (NERA)

Minutes from 3/28/2019 teleconference: **the minutes were approved by unanimous acclamation**

### Interim Actions (Jody Jellison, Rick Rhodes)

- Issue on match waiver
  - National Coalition for Sustainable Agriculture lobbied heavily against the match waiver as a means of “evening the playing field”
  - How should Directors keep up with the BAA on current issues? Who represents the Northeast on the BAA? How does the Northeast voice get heard at the BAA? Who can speak up on behalf of the Northeast about how new policies affect our programs?
    - Gary Thompson serves on the Policy Board of Directors representing ESCOP.
    - BAA / PBD isn’t the best channel for the region to talk directly with NIFA.
    - We wouldn’t have been able to catch this match issue even with more regional APLU engagement.
  - Closing the communications gap: how do we ensure stronger regional representation in national discussions?
  - Cornerstone – were they aware of the match issue in advance?
  - NERA must continue to be proactive.
    - NERA was the first region to bring the match issue to ESCOP.
    - APLU is now engaging NIFA and Congress; the issue looks to be fixed by 2020.
- National Impact Database (NIDB) participation
  - ESCOP and ECOP each contribute \$12.5k/yr to the NIDB, plus \$5k annually to impact writers.
  - Does the NIDB accomplish what it intended to accomplish?
    - Initially formed as a database for impact reporting to NIFA.
    - Quality is inconsistent: submitting content is more a “box checking effort.”
  - NERA has had only one institution submit material to the NIDB in the past three years.
  - NERA wrote to ESCOP, withdrawing regional support for the NIDB and recommending to cease the NIDB.
- USDA Disclaimer for Scientific Data / Publications
  - USDA wanted to require the inclusion of a disclaimer reading “This data is preliminary” for all scientific data reported by the agency – *the disclaimer was rolled back*.
  - The disclaimer is seen as an infringement upon scientific ethics.
  - [The letter from Chavonda Jacobs-Young \(NIFA\) regarding USDA scientific disclaimers/disclosures is posted on the NERA website.](#)

### MAC Report (Fred Servello, Northeast MAC Chair and NRSP RC Chair 2017-19)

- All Northeast Multistate Projects renewing on 10/1/2019 have been approved by NIFA.

- Administrative Advisers
  - NRSP10 (Database Resources for Crop Genomics, Genetics and Breeding Research)
    - Seeking a Northeast AA for NRSP10.
    - Sabine O’Hara volunteered to serve as Northeast AA, her economics expertise would be valuable.
    - **A motion was introduced to appoint Sabine O’Hara as the Northeast AA on NRSP10, approved unanimously.**
  - NE1939 (Improving the health span of aging adults through diet and physical activity)
    - Nutrition based project, originated at UDC; Sabine O’Hara currently serves as AA.
    - Cathy English (Chair, URI Dept of Nutrition and Food Sciences) has been identified and nominated by the technical team as the new AA.
    - John Kirby (RI AES Director) endorses the appointment.
    - **A motion was introduced to appoint Cathy English as the AA on NE1939, approved unanimously.**
  - NE1601 (Eastern White Pine Health and Responses to Environmental Changes)
    - Fred Servello is currently AA, request to transfer AA role to Mark Hutton (ME Associate AES Dir.)
    - NE1601 is off to a good start after two years, Mark Hutton understands crop pathology and would be a strong AA.
    - Strong participation from states in multiple regions.
    - **A motion was introduced to appoint Mark Hutton as the AA on NE1601, approved unanimously.**
- NRSP (NERA’s review of 2019 NRSP renewals was provided)
- MAC Chair / NRSP RC member succession planning
  - NRSP RC: Rick Rhodes (NERA ED) rotates off in 2020 and Fred Servello’s term ends
    - NERA needs to identify an NRSP RC representative.
    - **Fred Servello is willing to continue as NERA NRSP RC representative for another four-year term starting in 2019-20.**
  - MAC: Fred Servello (MAC Chair) does not seek to renew his term on the MAC. A new member and a new chair must be identified.
    - **Brad Hillman offered to serve as MAC chair for one year.**
    - Decisions on new MAC members were deferred to NERA elections.

### ESCOPE Updates

- Policy Board of Directors (Gary Thompson)
  - Under Doug Steele’s leadership, the tone and conversation at the PBD was different.
    - The agenda was not prescriptive, more used as a framework for discussion.
    - Positive impression of new APLU BAA Leadership.
    - Minutes were turned around more quickly than in previous years.
  - PBD working to determine a more transparent process for decision making and assessments.
  - BAA provides guidance and leadership, strengthening our relationships with partners and stakeholders.

- Competitive match – BAC charged Cornerstone with digging into that issue (both ramifications and fixes)
- Strategic realignment discussion
  - NIFA’s budget is divided into 43 lines, each with legislative authority.
  - Congress asked NIFA to simplify their process, reduce number of lines.
  - Currently 8 of the lines represent 90% of NIFA funding.
  - Strategic realignment committee is led by Ernie Minton (K-State) and Mike Harrington (WAAESD.)
  - As of the 2019 PBD meeting, the realignment proposal has been consolidated to 15 lines.
- Communications and Marketing Committee (ESCOP / ECOP / AHS)
  - In 2019, CMC was approved as an ad hoc committee of the PBD.
  - kglobal’s contract was terminated following approval by each section.
  - CMC structure is being reimagined and a draft plan will be released.
  - Currently under review: potential APLU hire to work on Communications and Marketing in-house for the system.
- Budget and Advocacy Committee (Gary Thompson)
  - Phone calls held monthly, mostly a transactional committee.
  - Discussions about appropriations and match.
  - BAC exchanges recommendations with Cornerstone.
  - Currently chaired by Craig Beyroudy (Maryland.)
- Communications and Marketing Committee (Rick Rhodes)
  - CMC and CMP has drifted toward advocacy.
  - Brand identity, system identity are coming back into focus.
  - kglobal contract was terminated (Marketing consultant.)
  - A subcommittee of the CMC will present recommendations to the committee on 6/27, on how to move forward.
  - The committee makeup is being reimagined.
    - Only two communications experts on the committee.
    - Chairs and reps from each section serve on the CMC.
    - The committee seeks to reduce the number of Directors and increase the number of communications experts on the committee.
- Diversity Catalyst Committee (Rick Rhodes)
  - DCC has identified the second award winner of the National Experiment Station Section Diversity and Inclusion Award.
  - Working to ensure that diversity and inclusion is incorporated into national meetings.
  - National Land-Grant Diversity Conference participation.
  - Quarterly calls showcase regional efforts.
- Science and Technology Committee (Adel Shirmohammadi)
  - Two Director-representatives from each region, liaisons from ARS and NIFA.
  - S&T drafted and released a new set of Grand Challenges in Food and Agricultural Research; Science Roadmap (visit <http://escop.info/>.)
  - Discussions on industrial hemp, antimicrobial resistance.

- S&T reviewed national reports on the Land Grant system (Breakthroughs 2030, TEconomy report on capacity funds; 1.86:1 return on Capacity funds.)
- S&T conducts the award process for National Multistate Research Excellence.
- NRSP Review Committee (Fred Servello)
  - Fly-in annual meeting held in Providence, RI 5/29/2019 ([Click to view minutes.](#))
  - NRSP1 funding at Colorado State
    - Balance of funding for Program Leader (vacant, formerly Sarah Lupis) is held at Colorado State; NRSP1 AAs will discuss this and make a recommendation to the NRSP RC.
  - NRSP6 mid-term review and funding plan
    - Jeff Jacobsen and lead AA Bill Barker stepped in to assist in getting a revised funding plan from project technical lead.
    - 10% reduction in the budget was proposed, but no plan to incorporate alternative sources of funding.
    - The submission was not acceptable and other funding plans/options will be explored.
  - Renewal of NRSP3
    - Generally supportive across regions, lower participation across stations in the West.
    - The team intends to focus more closely on Agriculture issues.
    - NRSP RC recommends approval of NRSP3.
  - Renewal of NRSP10
    - NERA, NCRA, WAAESD are not going to accept a renewal without a delivered transition plan from National OTT funding.
    - NRSP RC is deferring approval and wants to see a funding transition plan up front.
  - NRSP Guidelines
    - NRSP guidelines have been revised by a subgroup of the NRSP RC.
    - Guidelines are a lot for Directors and the RC to digest, but NRSP technical leads read them closely.
    - Intent is to simplify the guidelines, clean them, remove loose language, remove opportunities to interpret them differently.
    - Project teams will need to know that the OTT funding sunset must be considered up front.
    - NRSP RC will provide a guidelines revision to ESCOP, along with a summary of the proposed changes.

#### Discussion with Doug Steele (APLU)

- Never underestimate the power of the Northeast voice at the National level.
- We are not information brokers – we are curators of information.
- The LGU Promise
  - Connected to people
  - Connected to stakeholders
  - Curators of evidence based, science based information

- Strategic Realignment
  - Discussed since 2008 Farm Bill
  - Concerned about true realignment, not elimination of programs
- FY2020 Budget
  - \$60M increase over previous year (\$30M capacity funds pickup on the House side, \$30M increase to AFRI.)
  - \$2M net loss is embedded in NIFA budget proposal based on cuts.
  - BAA can only make recommendations to NIFA re: budget process.
- Advocacy strategies
  - BAA typically puts this together in March which is too late.
  - Cornerstone's preference and recommendation is for clear, concise messaging.
  - At the APLU Annual Meeting in November, advocacy efforts will be outlined.
  - CGA has gone to bat for us re: Matching requirements.
- Restriction on using waived overhead as match
  - Dr. Angle and Dr. Hutchins confirmed NIFA will not change their position.
- Antimicrobial Resistance
  - Underway at Iowa State and Nebraska, applications submitted to initiate a center of excellence and host a conference.
- Gene Editing in Livestock
  - Invitation-only meeting to be held in December. Announcements will be made to Northeast Administrative Heads. **Email [Doug Steele](#) if you are interested in the Gene Editing in Livestock meeting or initiative.**
- APLU should be seen as the leader of a National LGU movement.
- **NERA can ensure that all Directors are signed up for APLU and Cornerstone listservs.**
- Reflections on the Northeast Agenda
  - Research and Extension working well together is a strong foundation – a current success in the Northeast.
  - At the end of the day, can research be applicable to your stakeholders?
  - The NE can be a leader in “small food hubs” / “urban food hubs” / “urban food system”
  - Northeast should pursue a NIFA planning grant and host a national conference on the urban food system.

#### NERA Business (Rick Rhodes)

- Regional OTT Funding Approval
  - NE59 (Northeastern Regional Center for Rural Development): \$40,788 request
    - Run by Stephan Goetz, housed at Penn State.
    - Rick Rhodes and Gary Thompson serve on the NERCRD Board.
    - Budget request has been level for years.
    - NERCRD is a lean operation and doesn't need an increase.
    - NERCRD website is a robust resource for presentations and information.
    - Strong liaison with NIFA in Brent Elrod.
    - Presence known across the region – Maine has engaged with NERCRD.
    - Involved with both research and extension activities.
    - Can we utilize the NERCRD's resources to influence our institutional research?



**June 05, 2019**

In attendance: Jody Jellison (Chair), Jan Nyrop, Adel Shirmohammadi, Brad Hillman, Carol Thornber, Eric Wommack, Indrajeet Chaubey, Fred Servello, Ted Andreadis, Gary Thompson, Matt Wilson, Rick Rhodes, David Leibovitz

Budget discussion (continued from 6/4) and Assessments Breakdown

- The NERA budget was revised overnight and a second draft was presented to the Directors.
- Rick recapped the \$31k Planning Grants line.
  - The line constitutes \$21k in NERA RFPs and \$10k for a joint RFP with NEED which has not existed since 2017.
  - The goal is to bring investigators from multiple institutions together to submit a larger grant proposals.
  - The current NERA RFP would award \$7k to a team up front, not on a reimbursement basis.
  - Could this money be used to host a symposium / meeting on a regional theme?
  - This money could be used more globally, we should allow for more flexibility with the funds for greater impact.
  - \$10M sustainable ag and food systems grant opportunity from NIFA – could a NERA planning grant bring together a group to apply to something like that?
  - The Executive Committee should be granted more flexibility to develop ideas for investing the money.
  - This could look like more than a small seed grant housed on a single campus.
  - **A motion was introduced to keep the RFA in place, and grant the NERA Executive Committee more flexibility to disburse the \$31k planning grants line to support larger initiatives (e.g. regional symposia, workshops.)**
    - **The motion received unanimous approval.**
- Meeting expenses in FY20 were reverted to the FY19 approved levels.
- FY19 actual expenses for the summer meeting were far higher than budgeted and expected.
- Future summer meeting hosts should have capacities in-house to support hosting a conference.
- **A motion was introduced to approve the NERA budget revised 6/4. The motion received unanimous approval.**

NE Joint Summer Session 2020 and Meetings Discussion

- The meeting hosts traditionally rotate in roughly alphabetical order.
- Currently in the running: NJ, MA, RI, ME.
  - Not a good year for New Jersey; they will be hosting the National Urban Extension Leaders conference and will be undergoing some leadership changes.
  - Maine has the staffing capability to provide conference support.
  - **MA / RI / ME / NJ research and extension Directors will meet to agree on a rotation for the next three years**
- Timing of NERA Business Meeting
  - Major action at the summer meeting: budget approval; Major action at the fall meeting: OED evaluation; NERA still holds its holiday teleconference in December

- It's difficult to make multiple trips to NERA related meetings – it becomes a decision of “which meeting *won't* I attend?”
- Organizationally, the traditional spring meeting was the most valuable for NERA.
- The spring meeting allowed NERA to think strategically and deeply about issues.
- NERA no longer has the time to hold expanded best practices discussions.
- Should NERA continue to participate in the NE Joint Summer Session?
- **A motion was introduced to hold a NERA spring face-to-face business meeting in spring 2020, roughly during the first week in April. The OED would be granted flexibility to determine a date and location.**
  - **The motion was approved unanimously.**
- **At the spring 2020 business meeting, the NERA Directors will discuss their commitment to the traditional annual slate of meetings, their relationship with NEED on the summer meeting, and the value of the summer meeting**

#### NERA Officers

- Gary Thompson (Penn State) was nominated by Jody Jellison to serve as the NERA Officer-at-large.
- **A motion was introduced to approve Gary Thompson's appointment as the NERA officer-at-large, and was approved unanimously.**
- New MAC member
  - Currently serving on the MAC: Fred Servello (Chair), Brad Hillman (incoming Chair), Gary Thompson, Eric Wommack, Amy Ouellette (NH-NEED), Pat Vittum (MA-NEED.)
  - An economist or an animal scientist could be valuable on the MAC.
  - Matt Wilson (WVU) was nominated to serve on the MAC.
  - **A motion was introduced to approve Matt Wilson as a new MAC member, and was approved unanimously.**
- ESCOP Science and Technology Committee NERA representative
  - NERA seeks two representatives to the ESCOP Science and Tech committee.
  - A national committee supported by Executive Vice-Chair Bret Hess (WAAESD Executive Director.)
  - The committee handles the annual national award for excellence in multistate research and has drafted the Grand Challenges for Food and Agricultural Research + Science Roadmap.
  - One of NERA's representatives will soon serve as chair for two years
  - Adel Shirmohammadi nominated Indrajeet Chaubey as a NERA representative to the ESCOP Science and Technology committee, but not as the incoming chair.
    - **A motion was introduced to approve Indrajeet Chaubey as a NERA representative to the ESCOP Science and Technology committee. The motion was approved unanimously.**
  - **The second NERA representative and incoming Chair of the Science and Tech committee will be determined at another time.**

#### The NIFA Connection (Louie Tupas and Bob Green, NIFA)

- NIFA is implementing 2019 appropriations, which includes new programs



- Farmers' stress assistance program
  - Rural health and safety program
- The 2020 budget has been submitted, requesting \$500M for AFRI.
- Urban agriculture is an area of interest for NIFA.
  - Looking to spread investments in urban ag across AFRI programs, beginning farmers and ranchers, SCRI, small to medium size farms.
  - 14 USDA agencies will work on urban ag initiatives.
  - Definition: "agriculture in unconventional places and using unconventional techniques."
- USDA Undersecretary Scott Hutchins introduced five areas of focus
  - Agriculture Intensification - Anything that can stimulate agricultural production without affecting the natural resources base.
  - Climate Adaptation - An area where the Northeast is vulnerable.
  - Food and Nutrition Translation - Food safety, food science, human nutrition.
  - Value-added Innovation.
  - Ag Science Policy Leadership - Producing scientific leaders, community leaders, business leaders.
- NIFA will always be committed to Education and Workforce Development.
- The undersecretary sees agriculture as a business and economic vehicle, not just a system that feeds the population.
- The current administration focuses investments on ensuring that farm production is profitable.
- Federal opportunities will fall into the aforementioned areas.
- The Northeast must find a balance in their agenda which both appeals to the region and adheres to the available federal opportunities.
- Policy/Leadership opportunities are appealing: UDC is spearheading an Ag Urban Policy Council with 15 different DC agencies.
- Value-added innovation addresses product innovation and the entrepreneurial side of value-add.
- *Rick expressed gratitude and appreciation on behalf of NERA for Meryl Broussard's friendship and partnership over many years. NERA's expression of gratitude and condolences will be shared at Meryl Broussard's remembrance ceremony.*

#### Discussion with Jerry Baron (NRSP4 / IR-4)

- **Jerry Baron's slides will be posted on the NERA website**
- Jerry Baron was asked by the NRSP RC to visit with each regional association to provide a snapshot of what NRSP4 / the IR-4 project does and how each region is involved.
- Hot topic today: Food Waste; wasted in the field not just by consumers.
- Pest management is important – pests do not discriminate, any plant can be vulnerable.
- Cost of data development brings a higher focus to major crops.
- IR-4 remains the same: provide growers with safe pest management processes and products.
- IR-4 was born from a collaboration between CSRS, ARS, SAES, EPA, agrichemicals industry.
- Three objectives:
  - Food crop program
  - Biopesticide and organic support
  - Environmental horticulture program

- IR-4 sites in the Northeast: Salisbury, MD; Crane Ridge, NJ (ornamental and fruit research); Snyder Research Farm, NJ; UMass Cranberry Research Farm, Wareham, MA; Potato and blueberry growing sites in Maine; many sites in NY and PA.
- Registrations are plentiful but ability to use approved pest management products can be limited.
- Trade / export issues with foreign regulations on pest management products are apparent.
- May need multiple chemical and biological control strategies for a given area.
- Acceptance is an issue: public gets their “scientific information” on pest management and crop protection from Facebook and other social media.
  - Public reaction to glyphosate is only the beginning – other products will be smeared.
- Global Harmonization Efforts: repurposing old IR-4 Data, bringing it to current standards.
- Global zoning: bringing countries together to develop enhanced datasets between counterpart “IR-4” programs.
- 25% of IR-4’s research program is conducted in tandem with Canada.
- IR-4 will be involved in getting biostimulants registered.
- Indirect costs are a burden; e.g. Rutgers RCM model.
- IR-4 is engaged in Strategic Realignment discussions.
- IR-4 contributes \$9.4B to annual US GDP / supports > 95,200 jobs.

#### Cornerstone Report (Jim Richards)

- **Contact Jim Richards or Maggie Earle to be included on the Cornerstone listserv.**
- FY20: \$65M increase for core priorities (AFRI, 1890s Extension, Evans Allen.)
- Ag subcommittee had about \$1.3B more to spend than last year.
- Language on NIFA and ERS relocation is included, antimicrobial resistance is included.
- House ag appropriations committees and subcommittees signed a letter to shift USDA’s focus away from the NIFA move toward other more important priorities.
- Why is it said to be cheaper to do NIFA research than other agency funded research at an LGU?
- Ag research facilities end up falling behind other research units.
- Share with BAA issue of full indirects for LGU institutions securing NIFA grants.

#### Final comments and adjournment

- **The OED report will be shared with the NERA Directors.**
- Discussion of the Northeast Agenda has been tabled.
- Remaining committee members and assignments will be conducted electronically by the OED.
- An IDC and infrastructure best practices session will be held at a forthcoming NERA meeting.
- A resolution to UDC was delivered by Brad Hillman.

*The meeting adjourned at 11:47am.*