

NERA

Northeastern Regional Association
of
State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors Meeting

Hilton Nashville Downtown, Nashville, TN

September 27, 2010 [3:00-6:00PM]

Draft Minutes

Brad Hillman, Acting Chair

In Attendance:

Brad Hillman (NJ), Acting Chair
Edward Ashworth (ME)
Cameron Faustman (CTS)
Stephen Herbert (MA)
Mike Hoffmann (NYC)
John Kirby (RI)
Rick Rhodes III (RI)
Daniel Rossi (NERA)
Fred Servello (ME)
Adel Shirmohammadi (MD)
Jon Wraith (NH)
Rubie Mize (NERA), Recorder

MAJOR DECISIONS

- Approved the draft agenda for this meeting as posted in url---
<http://www.nera.umd.edu/workshop/NERAAgendaSept2010.doc>
- Approved the minutes of the NERA meeting held at Baltimore, MD on July 12-13, 2010, as posted in url--- <http://www.nera.umd.edu/workshop/NERAMinutesJuly2010.html>
- Approved the release of the 2011 NERA Planning Grant

THE JOB JAR
(Work Assignments for the Executive Director)

- Release the announcement for the 2011 NERA Planning Grant. Deadline for submission of proposals is November 30, 2010.
- Follow-up with USDA/NIFA and Canadian Dept. of Agriculture possibility of co-funding bi-national projects on climate change
- Assist the Northeast Water Resources and Climate Change Working Group in organizing the Planning Committee to develop the program for the regional forum
- Develop the executive summary for East US-Canada Climate Change Collaboration Forum and continue to provide support to the East US-Canada Climate Change Working Group.
- Follow-up response/feedback, through Dr. Hoffmann, from the Coordinator based at Cornell for the IPM Working Group On Invasive Species for New England and New York
- Assist the host and the 2011 Northeast Summer Joint Session Planning Committee in preparing for the 2011 summer meeting.
- Prepare for the NERA Spring Meeting to be held at the Admiral Fell Inn, Baltimore, MD on March 22-23, 2011.

Minutes:

1. Welcome and Introductions – Acting Chair Brad Hillman

Acting Chair Brad Hillman welcomed the group and Dr. John Kirby, who is attending the NERA meeting for the first time as Dean and Director at Rhode Island.

2. Approval of Agenda – Acting Chair Brad Hillman

The draft agenda was approved with a modification to discuss the Biotechnology Industry Organization letter that was sent to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack. This will also be discussed at the ESS Meeting.

3. Approval of the minutes of the NERA meeting held at Baltimore, MD on July 12-13,

2010, as posted in url--- <http://www.nera.umd.edu/workshop/NERAMinutesJuly2010.html>

The motion made to approve the draft minutes for the summer meeting held at Baltimore, MD, on July 12-13, 2010, was seconded and passed.

4. Executive Director's Report – Dan Rossi

- Report of the Office of the Executive Director (see attachment below, pages 6-8)
- ESCOP Report (see attachment below, pages 9-10)

5. Eastern US-Canada Climate Change Collaboration – Mike Hoffmann

NERA hosted the Forum that was held at Syracuse, NY, on August 18-19, 2010 and was attended by 35 US and Canadian university administrators and public/private sector executives.

The following potential areas for collaboration were identified:

- Energy/Bioeconomy
 - Urban waste streams to jet fuels (Joe Dunn, Don Schenk, John Oliver)

- Other feedstocks (Don Smith, Mike Hoffmann, Steve Pueppke, Don Schenk, Steve Slack)
- New cropping systems (Sean McNamara, Mike Hoffmann, John Oliver, Don Smith)
- Agroecosystem Sustainability
 - Watershed sustainability (Adel Shirmohammadi,
 - Population/land-use interface
 - Decision making tools

A Working Group was formed with Drs. Hoffmann and Shirmohammadi representing NERA. The group continues to meet and joint activities are being reported. The US Air Force may fund biofuels summits in the South and the Northeast. Field trials of several varieties of winter canola are underway in the US (Cornell) and Canada.

Eastern US and Canada has the potential of being the only region that will gain positively from climate change in term of agricultural production.

The next steps are to: (1) develop the executive summary for the Forum, and (2) organize multistate development committees.

A suggestion was made whether it is possible for USDA/NIFA and the Canadian Dept. of Agriculture to put funding together for bi-national projects. Dr. Rossi will follow up on this.

6. Northeast Climate Change Working Group – Adel Shirmohammadi

The Working Group was formed to follow up on actions from the summer joint session. The members are:

- Paul Bonaparte-Krogh and Larry Katz (NEED)
- Phyllis Carter and Dianne Lennon (CARET)
- Mike Hoffmann and Adel Shirmohammadi (NERA)
- Daniel Rossi and Linda Kay Benning (Facilitators)

The group had their first teleconference on Sept. 15 and currently in the process of planning for a regional Forum. A suggestion is to hold it in conjunction with the National Water Conference to be held in Washington, DC, on January 30 to February 1, 2011. Following the format of the NE Functional Foods Forum, there will be an evening reception on the first day followed by an all-day meeting, at the USDA-ARS campus in Beltsville, MD.

A Planning Committee will be formed to develop the program. The Deans and Directors will be asked to identify faculty that they will send to the Forum.

7. Multistate Activities Committee Report –

MAC Chair Jon Wraith gave the following update:

- NE 1044 - Whole farm dairy and beef systems: gaseous emissions, P management, organic production, and pasture based production [2010-2015]
 - Status: Officially approved by NIFA.
- NE1045 - Design, Assessment, and Management of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems: Addressing the Challenges of Climate Change [2010-2015]
 - Status: Submitted to NIFA and awaiting approval.

- NE1025 - Management of Annual Bluegrass on Golf Courses: Improved Practices for Maintenance, Pest Control, and Viable Techniques for Transition to More Desirable Grasses [2011-2016].
 - Status: MAC electronically approved the request to write for NE1025. The committee is now working on their NE_TEMP1721 proposal. This will be in the pipeline for the March 2011 meeting.

8. NRSP Review Committee Recommendations – Jon Wraith/Dan Rossi

(see attachment below, pages 11-12)

The Directors would like that NRSPs have a sunset built in their proposals. A suggestion was also made that there should be a cap for off-the-top funding for NRSPs. These are issues that will be raised with the NRSP Review Committee.

9. 2011 NERA Planning Grant – Dan Rossi (see attachment below, pages 13-14)

A motion was made to approve the release of the 2011 NERA Planning Grant as described in the attachment. The motion was seconded and passed.

10. Discussion of Coordinated Regional Research on Invasive Plants – Fred Servello/Cameron Faustman (see attachment below, pages 15-18)

Dr. Servello suggested following the discussion agenda below (page 16).

“On what scale do we approach this issue of invasive plants? Should we also include insects and aquatic plants? Other considerations are agriculture/horticulture/urban vs. natural ecosystems; terrestrial/freshwater aquatic/estuarine; geographic scale.

Some networks are already developed, like the IPM Working Group. Is there a need to coordinate efforts in the region, or should we just joint existing centers? However, these centers may not be research focused, most are outreach and extension focused. Should we approach this in light of climate change implications – mitigation and adaptation issues? How will it relate to urban sprawl and the global economy?

There are two projects in Connecticut – invasive weeds cataloguing and forecasting of invasive plants with climate change. Should we build our regional activity from these?

Should we talk to practitioners and identify research needs that can best be handled through a multistate, integrated structure or regional coordination? Target areas that have high potential for pay off or funding through a competitive grant. There is an IPM funded activity that will help us get stakeholder input to identify priorities.

Mike Hoffmann will ask the Coordinator at Cornell, “if there is an opportunity to regionalize, what do we ought to be doing?” and share the feedback with Drs. Rossi, Servello and Faustman.

11. Future Meetings:

- March 22-23, 2011 - NERA Spring Meeting at Baltimore, MD
 - Discussion of venue and ‘Best Practices’ topics

“Regional cooperation for efficiency or just to survive” was suggested as a potential topic for discussion, and will include cooperation on the following---

- a. dairy research

- b. sharing courses (like the Great Plains network). Form a Northeast network?
- c. sharing faculty

- July 10-12, 2011 - NE Summer Joint Session: Host is the University of Connecticut
 - Discussion of 2011 NE Summer Joint Session theme and expected outcomes“To what extent do we know what we’re doing in our universities?” We will attempt to answer this question at the 2011 summer joint session. Data will be collected prior to the meeting. Peggy Brennan at Rutgers will initiate the collection (she has already compiled a report for Rutgers) on the bioenergy area. The Planning Committee will work on collecting data for the other areas – functional foods and climate change. Should we look beyond our experiment stations and include other colleges/departments? On what other grants are we already collaborating -- NIFA, NSF, NIH, DoE, DoD etc.?

12. Other Business

- On the Biotechnology Industry Organization letter (see attachment on page 19) that was sent to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack, there is concern that this will hurt our institutions. However, there may be misconceptions about negatively impacting the system, as noted by Dr. Faustman. He shared three articles about this issue. Intellectual property procedures are already in place in our institutions, and there is respect within the community.

- Dr. Dan Rossi was appointed regional advisor for NRSP4/IR4 Enabling Pesticide Registrations for Specialty Crops and Minor Uses (10/2010-9/2015).

13. Closing Remarks/Adjournment – Acting Chair Brad Hillman

Acting Chair Brad Hillman thanked the directors and adjourned the meeting at 6:11PM.

NERA Meeting

September 27, 2010

Nashville, TN

Report of the Office of the Executive Director

July 13, 2010 – September 27, 2010

NERA and Regional Activities

- Eastern Climate Change Collaboration
 - Finalized program, meeting facilities and speakers for the Forum
 - Forum held on August 18-19, 2010, approximately 35 participants
 - Facilitated a follow-up conference call
 - Preparing a final report on the activity
- Northeast Climate Change Working Group
 - Facilitated the first conference call of the working group
- NERA Planning Grants Program
 - Supported 2009 and 2010 award recipients
 - Prepared a draft of the 2011 grants program announcement
- Northeast Urban Programs Initiative
 - Continued to support the Urban Programs Initiative working group
 - Finalizing and testing a web-based survey and data base for the region
- NERA Chair Support
 - Assisted in the development of the September 2010 NERA meeting agenda and compiled agenda materials
 - Assisted in the development of the September 2010 NERA Executive Committee meeting agenda
- Multistate Activities Committee (MAC) Support
 - Final approval and submission to NIFA of the following projects:
 - NE 1044 - Whole farm dairy and beef systems: gaseous emissions, P management, organic production, and pasture based production
 - NE1045 - Design, Assessment, and Management of Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems: Addressing the Challenges of Climate Change
 - Approval of Request to Write for NE1025 - Management of Annual Bluegrass on Golf Courses: Improved Practices for Maintenance, Pest Control, and Viable Techniques for Transition to More Desirable Grasses
- Reports
 - Summary Report on Northeast Functional Foods Forum
 - Report to NERA on the Eastern US-Canada Climate Change Collaboration Forum
 - Report to NERA on ESCOP Activities
- Service
 - Mid-Atlantic Food Systems Consortium Leadership Committee
 - Board of Directors of the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development
 - Board of Directors of the Northeast Regional Aquaculture Center

- Administrative advisor to:
 - NE-1029
 - NECC-63
 - Northeast States and Caribbean Islands Regional Water Program

National Activities

- Science Roadmap for Food and Agriculture
 - Providing overall coordination of the Roadmap project
 - Prepared draft of introductory sections of the overall report
 - Collated and edited overall report draft
 - Secured professional editing and design services for final draft and arranging for final printing
 - Secured final peer review of overall report
- ESCOP Science and Technology Committee Chair Support
 - Coordinated session at ESS meeting on the Science Roadmap
 - Prepared a PowerPoint presentation for the introduction of the ESS Science Roadmap session
 - Provided a committee report for the July 2010 ESCOP meeting
 - Prepared an agenda brief for the ESS meeting
 - Prepared a PowerPoint presentation on the Multistate Research Award for ESS meeting
- ESCOP NRSP Review Committee Chair Support
 - Facilitated a conference call of the committee to prepare final recommendations concerning NRSP proposals and budgets to be considered at the ESS meeting
 - Organized a meeting scheduled for September 28
 - Prepared an agenda brief for the ESS meeting
 - Prepared a PowerPoint presentation for the ESS meeting
- NRSP-1 Administrative Advisory Committee Chair Support
 - Preparing a proposal for the continuation of NIMSS support and perhaps other research support activities in a new NRSP-1 proposal
- NIMSS
 - Serve as regional NIMSS Coordinator
 - Provided national level support for the operations of NIMSS
 - Oversee upgrades to NIMSS
 - Support NIFA Management Dashboard access to NIMSS data
- Service
 - ESCOP Chair's Advisory Committee
 - ESCOP Executive Committee
 - ESCOP NIMSS Oversight Committee
 - National Multistate Management Committee
 - CSREES/NIFA One Solution Stakeholders Committee
- Program Monitoring and Feedback
 - ESCOP Marketing Plan
 - Farm Bill development
 - NIFA budget developments
 - NIFA competitive grants programs

- NIFA operational web and teleconferences

Travel

- July 19-22, 2010, Seattle, Washington – Joint COP’s and ESCOP Meeting
- August 18-19, 2010, Syracuse, NY - Eastern US-Canada Climate Change Collaboration Forum
- September 21, Storrs, CT – Provide new director orientation

NERA Meeting

September 27, 2010

Nashville, TN

Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy Report

July 2010 – September 2010

ESCOP Officers

- Chair - Clarence Watson
- Chair-Elect – Orlando McMeans
- Past Chair – Steven Pueppke
- Executive Vice Chair – Eric Young
- ESS Rep to BAA Policy Board – Nancy Cox
- Budget and Legislative Committee Chair – Steve Slack
- Communications & Marketing Committee Chair - Gerald Arkin
- Science & Technology Committee Chair – Bill Ravlin
- NRSP Review Committee Chair – Ralph Cavalieri

NERA Representatives to:

- ESCOP:
 - Tom Burr
 - Brad Hillman
 - Jon Wraith
- ESCOP Budget & Legislative Committee
 - Tom Brady
 - Tom Burr
- ESCOP Communications and Marketing Committee
 - Steve Herbert
 - Mike Hoffmann
- ESCOP Science & Technology Committee
 - Tom Brady
 - Mike Hoffmann
- NRSP Review Committee
 - Jon Wraith

Meetings

ESCOP last met on July 20-21, 2010 in Seattle, WA. The Experiment Station Section will meet on September 28, 2010 in Nashville, TN. The ESCOP Executive Committee will meet on November 15, 2010 in Dallas, TX.

Budget and Legislative

The Budget and Legislative Committee has been monitoring progress towards the 2011 federal budget. The Committee was also charged to preparing input into the 2012 Farm Bill development. It implemented a survey of SAES directors. A draft plan for input into the Farm Bill was prepared and a letter was sent to D.C. Coston, chair of the BAA Committee on Legislation and Policy (CLP). A session is planned for the ESS/SAES/ARD Workshop to further refine the input. The CLP will provide system-wide input on 2012 Farm Bill.

Communications and Marketing

The Communications and Marketing Committee works with Podesta and Cornerstone to implement our marketing effort. The current focus is an effort is expanding the placement of opinion editorials. The Committee has evaluated the effectiveness of the marketing plan and presented it at the July ESCOP meeting. ESCOP voted to recommend continuation of the contract with Podesta and the assessment to support it at the ESS meeting.

Science and Technology

The primary focus of the Committee has been to provide leadership and coordination to the development of a new Science Roadmap for Food and Agriculture. Seven writing teams have prepared white papers for the seven challenges areas of the Roadmap. The seven drafts received peer reviews. Approximately 80 scientists and administrators were involved in this process. The papers were collated and combined with other documentation into an overall draft of the Roadmap. An editor was hired to provide professional editing and design services. The edited document was then sent to Colin Kaltenbach and Daryl Lund for overall review. The Committee is working with Ohio State to provide printing services for the final document. A session is planned for the ESS/SAES/ARD Workshop to present highlights from the Roadmap.

National Research Support Projects

The NRSP Review Committee will present its recommendation on project proposals and budgets at the ESS meeting,

Agenda Brief: ESCOP National Research Support Project Review Committee

Date: September 28, 2010

Presenter: Ralph Cavalieri/Daniel Rossi

Background Information:

1. Committee Membership:

- Chair
 - Ralph Cavalieri (WAAESD)

- Delegates
 - Abel Ponce de Leon (NCRA)
 - Jon Wraith (NERA)
 - Kirland Mellad (ARD)
 - Mark Cochran (SAAESD)
 - Tom Bewick (NIFA)
 - James Wade (APLU)

- Executive Director
 - Arlen Leholm (NCRA)

- Executive Director/Executive Vice-Chair
 - Dan Rossi (NERA)

- Representative
 - Don Latham (Stakeholder (CARET))

2. Meetings

The Committee met on June 8-9, 2010 in Dallas, TX. It also met by conference call on August 11 and in person on September 28, 2010 in Nashville.

3. NRSP Proposals Recommendations

- NRSP-1 Research Planning Using the Current Research Information System (CRIS and NIMSS)
Approve one year no-cost extension.

- NRSP TEMP4 Enabling Pesticide Registrations for Specialty Crops and Minor Uses
Approve project proposal for 2010-2015.

- NRSP TEMP6 The US Potato Genebank: Acquisition, Classification, Preservation, Evaluation and Distribution of Potato (*Solanum*) Germplasm
Approve project proposal for 2010-2015.
- NRSP TEMP161 National Animal Nutrition Program
No action pending receipt of revised proposal.

4. NRSP 2011 Budget Request Recommendations

<u>Project</u>	<u>Request</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
NRSP-1	\$0	\$0
NRSP-3	\$50,000	\$50,000
NRSP-4	\$481,182	\$481,182
NRSP-6	\$150,000	150,000
NRSP-7	\$325,000	\$325,000 *
NRSP-8	\$500,000	\$500,000
NRSP TEMP161	\$350,000	No action pending decision on proposal

* with the caveat that if funds equal to or less than this amount become available to NRSP-7 through a Congressional special grant or equivalent funding mechanism during FY2010-11, that amount will not be distributed to NRSP-7 from Hatch MRF

5. Research Support Needs

Consistent with its charge, the Committee identified five new areas of potential research support needs relating to a national data repositories for the following areas: plant germplasm, climate change, bioinformatics, sustainable lifecycle analysis, and functional foods. It is investigating how it might be able to stimulate interest in and support for these areas. One approach might be to establish NRSP Development Committees to develop strategies for implementing these ideas along with strategies for long term funding.

Action Requested: Approval of proposals and 2010-11 budgets.

2011 NERA Planning Grants Program

The Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors (NERA) announces the third round of its regional competitive planning grants program. These grants are to be used to organize Northeast researchers and Extension educators around teams to develop new mission-oriented, cross-disciplinary, multistate problem-solving programs. The programs are to be needs driven and include clearly defined research and outreach components. They must focus on new and promising research collaborations or integrated research and extension activities that bring together specialists in diverse fields to apply complementary approaches to work on an important well-defined problem. Proposals in support of programs that are forward looking/anticipatory are especially encouraged.

While we will not have a specific focus to this year's round of proposals, we ask that you keep in mind the AFRI priority areas and the four competitive funding initiatives mandated in the 2008 Farm Bill. The AFRI priority areas are:

- Keep American agriculture competitive while ending world hunger
- Improve nutrition and end child obesity
- Improve food safety for all Americans
- Secure America's energy future through renewable biofuels
- Mitigate and adapt agriculture to variations in climate

The four mandated funding initiatives are:

- Organic Agriculture Research & Extension
- Specialty Crops Research Initiative
- New Farmer and Rancher Development
- Biomass Research and Development

Proposals (not to exceed three single spaced pages) will be due on November 30, 2010. The NERA Multistate Activities Committee will review the proposals and make recommendations for funding to the NERA Directors. Final decisions will be made by December 15, 2010. Funding up to \$10,000 will be available to support transportation and meeting expenses to bring the team together. The funding will be available to the teams for a maximum of one year from the date of the award notification. A report at the end of the award year is required specifying how the funds were used, what competitive grants were targeted, the outcomes of those submissions, and any other collaborative activities resulting from the grant supported project. If necessary and duly justified, a one-year no cost extension can be granted.

An expected outcome of a planning grant will be a proposal submitted to the National Institute for Food and Agriculture in response to the FY2011 or 2012 RFA's for the four mandated initiatives or other competitive grants. Other targeted funding sources should be specified in the proposal.

Proposals for planning grants should include:

- Mission and goals of the proposed program
- Justification for the program relative to stakeholder needs and potential for sustained external funding
- Activities to be engaged in by team members towards a more complete definition of the program
- Timetable for completion of the planning activities and preparation of a competitive proposal
- Team members from two or more Northeastern State Agricultural Experiment Stations and an explanation of their roles on the team
- Team leader with a demonstrated track record of leading cross-disciplinary and/or multi-institutional collaborations
- Budget for planning activities not to exceed \$10,000

In order to provide guidance and feedback from the previous rounds of grant proposals, the following are some of the reviewer comments on those proposals:

- Goals not well defined
- Not clear what specific major compelling issues will be addressed
- Priority not well established
- Needs not clearly justified by stakeholder support; did not identify specific clientele being served
- Planned specific research and extension activities not well defined
- No specifics on what activities are being planned – what are the key approaches to be used
- Strategy of individual proposal development and then consolidation not clear
- Proposed collaboration not well described
- Deliverables not clear
- Potential for sustainable funding not clear

Please submit planning grant proposals by c.o.b. on **November 30, 2010** to Rubie Mize at rgmize@aesop.rutgers.edu.

NERA Meeting

Discussion of Coordinated Regional Research on Invasive Plants

Background:

At the March 23-24, 2010 meeting of NERA, the directors present concluded that a comprehensive and multi-institutional research effort was likely needed for invasive plant issues in the northeast region. This discussion was an outgrowth of the review of a proposed multi-state project on invasive plants that was relatively narrow in scope. At the request of NERA, Fred Servello, Cameron Faustman, and Dan Rossi have assembled background information and organized a discussion of this subject at the NERA regional meeting on September 27th, 3:00-6:00 pm at the 2010 EES/SAES/ARD Meeting and Workshop (Sep 27-30) in Nashville, TN. The goals of this discussion will be 1) to refine our thinking on the nature and scope of a regionally coordinated effort given the background information we now have on existing initiatives and projects in the region and 2) to propose a process for developing a SAES-sponsored regional initiative. If you are not able to attend the September meeting, please pass along your thoughts and comments via email.

Please find four attached documents for the planned discussion. These include:

1. Discussion agenda.
2. Brief description of a recently established working group (Invasive Species IPM Working Group for New England and New York).
3. List of current USDA-sponsored projects on invasive plants developed using CRIS. Also included are brief descriptions for a small number of projects from the above list.
Please print from URL---
<http://www.nera.umd.edu/InvasiveSpecies/InvasivePlantResearchProjects.pdf>
4. The Executive Summary from a 2005 report (Final Report of the New York State Invasive Species Task Force).
Please print from URL---
<http://www.nera.umd.edu/InvasiveSpecies/NYExecSummaryInvasiveSpecies.pdf>

1. Discussion Agenda:

- I. Existing regional working groups and initiatives.
 - a. Current and expected contributions to regional research and outreach.
 - b. Strategic opportunities for collaboration with a SAES initiative

- II. Purpose and scope
(Potential topics and factors)
 - a. Broad purpose of a regional effort (research/education, application/program development)
 - b. Should a SAES initiative focus solely on invasive plants? Or on invasive species more broadly? Other significant subsets to consider (insects, aquatic plants)
 - c. Other scope considerations (agriculture/horticulture/urban vs. natural ecosystems; terrestrial/freshwater aquatic/estuarine; geographic scale).
 - d. Note that natural resources agencies, other public agencies, and NGO's are significant players in this issue. Many manage large amounts of public or private lands.
 - e. Influence of potential funding opportunities on purpose and scope (e.g., AFRI Climate Change funding).
 - f. Potential partners

- III. Steps to develop a SAES initiative
 - a. Structure (development committee? coordinating committee? multi-state project? facilitated faculty teams? other?)
 - b. Would an informal planning committee of directors and faculty be a useful approach to refine the charge before more concrete steps are taken?
 - c. When is the appropriate time to engage working groups in broad strategy discussions?
 - d. When is the appropriate time to involve potential partners in planning?
 - e. Time lines.

2. Brief description of a recently established working group (Invasive Species IPM Working Group for New England and New York).

Project Title: Establishing an **IPM Working Group On Invasive Species** for New England and New York

PD(s): Eleanor Groden, Professor of Entomology, School of Biology and Ecology, University of Maine
Lois Berg Stack, Extension Professor, Ornamental Horticulture Specialist, Cooperative Extension, University of Maine

Funded by: Northeastern IPM Center – IPM Partnership Grants – 2010

Project Summary:

Invasive plant and animal species have caused considerable problems in both natural and managed landscapes, with resulting damage, losses, and efforts to manage them estimated to cost the United States economy over \$120 billion per year (Pimentel et al. 2005). These problems do not conform to political boundaries, and are thus best addressed with interstate coordination. Regional efforts to address invasive species in the NE have generally been fragmented by target species, taxa, or ecosystems impacted with little coordination across species and taxa or between the many instate and regional groups working on these issues. Individual states and the NE region could benefit greatly from more coordination among the individuals, agencies and organizations working in this area, both within and among states. Because of the shared geographic characteristics (including climate, landscape and land-use features) in New England and parts of New York, it will be most productive for those working with invasive species in these states to coordinate and assess the threats to this subregion. This project will establish an IPM Working Group (IWG) on Invasive Species for New England and New York in order to exchange information among the states on within state coordination of invasive species efforts via councils, advisory boards and/or networks, and assist each other with instate coordination efforts and assessing the needs of stakeholders within individual states. The IWG will then prioritize specific regional IPM outreach and research needs for invasive species that reflect the input from each of the state invasive species councils.

Objectives, Approach and Timeline:

1) To establish an IPM Working Group (IWG) on Invasive Species for New England and New York.

Project directors (PDs) will work with primary contact people in each state to develop a list of two collaborators per state. This group of 14 people will meet as the IWG in summer 2010. These collaborators will represent a diversity of stakeholders (researchers, extension educators, IPM practitioners, state and federal agencies employees and environmental group professionals. One individual from each state will represent the state's land grant institution. PDs will organize an initial face-to-face full-day meeting of the IWG at a central location within the region to exchange information

and discuss current organizations and coordination models (i.e. councils, advisory boards and networks) for within-state activities pertaining to the identification, mapping, monitoring, research, management, and education on invasive species.

Membership to be completed by April 30, 2010.

2) To exchange information among IWG members and evaluate current models for within-state coordination of invasive species efforts via councils, advisory boards and/or networks.

IWG members will share information about successful models and programs in their states, and where appropriate and needed, work with state groups to advance their coordinating efforts. IWG members from Maine, for example, will likely share updates of the MISN database, discuss progress on MISN's website, and ask IWG colleagues for suggestions on defining MISN's mission and goals.

Project PDs will work with other IWG members to compile a document that:

- i. outlines potential structures for states that do not currently have invasive species research/outreach groups;
- ii. describes actions that might be accomplished by such groups, following protocol that would support future integration of data from all seven states.

Face-to-face meeting of IWG will be schedule during June 2010.

Document for potential structures for in-state stakeholder organizations will be completed by early Fall 2010.

3) To assist within-state coordination efforts for participating states.

Each collaborating state will be provided with funds to facilitate communication among stakeholders within each state. These funds might be used for partial support of a within-state meeting (virtual or face-to-face) or other electronic networking. This support will lead to either establishment of an in-state organization in the states where no such organization currently exists, or to the incorporation of ideas generated by the IWG in those states with pre-existing organizations.

Fall 2010 – January 2011.

4) To identify and prioritize specific regional IPM outreach and research needs for invasive species that reflect the input from each of the state invasive species councils.

Following the face-to-face IWG meeting, the IWG will hold a virtual meeting to discuss common methodologies for surveying stakeholders (invasive species councils, advisory boards, networks) with each state. Members will then communicate with stakeholders within their state to assess outreach and research needs to address problems associated with IPM of invasive species within the state. The IWG will convene a second virtual meeting to exchange survey results and identify priorities and needs for research and outreach activities on invasive species that are shared across New England. Finalization of the list of priorities will be accomplished via e-mail.

Within state networking: Fall 2010 – January 2011.

IWG Video conference: September 2010, January 2011.

List of New England and New York priorities for invasive species IPM will be prepared January 2011-March 2011.

September 9, 2010

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We are writing today to bring to your attention a court case that has the potential to negatively impact the United States' global competitiveness in agriculture. In particular, we are concerned about the possible elimination of DNA-based patents that protect investments and innovations in agricultural biotechnology, not only for private sector researchers, but also for public researchers such as those within your Department's Agricultural Research Service and at Land Grant universities. We request that you engage with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and appropriate officials at the White House to ensure that the federal government actively defends the patent eligibility of DNA-based inventions.

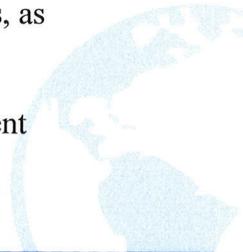
Earlier this year, in a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) against a genetic diagnostic testing company named Myriad Genetics, among others (hereinafter "the ACLU case"), a federal district court ruled that isolated DNA sequences are not eligible for any patent protection, because they are derived from natural sources. In this particular case, the patented DNA molecules are important for clinical breast cancer testing – but the reasoning of the district court was so expansive that patents on animal, plant, bacterial or viral DNA preparations are now also in serious question. As an example, patents on genes that confer drought resistance or those with improved nutritional qualities or high-yielding biomass crops are clearly now at risk by this court decision.

Currently, the Department of Justice is in the process of determining what position the federal government will take on the patentability of genetic materials in this case, which currently is on appeal to the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit and may eventually go to the United States Supreme Court. We are bringing this case to your attention, because we are unsure whether DOJ has sufficiently appreciated the implications of the case outside of the human clinical diagnostics area, and to ensure that the U.S. government's position is determined only after all affected agencies have had an opportunity to consider and weigh in on the matter.

An ultimately negative outcome in this case would greatly and negatively impact our ability to meet the nutritional demands of an ever increasing world population, to mitigate harmful impacts of global climate change, and to reinvigorate the American economy through agriculture. Such a future requires massive investment and innovation in the areas of crop agronomics and yields, as well as advanced biofuels from purpose-grown energy crops and other environmental technologies. Yet such massive investment and innovation can proceed only if we have the ability to protect the inventions that will spur progress in this field through the use of the patent system.



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Patent protection on these basic inventions provides investors with the assurance that their investments are protected, and often provides the platform upon which a more diversified and robust R&D program can be funded and expanded. This is particularly true for the hundreds of small biotech start-ups on the cutting edge of biotechnology innovation. This innovation pipeline will in turn lead to subsequent domestic job creation in the area of agricultural biotechnology, creating thousands of new, high-paying American jobs in the process. Eliminating the very basic patents protecting inventions in this sector will undoubtedly have a negative effect on the availability of venture capital, decreasing the speed at which innovation will occur and the breadth of the potential R&D portfolio.

To ensure that this lawsuit over one human clinical diagnostic test does not tear down a whole class of intellectual property that is important to the rest of the U.S. economy and the biotech industry alike, it is essential that the U.S. government strongly defend the patentability of such basic biotech inventions. We urge you to review this matter closely and let the Department of Justice and appropriate officials at the White House know the importance of biotech patent protection to our global competitiveness in the field of agriculture. Drastic and overbroad legal changes, such as eliminating or casting a huge cloud of uncertainty over a whole class of patents, will only serve to discourage innovation, resulting in reduced investment and lost jobs at a time when the country can least afford it and when private access to capital for investment in innovative technologies is already hard to obtain.

We believe the strength of the American patent system – and with it, the U.S. biotechnology industry – lies in the breadth and scope of what is considered patentable subject matter. It has been this approach that, since the Supreme Court’s 1980 landmark decision in *Diamond v. Chakrabarty* holding man-made, oil-degrading bacteria eligible for patenting, has spurred U.S. global leadership in the life sciences and has provided the United States with one of its greatest global competitive advantages. If the Department of Justice fails to support the patent eligibility of DNA sequences in the ACLU case on appeal, the United States could become the only industrialized nation that does not permit such patents – thus, abdicating our role as the world leader in this field, undermining U.S. economic competitiveness, and potentially closing the door on those future innovations that can help the United States and the rest of the world address some of the greatest challenges of the 21st century.

We respectfully request your help to influence the outcome of this critical issue, and thank you in advance for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

James C. Greenwood
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