

NERA Meeting Minutes
March 15, 2022 (Virtual)

In attendance: Matt Wilson (Past Chair-WVU), Puneet Srivastava (Maryland), Jody Jellison (Massachusetts), Margaret Smith (Cornell AES), Darrell Donahue (WVU), Calvin Keeler (Delaware), Jason White (Connecticut-New Haven), Jessica Leahy (Maine), Anton Bekkerman (UNH), Jan Nyrop (Cornell AgriTech), Anna Katharine Mansfield (Cornell), Blair Siegfried (Penn State), Bill Hoffman (USDA-NIFA), Rubella Goswami (USDA-NIFA), Chris Pritsos (WAAESD-UNR), Mario Machado (UVM-Fellow), Alicia Coleman (UMass-Fellow), Bret Hess (WAAESD Exec Dir), David Leibovitz (NERA)

Meeting administration – Matt Wilson and NERA

- Rick Rhodes (NERA Executive Director) was not feeling well and could not attend this meeting. Rick sends his regards to the Directors.
- The USDA will host the first public meeting of the inaugural Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production on March 23-24, 2022. The public – including urban producers– is encouraged to attend.
 - **Registration is available until March 18:**
https://www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_sDAcexgNQQKuIEM3eRfNow
- **The agenda for this meeting was approved unanimously.**
- **The minutes of December 15, 2021 NERA meeting were approved unanimously.**

Multistate Activities Committee – Jan Nyrop (Report and recommendations enclosed)

- The MAC approved the following requests to write:
 - NE18940: A regional network of social, behavioral, and economic food systems research, 10/1/22-9/30/27. Submitted by Cristina Connolly, UConn
 - NE18946: Green Stormwater Infrastructure, 10/1/22-9/30/27. Submitted by Christopher C. Obropta (Rutgers) and Michael Dietz (UConn)
- The MAC recommends to NERA, the approval of the following peer reviewed proposals:
 - NE_TEMP2249: Sustainable and Inclusive Rural Economic Development to Enhance Housing, Health, Entrepreneurship, and Equity, 10/2022 – 09/2027 [Renewal of NE1749, AA: Peggy Brennan – Rutgers] [Primary reviewer: Jan Nyrop]
 - NE_TEMP2251: Tourism Resilience and Community Sustainability: Adaptation and Recovery of Rural Businesses and Destinations, 10/2022 – 09/2027 [New project, AA and Primary reviewer: Matt Wilson – WVU]
 - **These two peer reviewed proposals were approved by NERA and will be approved as multistate projects in NIMSS.**
- ESS/Northeast Excellence in Multistate Research Award selection
 - The Northeast has not won this award in a long time.
 - The MAC recommends supporting NE1962 (Outdoor Recreation) as the 2022 nominee.
 - Matt Wilson (WVU) serves as administrative adviser and confirms this has been an active group in this project cycle.
 - The group is working toward publishing a book that describes its research and impacts.

- **NERA unanimously approves the nomination of NE1962 as the 2022 recipient.**
- ESS/Northeast Excellence in Leadership Award selection
 - The MAC recommends nominating Jody Jellison (UMass) for this award in 2022.
 - Jody served an extended term on the NERA Executive committee, chaired the ESCOP Science and Technology Committee, and represented the Northeast on a national stage.
 - **NERA fully approves the nomination of Jody Jellison as the 2022 recipient.**
- NRSP_TEMP1 (Multistate Research Information Management and Impact Communications, 10/1/22-9/30/27. [Renewal of NRSP1, Northeast AA: Bill Miller, Massachusetts]
 - This is a “capacity/core” designated NRSP as opposed to a new/emerging initiative. The proposal is not written with the intent for NRSP1 to sunset after its five-year term.
 - NRSP1 is off-the-top national research support project funding that supports NIMSS and the Multistate Research Fund Impacts Writing program.
 - **NERA unanimously approves the NRSP_TEMP1 proposal.**
- Request to Write process discussion
 - The MAC will be discussing the Northeast’s “request to write” requirements at a future meeting. We often receive submissions that look like full project proposals rather than just the issues and justification section – the additional information is helpful. NERA will scan the other regions for their request to write requirements and set this discussion topic aside for the next MAC meeting.

NIFA Update – Rubella Goswami and Bill Hoffman

- NIFA Director Carrie Castille is leaving on April 9 to join the University of Tennessee. An interim NIFA Director period should last up to one year.
- AFRI foundational RFA has been developed. Three new program areas are included and new opportunities for climate change research. NIFA is organizing webinars related to these programs.
- Upcoming hires being advertised:
 - NPL positions for Social Sciences and Plant Protection division
 - Program specialists
- Coming soon: AFRI Education and Workforce Development, pre- and post-doctoral fellowships, experiential education for undergraduates.

Station Research Profile: Agriculture and Nanotechnology – Jason White, Director, CT AES

- Inaugural presentation to learn about the research happening across the region
- Nanomaterials as emerging contaminants; Nanotoxicology and its effect on agriculture
- **Slides from this presentation are enclosed with these minutes.**

NERA and ESCOP Updates – Matt Wilson

- Summer joint meeting: June 5-7, Portland, Maine (Face-to-face only, no virtual component)
- NERA Leadership changes, replacing Mark Hutton
 - Puneet Srivastava (Officer-at-large) will shift to incoming chair

- **NERA is seeking a new Officer-at-large. We are seeking volunteers or nominations soon but not necessarily during this meeting.**
- ESCOP and the Northeast
 - Matt Wilson (WVU) will serve as the ESCOP Chair 2022-23, putting the Northeast in a leadership position.
 - Business practices and organizational structure ESS will be reviewed in the coming year.
 - ESCOP Budget and Legislative Committee is exploring a “moonshot” ask and has an active call for ideas, seeking research initiatives or legislation to target in the next moonshot.
 - 2022 Unified Ask was presented at the CARET/AHS meeting at the beginning of March
 - Jody reflected that during hill visits at CARET/AHS, legislators asked: which should we support, infrastructure funding or capacity funding?

Final report, Northeast Ecosystems Services Inventory – Alicia Coleman and Mario Machado, NEED/NERA Postdoctoral Fellows

- NERA and NEED funded two fellowships to conduct an ecosystems services inventory and assessment, to inform the design and audience of a series of virtual listening sessions and a Northeast Ecosystems Services Symposium. **A slide deck will be enclosed with these meeting notes.**
- Scope of work included:
 - Identifying the organizational scope of relevant programs and policies
 - Document ag-related practices that procure ecosystem functions/services
 - Report the breadth of direct and indirect incentives/rewards offered to ag-related producers for ecosystem function/service practices
 - Describe producers’ strategies to advertise function/service practices and boost revenue streams
- 1,300 programs in four categories are included in the generated database:
 - Food, farming, agriculture
 - Working forests and woodlands
 - Fisheries, aquaculture, and shellfish operations
 - Supporting landscapes and systems
- Recommendations: Increasing farm profitability and sustainability
 - Producers and land managers operate according to the "safety-first" principle and are often risk-averse. In order to be successful, practices and programs must sufficiently and sustainably offset these risks in concrete ways.
- Recommendations: Positioning agriculture and forestry as primary leaders in mitigating climate change
 - Programs are structured to either incentivize a single ecosystem service or multiple layered services. Project design should account for those strengths and weaknesses as well as the potential to scale practices from individual farms to multifunctional landscapes.
- Recommendations: Building resilience of rural and urban communities
 - Very few programs reviewed in this assessment directly address resilience and fewer directly address resilience beyond the farm scale.

- Recommendations: Increasing the appeal of agricultural and working lands professions to a wide range of young people
 - Ecosystem service provisioning programs for young and beginner farmers, while important, may not be enough to entice young people into working lands-related careers. Programs that couple ecosystem service provisioning with incentives that directly support livelihood provisioning such as cash-in-hand (basic income), land access/acquisition, free education/professional development, and healthcare, may help.
- A deliverable final report is set for completion in late March.
- Front-facing Ecosystem services database will be developed and made available to the public.
- Alicia and Mario are both conducting postdoctoral research at NERA institutions (UConn Applied Forest Ecology Lab and UVM Gund Institute for Environment).

Guided discussion with the ESCOP Chair – Chris Pritsos, Director of Nevada AES, Associate Dean of Research, University of Nevada, Reno

- Chris Pritsos shared some academic and professional background about himself, and presented the organizational structure of the Experiment Station Section and ESCOP.
- As NERA's regional communications effort comes together, we can share our progress with ESCOP along the way. The West and South have similar communications efforts in place.
- **Slides from Chris Pritsos's presentation, including ESCOP Chair's Initiatives and Priorities, will be enclosed with these minutes.**

This meeting adjourned at 11:58 pm ET.