

NERA Business Meeting DRAFT Minutes
September 28, 2022, 9:50 AM – 12:00 PM ET
Baltimore, MD

In attendance: Puneet Srivastava (Chair / Maryland), Matt Wilson (Past Chair / WVU), Anton Bekkerman (Vice Chair / New Hampshire), Wendie Cohick (Officer-at-large / New Jersey), Jan Nyrop (NY-Geneva), Anna Katharine Mansfield (NY-Geneva), Blair Siegfried (Pennsylvania), Margaret Smith (NY-Ithaca), Jane Kolodinsky (Vermont), Kumar Venkitanarayanan (CT-Storrs), Kevin Kephart (USDA NIFA), Rick Rhodes (NERA), David Leibovitz (NERA)

Welcome and Meeting Administration (Rick Rhodes / Puneet Srivastava)

- Eric Wommack left his position at University of Delaware and vacated the NERA Chair's position. Puneet was sworn in as NERA Chair and the group went through a series of introductions.
- **The following agenda modifications were approved to include new discussion items:**
 - **USDA Regional Food Business Centers (Jane Kolodinsky)**
 - **Urban Agriculture Multistate Project concept during the MAC report (Matt Wilson)**
- **NERA Business Meeting Minutes (June 7, 2022 in Portland, ME) were approved by acclamation**

Multistate Activities Committee – Jan Nyrop

- Request to approve peer-reviewed multistate activities: The MAC recommends to NERA the approval of the multistate activities below for a project cycle of 10/1/2022 – 9/30/2027:
 - NEERA_TEMP2104 (Northeast Region Technical Committee on Integrated Pest Management, AA: Margaret Smith, NY-Ithaca)
 - NE_TEMP2105 (Industrial Hemp Products, Production, Markets, and Associated Challenges for the Stakeholders, AA: Matt Wilson, West Virginia)
 - NECC_TEMP2203 (Legal Issues in Agriculture and Natural Resources, AA: Puneet Srivastava, Maryland)
 - **NERA Directors approved the full slate of multistate activities above by acclamation.**
- Disposition of project proposals yet to be approved, lacking peer reviews
 - Proposals have been submitted late in the renewal process or progress has been made slowly by renewing teams.
 - NE_TEMP2201 (renewal) Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals
 - NE_TEMP2204 (new project) A Regional Network of Social, Behavioral, and Economic Food Systems Research
 - NE_TEMP2206 (new project) Green stormwater Infrastructure
 - NE_TEMP1962 (renewal) Outdoor Recreation
 - Request to write requirements may have been unclear to renewing project teams.
 - Emphasis is put on the role of the Administrative Adviser to help teams with renewal.
 - Initial peer reviews for these projects have frequently been fair-weak.
 - **NERA OED continues to seek peer reviews from these teams**
 - **These activities can be approved by November 15, 2022 for a 10/1/2022 start date**
 - The burden of late approval is administrative – salaries may need to be temporarily re-coded to other funding sources until multistate activities are approved.

- Unsure if the NIFA NRS system accommodates backdating multistate project initiations to 10/1/2022.
- Approval of changes to the Northeastern Supplement to the Guidelines for Multistate Research Activities.
 - Changes were made as a follow-up action from discussion in Portland, ME in June 2022.
 - The MAC seeks endorsement from NERA on the revised Northeast Multistate Guidelines as presented. Major changes include:
 - For new and renewing multistate activities, the “request to write” requirement is eliminated. Communication of intent to draft a new/renewing proposal should happen up front with the NERA OED, and a full proposal should be drafted for a team’s initial submission.
 - Changes in language now reflect NIMSS functions and current NERA/MAC practices.
 - Clarification of roles and responsibilities (e.g. Administrative Advisers) is made to reflect current NERA practices.
 - Peer reviewers for multistate proposals no longer need to come from outside the northeast region. Peer reviewers still must not have a conflict of interest with the project that is being written.
 - **Changes to the Northeastern Supplement to the Guidelines for Multistate Research Activities were approved by acclamation.**
- Additional MAC discussion
 - Recommendations to technical teams for new/renewing project proposals: set broad objectives, strive for umbrella projects, make the opportunity attractive to investigators. The multistate activity concept isn’t always apparent to peer reviewers.
 - **NERA OED will communicate the MRP concept to reviewers so they know how to review our proposals – make a statement in our solicitations of reviews.**
- Urban Agriculture Multistate Project (Matt Wilson)
 - WVU has a new faculty member interested in urban agriculture (e.g. raised beds, rooftops, container production) and would like to connect with a network of people across the country with shared interests.
 - There is no current multistate project related to urban agriculture and the Northeast could be the chief architects of a new project proposal.
 - University of the District of Columbia has a lot of activity in urban agriculture and should be engaged in this process.
 - Matt would like an urban agriculture team to submit a planning grant to NERA for \$10k seed to plan an RFP for an urban agriculture proposal.
 - NEED Directors are excited about the prospect of an urban agriculture project and could have a number of extension participants join the project.
 - Colorado State University established an urban agricultural field station in Denver, CO (CSU Spur Campus).
 - Rutgers could be poised for a leadership position in this proposal.
 - UConn has some extension folks in the area of urban agriculture.
 - This is an opportunity to infuse a component of DEI, environmental justice, social science / community science, community gardening.

- **Matt Wilson (WVU) and Wendie Cohick (Rutgers) agreed to lead a team forward with an endorsement to draft a planning grant or multistate project proposal. The proposal should have a broad perspective on urban ag, making this an attractive opportunity to participate. The team is encouraged to reach out around the region and involve interested participants from UConn, UDC, and elsewhere.**

NERA Leadership and Committee Assignments – Rick Rhodes and Puneet Srivastava

- NERA Officer-at-large (NERA Executive Committee)
 - **Wendie Cohick accepted a nomination to serve as the NERA officer-at-large in 2022-23. Wendie’s nomination was approved by acclamation.**
- NERA Past Chair (NERA Executive Committee)
 - Eric Wommack (former NERA Chair, Delaware) stepped down as NERA Chair and moved into a new position at the University of Delaware.
 - **Matt Wilson (former NERA Past Chair, West Virginia) accepted a nomination to serve as the NERA Past Chair for one more term, in 2022-23. Matt’s nomination was approved by acclamation.**
- NERA Liaison to NEED
 - **Lisa Townson (Rhode Island) accepted a nomination to serve as the NERA Liaison to NEED. Lisa’s nomination was approved by acclamation.**
- NERA Liaison to Northeast Academic Programs Section
 - **Jane Kolodinsky (Vermont) accepted a nomination to serve as the NERA Liaison to APS. Jane’s nomination was approved by acclamation.**
- ESCOP-Science and Technology (2)
 - **Jessica Leahy (Maine) accepted a nomination to serve on the ESCOP Science and Technology Committee as a NERA representative. Voting on this nomination will take place electronically in the fall.**
 - **The Science and Technology Committee continues to seek another NERA representative to succeed Jody Jellison.**
- LEAD21 Board of Directors (ESS Rep)
 - LEAD21 is seeking an Experiment Station Section representative on its board of directors, from the Northeast region.
 - LEAD21 is a leadership development program for professionals in the Land-grant system (LGUs, NIFA, regional associations).
 - **Kumar Venkitanarayanan (UConn) volunteered to serve as the ESS representative on the LEAD21 Board of Directors.**

Station Research Profile – Wendie Cohick

- Wendie Cohick discussed the NJAES Agrivoltaics Initiative with NERA Directors. She was also interested to find out about some of the work in Agrivoltaics across the region.
- Kevin Kephart (NIFA) found this interesting and has a monthly meeting with the US Department of Energy on agrivoltaics.
- Slides from Wendie’s presentation will be posted on the NERA website.

USDA Regional Food Business Centers Discussion – Jane Kolodinsky

- Regional food business center proposals are due to USDA Ag Marketing Service on November 28. (RFA: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/RegionalFoodBusinessCentersRFA.pdf>)
- Colorado State and a number of Western states are drafting a proposal.
- A Northeastern group could have a great chance at securing funding through this RFA – we are the home to most small regional food systems in the USA
- Who will serve on this Northeast team? Who will take the lead?
- There is a large administrative requirement to bringing in these awards – which institutions have an OSP that is equipped to help with this?
- Not all of these awards will be made in 2022, so it is worthwhile to continue to explore the opportunity.
- Jan will check with New York State Department of Ag and Markets to see if there's interest participating in a Northeast consortium.
- This might serve best as an Extension activity and is worth discussing with NEED.

NERA Action Plan, 2022-2023 – Puneet Srivastava (NERA Chair) and Matt Wilson (ESCOPE Chair)

- What does NERA want to do in the coming year?
 - Continue work on and complete the Northeast Agenda.
 - Identify ways to strategically insert the Northeast's voice into ESCOP priorities.
- What does ESS intend to do in the coming year?
 - ESS front-facing branding effort (Erica Mirich and PIVOT Creative and Consulting) continues in 2023 – a jumping off point for conversation with stakeholders, legislators, influencers, and LGU Central Administrators.
 - Strengthen strategic collaboration with traditional and non-traditional partners.
 - Trying to be more concise in the identification and messaging/delivery of ESS initiatives.
 - Matt Wilson as ESCOP Chair will have a regular presence in Washington, DC over the upcoming year – take advantage of engagement opportunities with national organizations and make suggestions to Matt.
 - Demonstrate that the purchasing power of capacity funds is decreasing – we aren't maintaining capacity, we are losing capacity.
 - Develop a strategic plan for moving infrastructure advocacy effort toward real dollars.
- NERA ongoing business and upcoming meetings
 - Keep an eye out for NERA News – you can count on it bi-weekly
 - Spring Meeting (NERA only) – Philadelphia Spring 2023
 - **A decision on the NERA Spring Meeting being held in person vs virtual is yet to be determined. If we meet, Directors elect to hold a 1-day meeting.**
 - Summer Joint Meeting (NEED NERA CARET AHS APS...)
 - **Tentatively, Annapolis, Maryland, ~June 2023**

Summary Comments and Adjournment – Puneet Srivastava

- Puneet thanked the NERA Directors and expressed his enjoyment of this productive ESS/CES-NEDA meeting. It was great to be together face-to-face in Baltimore.

- Jan Nyrop was thanked for his service, as he will be retiring in the Fall and this is his last NERA meeting.
- *The meeting adjourned at 12:07 pm ET.*

DRAFT