



# **Strategic Plan**

**INITIATED JULY 2005**

**ACTIONS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

***UPDATED FEBRUARY 2007***

**Developed and written by the members of the**

**NTEP Policy Committee**

# INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan will direct the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) as it progresses into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This plan focuses on clientele needs as well as opportunities for improvement in programs and services offered by NTEP. This plan also responds to changes within the turfgrass industry and society, in general. Finally, this plan continues and enhances NTEP's leadership role within the turfgrass research community.

Members of the NTEP Policy Committee developed this plan as a dynamic document. This document will enable NTEP to continue to be proactive rather than reactive. NTEP will continually analyze and refine the goals and objectives of this plan. An annual review of this plan will be conducted by the Policy Committee. Input from our clientele will be sought to ensure that the plan addresses the needs of the turfgrass industry.

Since its inception, NTEP has served as a leader in cultivar evaluation. This role has continued to increase in importance as the industry has grown and the interest in breeding and development of new and improved turfgrasses has escalated. The number of experimental lines and new cultivars in NTEP trials has risen dramatically over the last few years. The increasing demand for improved turfgrasses and the inherent challenges of evaluating these grasses emphasizes that NTEP should chart its future programs and activities carefully.

## TRENDS AND ASSUMPTIONS

There are a number of significant trends and assumptions that will impact NTEP's future. These trends include the following:

1. A changing economy with narrower profit margins, more competition, and greater clientele expectations;
2. An expanding technology base and continuing information explosion;
3. An increasing demand from clientele for accountability and applicable results;
4. A growing concern over quality of life and environment (i.e., soil, air and water quality);
5. An increasing emphasis of government to regulate public policy relating to environment, health and food safety;
6. A shifting pattern of demographics, including movement from rural to urban areas, an aging population and an increase in discretionary spending and leisure time.

These trends will influence the decisions that NTEP must make to effectively commit its resources for program priorities and to satisfy expectations and needs of its clientele.

# CLIENTELE

NTEP's clientele, as assessed by the NTEP Policy Committee, have diverse interests, expertise, technical background and expectations. The following list of clientele has been identified (no prioritization is intended by the order of the clientele listed):

- Public and private turfgrass plant breeders
- Public and private sector researchers
- Seed distributors, marketers and retailers
- Technology transfer educators
  - extension educators
  - industry technical representatives
- Private consultants/agronomists
- Professionals
  - seed producers
  - sod producers
  - golf course superintendents
  - golf course builders and architects
  - grounds managers
  - sports turf managers
  - lawn care service operators
  - landscape contractors
  - landscape architects
  - vegetation managers
- Home owners (indirectly)

## MISSION

The National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) serves a fundamental role in the turfgrass industry. Its mission is to provide leadership for the evaluation and improvement of turfgrass cultivars by:

Providing a mechanism for uniform turfgrass evaluation;

Advancing the science of evaluations;

Collecting and disseminating turfgrass performance information;

and

Enhancing the transfer and use of information and technology relating to turfgrass improvement and evaluation.

As a not-for-profit organization, NTEP uniquely links the public and private sectors of the turfgrass industry through their common goals of turfgrass development, improvement and evaluation.

# OBJECTIVES

The following objectives will serve as program focus for NTEP:

1. Focus on clientele needs.
2. Enhance quality and scientific merit of trials including data collection, analysis and reporting.
3. Develop new partnership opportunities and continue on-site testing programs.
4. Develop staffing and training plans.
5. Increase industry awareness of NTEP's contributions and accomplishments.
6. Lead, monitor and publish the results of turfgrass cultivar evaluations.
7. Cooperate with USDA-ARS and other industry organizations in developing and implementing the National Turfgrass Research Initiative (NTRI).
8. Investigate new opportunities and strategies for revenue generation, efficiency in program costs, and growth of financial assets.

## STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

The following strategies and actions are proposed to accomplish the objectives of the NTEP Strategic Plan. The NTEP Policy Committee will annually review and update this plan. When an objective is accomplished or is deemed to be no longer a priority, that objective will be deleted from the plan and a new objective or objectives will replace it. To enhance the completion of actions within the plan, objectives and actions in the plan will be prioritized and an implementation timeline will be developed and monitored.

## Objective 1

## Focus on clientele needs

**Strategy:** Determine clientele needs and expectations.

**Actions:** Survey clientele and conduct stakeholder listening sessions.

**Accomplishments:** A Listening Session was held on February 24 in Anaheim, CA (2007).

**Strategy:** Assess impact of present programs on the industry.

**Actions:** Develop survey instruments to quantify the value of NTEP to the turfgrass industry and society, in general.

**Accomplishments:** None to date



## Objective 2

### Enhance quality and scientific merit of trials including data collection, analysis and reporting

**Strategy:** Improve quality of evaluations and data collection.

**Actions:** Develop web-based training programs for data collection, trial establishment and maintenance.

Improve identification of diseases by contracting with an independent lab for analysis and diagnosis.

Develop standardized disease and insect screening procedures.

Cooperate with turfgrass entomologist and pathologist groups to increase the quality and quantity of pest information collected on NTEP trials.

Review findings from automated data collection studies and implement those findings that are practical, efficient and cost-effective.

Fund additional research on innovative data collection techniques.

**Accomplishments:** Developed the foundation for a web-based training program on turf evaluation (2005).

Contracted with NC State disease lab for disease diagnosis on NTEP trials; sent information and

materials to cooperators and reminders

(2005, 2006).

Have met with pathologists and entomologists to discuss ways to improve disease and insect data in NTEP trials (2005).

Have completed studies at AR and IL using automated data technology, and have received final reports on those studies (2006).

Conducted another large turfgrass evaluation workshop in conjunction with ASA; 50 people were trained (2006).

Discussed with C-5 the possibility of a subcommittee to better define turf evaluation parameters. A subcommittee has been setup by C-5 and will work in 2007 to develop draft recommendations (2006).

**Strategy:** Improve data analysis procedures to improve accuracy.

**Actions:** Review Additive Main Effects and Multiplicative Interaction (AMMI) analysis of field validation trials for Kentucky bluegrass and if appropriate, integrate AMMI procedures into NTEP data analysis.

Incorporate AMMI procedures into data analysis for all NTEP trials, if appropriate and if needed, conduct field validation trials for other species.

**Accomplishments:** Data from 2004 and 2005 has been collected and analyzed from several locations of the AMMI Ky. Bluegrass field validation trial (2005, 2006). Consulted with an ARS statistician on the feasibility of using pooled means in final reports (2006).

**Strategy:** Enhance reporting procedures.

**Actions:** Enhance web site and make data easier to access.  
Investigate methods for web site users to sort and/or locate data making cultivar selection easier and more precise.

**Accomplishments:** None to date

### Objective 3

### Develop new partnership opportunities and continue on-site testing programs

**Strategy:** Strengthen existing coalitions and develop new ones that will help meet clientele expectations and needs.

**Actions:** Establish jointly funded projects with TPI, STMA and similar organizations.

Continue jointly funded projects with USGA and GCSAA.

Develop new on-site trials.

**Accomplishments:** Coordinated a second on-site overseeding trial, collecting and publishing data from 2004-2005, paying cooperators for data collected, sending out seed for planting in fall 2005, visiting all but one location (2005, 2006).

Data from 2005-2006 was received from cooperators, analyzed and published on the NTEP web site in fall 2006, along with site management information.

## Objective 4

## Develop staffing and training plans

**Strategy:** NTEP is too dependent upon limited staffing resources. In the event that the Executive Director is disabled, who would run the organization? A staffing plan with position descriptions and duties and responsibilities is needed.

**Actions:** Develop and annually update a staffing plan including full and part-time staff.

**Accomplishments:** Position descriptions are updated but a staffing plan is not in place.

**Strategy:** A plan to cross-train staff, so individuals can cover for one another during sickness or absence is also a dire need.

**Actions:** Determine the needs for an assistant administrator or office manager.

Annually update position descriptions for all current staff.

Prioritize critical staff functions and ensure that others are trained to cover these aspects in case the primary staff person is sick or absent.

Develop and update annually an office procedures manual that outlines in a step-by-step fashion key operations and

tasks.

Explore possibility that turfgrass scientists within one or more state universities might be interested and able to be trained in some duties and responsibilities of NTEP.

**Accomplishments:** Position descriptions along with performance standards are updated annually (2005, 2006).

## Objective 5

## Increase industry awareness of NTEP's contributions and accomplishments

**Strategy:** Actively seek ways to promote the contributions and accomplishments of NTEP, and increase its visibility to the industry.

**Actions:** Seek multiple ways to get information to our clientele.  
Enhance the use of the website.  
Write articles for trade journals and other publications on NTEP and the turf industry, in general.  
Develop periodic news releases for industry trade magazines and news items on our web site.  
Develop automatic e-mails and/or listservers to contact or forward information to our clientele and others.

**Accomplishments:** Gave information on NTEP for article in *TURF Magazine* (2006).  
Wrote an update on grasses for *Turf News* (2005, 2006).  
Wrote articles on the Turfgrass Initiative for USGA-TERO and the International Turf Society newsletter (2006).  
Gave over the phone interviews on turf for *Money*

Magazine, *New York Times* and many others  
(2005, 2006).

Developed an email list to provide information on  
a timely basis (2005).

Publish periodic news items on our web site  
(2005, 2006).

Sent out press releases periodically to turf trade  
journals, mainly on the Turf Initiative (2005).

Provided summarized data to *Landscape  
Management* magazine for timely publishing of  
their *Seed Guide* (2005, 2006).

Made presentations on NTEP and/or NTRI at  
conferences in UT, NE and MD (2006).

Wrote an article entitled 'NTRI – A New Vision for  
the Turfgrass Industry' for the turfgrass trade  
magazines (2006).

Gave twelve presentations on NTEP, advances in  
turfgrass development and/or NTRI at various  
meetings; to approximately 2000 attendees  
(2006).

Wrote a manuscript on "Evaluation of Cultivars for  
Overseeding of Bermudagrass Fairways";



published on the USGA-TERO web site and also in  
*Golf Course Management* (2006).

Wrote two manuscripts on NTRI, one for *Golf  
Course Management* and the other for *Turf News*  
(2006).

## Objective 6

### Lead, monitor and publish the results of turfgrass cultivar evaluations

**Strategy:** Involve individuals from both public and private sectors in the planning, execution and dissemination of results from all evaluations.

**Actions:** In conjunction with clientele, develop and distribute a schedule for upcoming evaluations.

Request and obtain input on the proposed management regimes for each evaluation.

Publish the criteria used to select standard entries.

Visit each site at least once in the course of the evaluation period.

Request and obtain input on the content and format of reports.

**Accomplishments:** A schedule of NTEP trials through 2014 is posted on the NTEP web site (2005).

Advisory committees comprised of members from universities and industry develop the proposed management levels for each trial (2005, 2006).

The criteria to select standard entries has been developed and is given to the advisory

committee members (2005, 2006).

Kevin Morris and Jeff Krans visited a total of 20 trial sites in 16 states in 2005.

Using advisory committee recommendations, determined management regimes, standard entries, seeding rates, etc. and selected official and ancillary trial locations for the 2006 National Tall Fescue Test (2006).

Organized advisory committees, developed recommendations for management regimes, standard entries, official and ancillary trial locations, seeding rates, etc. for the 2007 warm-season grass trials – bermuda, buffalo, seashore paspalum, st. augustinegrass and zoysia (2007).

Published annual progress reports for Ky.

Bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, tall fescue, fineleaf fescue, bentgrass, Bermudagrass, buffalograss, st. augustinegrass and zoysiagrass (2006).

Summarized data and published final reports from completed trials of tall fescue and Ky.

Bluegrass (2006).

Kevin Morris and Jeff Krans visited several trial

sites, including the remaining six on-site  
overseeding trial locations (2006).

## Objective 7

### Cooperate with USDA-ARS and other industry organizations in developing and implementing the National Turfgrass Research Initiative (NTRI)

**Strategy:** When possible and where opportunities arise, cooperate with USDA-ARS and other organizations in implementing the objectives of the National Turfgrass Research Initiative that may benefit NTEP and its clientele.

**Actions:** Work with the turfgrass program at the National Arboretum in establishing and maintaining NTEP trials, demonstration trials and other appropriate research and/or turfgrass management opportunities.

When new turfgrass scientist positions are created as a function of NTRI, consult and work with USDA-ARS National Program Staff, administrators and scientists concerning NTEP's role and possible collaborative efforts with each position.

**Accomplishments:** Cooperated with Scott Warnke in facilitating his research program. This includes discussions with the Univ. of MD concerning field research, review of his proposed research direction for the next five years, and support of this research to the administration (2005, 2006).

Involvement in the Florist and Nursery Plant Lab review in May 2006.

Consulted with ARS in development of several proposed research positions, including Riverside, CA and Phoenix, AZ (2005, 2006).

Attended a workshop concerning a new five-year plan for ARS National Program 205. Offered suggestions and changes for the turf section of NP 205 (2006).

Coordinated a visit, with two other turf scientists, to the ARS lab in Beaver, WV. Purpose of the visit was a discussion of their research direction with funding received through Congress. Kept in touch and offered further advice/assistance (2006).

Developed draft by-laws and articles of incorporation for a new organization to oversee and facilitate NTRI (2006).

Organized and held the inaugural meeting of the new organization, to be called National Turfgrass Federation, Inc., in Washington, DC. Visited with Congressional staff, ARS staff, the President's ag. science policy advisor and the Secretary of Agriculture (2006).

Organized and led several conference calls regarding fund raising, by-laws development and government relations of the new organization.

Worked with an attorney to file documents of incorporation. Solicited donations from organizations and companies. Coordinated lobbying activities for FY08 and conducted congressional visits to garner support (2006, 2007).

Participated in meetings between ARS, the Industrial Resources Council and the Ag.

Drainage Coalition, for the purposes of potential ARS turf research on water quality, drainage and filtering systems (2006, 2007).

## Objective 8

Investigate new opportunities and strategies for revenue generation, efficiency in program costs, and growth in financial assets

**Strategy:** Investigate, cultivate and develop possible new opportunities that serve clientele needs as well as generate significant revenue.

**Actions:** Consider and develop, if feasible, new trials, such as salinity tolerance, low maintenance and promising new species.  
Consider and develop, if feasible, germplasm screening trials (preliminary trials).

Obtain and consider recommendations from a reputable investment counselor concerning security and growth of our current financial assets.

Reduce dependence of NTEP as the primary funding source for the promotion (lobbying) of NTRI.

**Accomplishments:** Developed a preliminary trial proposal, got input from breeders and university researchers and presented to TBA (2005).

Sent out questionnaire soliciting interest and participation in a seashore paspalum trial (2005).

Selected an investment counselor and have been working with him (2006).



Reduced the amount of NTEP funding to NTRI lobbying effort significantly and have solicited donations from other organizations and sources (2005, 2006).

Developed preliminary budget estimates for the next six years that will reduce operating expenses and match trial income with expenses such that NTEP stops its declining net worth (2006, 2007).