

HIGHLIGHTS

NTEP Policy Committee Meeting

June 11-12, 2009

University of Minnesota

Minneapolis, MN

And

Conference call on October 7, 2009

NTEP Policy Committee Members Present:

Mr. Duane Klundt, representing OSTA and PSA

Mr. Warren Bell, representing TPI

Dr. Brian Horgan, representing NCERA-192, north central universities

Dr. Jeff Nus, representing USGA

Dr. Dave Kopec, representing WERA-11, western universities

Mr. Steve Tubbs, representing ASTA, Lawn Seed division

Dr. Scott Ebdon, representing NE-1025, northeast universities

Dr. Mike Richardson, representing SERA-IEG-25, southern universities

Dr. Clark Throssell, representing GCSAA

Mr. Steve Johnson, representing TBA

Mr. Kevin Morris, NTEP staff

Guests:

Dr. Ken Diesburg, Southern Illinois University, incoming rep for NCERA-192

Mr. Pat McClain, Burlingham Seeds, incoming rep for OSTA and PSA

NTEP Budget

The committee spent considerable time discussing the budget during the June meeting. Since the number of entries in NTEP tests are declining, it is imperative that NTEP reduce its expenses, along with finding ways to offer trials of interest to the seed industry and consumers. A preliminary budget was passed contingent on holding on a conference call after the new Drought and Traffic trial entries are submitted. Final budget adjustments will be made during the conference call.

During the conference call, the committee discussed the fact that the traffic trial was postponed due to an insufficient number of entries and the drought trial ended up with 17 paid entries (20 entries were in the budget). The drought trial had to drop one location (down to 5 from 6) so that the trial would pay for itself. This left a deficit of about \$27,000 for the fiscal year. Travel was reduced from \$18,000 to \$4,000, saving \$14,000 by eliminating almost all travel (including the Feb. 2010 PC meeting), postponing Jeff

Krans' site visits until July 1, 2010, and eliminating over \$10,000 in part-time labor. Funding was also eliminated for the National Turfgrass Federation(\$10,000), as well as cuts were made to NTEP operating expenses. These actions balance the budget for FY09-10.

2009 Drought and Traffic Trials

The committee discussed the Traffic Tolerance Trial. The committee accepted the six sites recommended by the Advisory Committee (Puyallup, WA; State College, PA; East Lansing, MI; Ames, IA; Riverside, CA; and Lexington, KY). It was further discussed that if the trial did not receive the number of seed entries, it may be scaled back or postponed.

The Drought Tolerance Trial was also discussed by the committee. It was moved and passed that the six locations recommended by the Advisory Committee be accepted (*chronic*: Ft. Collins, CO; Logan, UT; Fargo, ND; *acute*: St. Paul, MN; Fayetteville, AR; and Ithaca, NY).

During the October conference call, it was reported that the Drought trial fell short of the required 20 paid entries (17) while the traffic trial only contained six paid entries. The traffic trial was therefore postponed while the number of locations for the drought trial was paired down to five from six (Fargo, ND not selected).

Strategic Plan

Aspects of NTEP's Strategic Plan were discussed by the committee. It was suggested to add a line in "Trends and Assumptions" to maintain good relations with university cooperators. (i.e.7. the ability to manage and maintain relationships with university cooperators and industry representatives..." It was also suggested that NTEP change (3-6) objectives to better characterize Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass trials, especially to emphasize that trait-specific trials will become more prominent in NTEP goals.

Plant Protectant Applications on Completed NTEP Trials

A herbicide and plant protectant evaluation program, which is to use NTEP trials as the basis to conduct chemical evaluations across a broad range of species, was discussed. The idea would include the use of a 9-month window after a trial is completed to gather such information regarding herbicide phytotoxicity ratings and other data. The committee requested that this idea be developed further and presented to those in the chemical industry.

Low Input/Native Species trials

A trial of native grasses/low input trial was discussed. It was noted that ASTA has a native grass group and useful information may be acquired from them. An advisory group will contact the ASTA group and report back to the committee.

Upcoming Perennial Ryegrass and Ky. Bluegrass Trials

The 2010 Perennial Ryegrass Trial was discussed by the committee. It was moved that we continue to refine the Perennial Ryegrass Trial proposal, including an advisory committee to discuss how to move forward with this trial.

It was suggested that NTEP develop a list of traits for each species that trait-specific trials can be designed around. A year prior to the initiation of a trial, seed companies would be informed of what trait-specific trials would be conducted, in addition to the quality and color (i.e. “beauty contest”) trials for that species. With this in mind, it was the committee’s decision that we will arrange an advisory committee to determine specific traits for the 2011 Kentucky Bluegrass Trial.

NTEP Branding/Refocusing NTEP

The committee expressed concern that the number of entries for NTEP’s largest trials (Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, and tall fescue) were down at least 25% or so. It was noted that much of this has to do with current market forces. It was also noted that the trials had become predominantly a “beauty contest”, but the need by the seed companies is for data that is statistically significant to be able to better market varieties. The question becomes how do you re-focus NTEP to meet these needs? The committee discussed this issue as it relates to the future of NTEP and what NTEP needs to do to better serve clients. It was suggested that Kevin Morris travel to Oregon to survey the industry, as well as relay the intent of NTEP to focus on trait-specific trials for each species.

The concept of “NTEP branding” was also discussed. The brand would be placed on seed bags where companies would show that their grasses were NTEP tested. A potential cooperative effort, between NTEP and TPI, was discussed during the conference call. A draft white paper was developed on the issue. The committee liked this idea, and it was agreed that Kevin would further develop the concept and report back to the Policy Committee.

An idea of formulating “Big Box” blends for inclusion in NTEP trials was discussed. These would include blends marketed by big box stores such as Lowes or Home Depot. However, after discussion, it was the committee consensus that this approach not be pursued due to the fact that specific blends most often change from year to year, depending on seed availability, and because of this, it would be difficult to conduct such a multi-year trial involving blends that may not even be marketed midway or at the end of the trial.

Water Sense

The committee discussed the Water Sense Program being proposed by the USEPA. The Water Sense Program wants the Lawn Institute to take on a “qualification program” for varieties to be added to a list of recommended varieties. It was moved that the Executive Committee of NTEP contact the Lawn Institute (Kirk Hunter). It was urged that NTEP Policy Committee members e-mail Kevin any concerns we may have before the Lawn Institute’s July 29 meeting. Kevin reminded the committee that at 2:00 p.m. (Eastern daylight) on June 16, there will be a conference call regarding the Water Sense Program and that committee members are urged to attend that call.

Other Business

The committee discussed a proposal from the Sports Turf Research Institute, Bingley, UK. The questions was asked as to how valuable it would be for American seed companies to be on a list of “approved or recommended” varieties for the European turf seed market. The committee directed Kevin to ask seed producers if this is important to them and further discuss this idea with representatives from STRI.

The NTEP Policy Committee elected Steve Tubbs as President, Warren Bell as Vice-President, and Mike Richardson as Secretary for 2010.