

# National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board

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REE Advisory Board Office  
Room 344-A Whitten Building  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20250-2255

Mailing Address:  
STOP 0321  
1400 Independence Ave. SW  
Washington, DC 20250-0321  
Telephone: 202-720-3684  
Fax: 202-720-6199

## DRAFT MINUTES Executive Committee Conference Call

Thursday, March 19, 2009, 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. EST.

**Executive Committee Members Present:** Dr. Martin Massengale, Dr. Walt Armbruster, Dr. Fred Cholick, Mrs. Carol Keiser-Long, Mr. Terry Wolf, Dr. Ed Runge.

**Executive Committee Members Absent:** Dr. Tom Rosol, Dr. Edward Runge, Dr. Mary Wagner, Mrs. Jean Mari Peltier, Dr. Katherine Smith, Acting, REE Under Secretary (ex-officio)

**Invited Attendees Present:** Mr. Bruce Mertz

**NAREEE Board Staff:** Mrs. Karen Hunter, Executive Director, Mrs. Shirley Morgan-Jordan Program Support Coordinator



### I. Roll Call of Members and Invitees

Karen Hunter, Executive Director called roll of the Executive Committee members.

### II. Comments and Welcome

Dr. Martin Massengale thanked everyone for joining the conference call. He welcomed Karen back from leave and thanked Bruce Mertz for handling the office in her absence. Bruce will continue to work with Karen to finish several tasks. The Specialty Crops Committee met in Maitland, Florida on March 13. He commented that it was an excellent meeting with good participation and attendance from the Committee and from industry. Half of the committee was in attendance. Dr. Massengale also noted that the Renewable Energy Committee submitted their initial report and that Carol Keiser-Long will elaborate on it later in the agenda. The Peer Review Report has also been completed and sent forward to the Secretary. April meeting preparations are well underway and a program is in place for the Farm Foundation portion of the meeting on April 28. The Secretary is anticipated joining for part of the spring meeting.

### **III. Comments from Dr. Katherine Smith**

Dr. Smith was unable to attend the call.

### **IV. Update on Committee Activities and/or Reports**

#### **Specialty Crop Committee Activities**

Bruce Mertz made some remarks. He heard many good comments from the listening session participants. He's been collecting presentations and documents from the meeting to compile and send to Karen for use in drafting the Specialty Crop report. He asked about the cutoff date for written comments. It was confirmed that the cutoff was two weeks post-meeting as stated in the Federal Register notice. Massengale commented that people from outside of FL came to make presentations. The three most salient points from the meeting: invasive species are a big priority (diseases and insects), labor issues continue to be prominent, and there is still discontent among applicants for federal research dollars (particularly Specialty Crop Research Program). Tom Bewick from CSREES was present and able to address some of the comments pertinent to the Specialty Crops Research Initiative Program. There was also some additional interest in nutraceuticals and food safety (peanut butter and salmonella, etc.). Terry Wolf pointed out that with reopened trading with Cuba, edible crops and invasive species could be a big issue in the relatively new future. It was suggested that some Federal funding be set aside for 'emergency' type situations/threats to the industry. Fred Cholick noted that we need to continue to push the issue. Carol Keiser-Long also commented that she expected more conversation on competitive trade practices and food safety and inspection. She noted that most discussion revolved around the funding and or lack of funding. It was also discussed at the meeting that it might be good to have more grantsmanship workshops to help prepare people for responding to the call for proposals.

#### **Renewable Energy Committee Activities**

Carol Keiser-Long stated that the first report (180 day report) was submitted to the Secretary on March 11 and included five recommendations for areas in which the Committee felt that REE should take a leadership role. The report is presented in general terms and is still a work in progress, but it is a starting point for the Committee and for REE. Also, the Committee had a conference call to discuss the stakeholder summit; they are planning to wait until there is a permanent Under Secretary in place. The Committee is currently considering July for a potential date. Martin asked if the REC had talked with the agencies to determine whether or not their priorities are in line with what was recommended by the report. Carol indicated that the report hadn't been out very long and that the group hadn't met specifically to talk to the agency. Fred Cholick stated that he had reviewed strategic plans from Department of Energy and USDA and commented that the NAREEE report does an excellent job linking up with the strategic energy plan put out from USDA and DOE. There is some uncertainty over how the energy plan for the new administration will look. It is important that the report narrowed down the renewable

energy field to five areas that REE can take leadership. Martin stated that it was important to also identify weak areas. The question was posed whether it was time for an inventory of what is currently being done in the Department? The inventory could then be cross-referenced with any data gleaned from a stakeholder summit. Carol also commented that she attended the last BRDI TAC meeting and gave an overview of the report. She noted that co products and byproducts are not a BRDI TAC priority area, and thus are a good fit for USDA to take the lead.

### **NAREEE-Farm Foundation Planning Committee**

Terry Wolf asked for an agenda for the Farm Foundation portion of the meeting. The focus of the meeting is funding for agricultural research. The Board needs to do a more thorough promotion of the importance of agricultural research. Huge amounts of money currently go to other research agencies (NIH, etc.), while only a small amount is appropriated to USDA. There are data to show that funding for agricultural research has decreased, and productivity is decreasing proportionately. To stay competitive, USDA needs additional funding for research. Fred Cholick commented on draft agenda for the Farm Foundation meeting. It is anticipated that the new director of NIFA will not be named until after the Under Secretary for REE is confirmed.

## **V. Updates on Work Group Reports**

### **Invasive Species**

Thomas Rosol was absent from the meeting. Bruce Mertz stated that a draft report is being worked on and that he recommended Dr. Rosol contact Dr. Michael Bowers, a National Program Leader at CSREES working with invasive species.

### **Commodity Crops**

Jean-Mari Peltier was absent from the meeting. Bruce Mertz noted that he had sent Karen the draft that he had been working on. Karen will work with Jean-Mari to finalize a Work Group report.

## **VI. Spring Board Meeting**

The topic of the spring meeting will be climate change and agriculture. Karen commented for Dr. Heldman, the planning committee chair, who was unable to attend. Dr. Massengale recommended the group plan for a half day program. Massengale also asked that board members plan on staying through noon on Thursday. He asked Shirley for an update on hotel arrangements. Shirley met with the hotel director yesterday to confirm room set up and arrangements. Also, a website has been created for board members to make their reservations directly.

## **VII. Future Meeting Dates for Committee and Full Board Meetings**

The fall meeting will be held at the Madison hotel from October 28-30, 2009. Shirley has put in a request to her hotel contact to solicit availabilities for the last two weeks in March of 2010 for the spring meeting. Terry Wolf commented that travel arrangements need to be formalized much sooner so that people can have their schedules set and that travel arrangements need to be made in a more timely fashion. Dr. Massengale asked about blanket travel orders. Karen will check with Valri Lightner at Department of Energy and inquire about how she makes travel arrangements for the Biomass Research and Development Technical Advisory Committee members (also a FACA board).

**VIII. Other – no report**

The meeting adjourned at 1:10 p.m.

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MARTIN MASSENGALE  
Chair

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Bruce Mertz  
Acting Executive Director

APPROVAL BY ADVISORY BOARD: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Initials  
Chair

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Initials  
Executive Director