**NE-TEMP2333: Response to reviewers.**

All review comments were extremely supportive for the continuation of the project with unanimous ratings of “Excellent” in every category. We are extremely grateful to the reviewers for the positive feedback and encouragement.

Just two comments were provided in the second review that required a response. Changes are denoted by underlined text in the revised document. In the first, the reviewer has accurately highlighted a simple misstep that inadvertently framed our argument around the notion of transgenic approaches being the most important. The text now reads: “To date, the most promising transgenic approach to enhance blight resistance has been the insertion of the oxalate oxidase (OxO) gene…”. Thus, the ensuing descriptions are framed more accurately and even-handed as originally intended.

In the second comment, the reviewer notes potential pitfalls with public opinion relating to a genetically modified organism and the possibility for its environmental release. The reviewer is correct that considerable public skepticism does exist with regard to GM foods, although the experience of this team with the public comment periods mandated by the deregulation process for the D58 genetically modified chestnut has demonstrated overwhelming support for the aims of the project. We consider developing a tool for measuring the changing opinions with regard to GMO’s writ large would be very worthwhile, but an undertaking worthy of a project on its own and not within the remit of this current proposal. Nonetheless, as the reviewer mentions, there is an intersection of the outcomes of this project and these public perceptions that we should be cognizant of. To address these points, we have included two paragraphs summarizing public comment reactions in the third page of the narrative in the Statement of Issues and Justification section. In addition, we have added the knowledge gained from this approach to tree conservation, with implications for other applications, to our list of Outcomes and Projected Impacts. These modifications emphasize the long term and ongoing public interest in the project and commitment of the team to public education, outreach and transparency.

We hope that these changes will be sufficient for continued support of this project through the Multistate system.

On behalf of the NE-1833 technical committee renewal writing team,

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