

**NRSP005: National Program for Controlling Virus Diseases of Temperate Fruit  
Tree Crops  
Minutes of the annual meeting**

**Date of Annual Report:** 05/09/2006

***Report Information:***

- Annual Meeting Dates: 04/04/06
- Period the Report Covers: 03/2005 to 04/2006

***Attendees and affiliation:***

The meeting was convened in the large conference room of Hamilton Hall at the Washington State University Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center (IAREC) in Prosser, WA.

In attendance were:

*Western Region*

Administrative Advisor: Ralph Cavalieri, Director of Agriculture Research Center, Washington State University, Pullman, WA

*North Central Region*

Technical Representative: Patricia McManus, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

*Eastern Region*

Administrative Advisor: Thomas Burr, Cornell University, Geneva, NY

*Horticultural Advisor:*

Amy Iezzoni, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI

*Consultant*

Dan Thompson, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Sidney, BC

*University Representatives*

Tim Murray, Chair, Plant Pathology, Washington State University, Pullman, WA

*Washington State Department of Agriculture*

Tom Wessels, Program Manager, Plant Protection Division, Olympia, WA

Lauri Guerra, Plant Pathology Project Coordinator, Prosser, WA

*NRSP5 Administration*

Director: Ken Eastwell, NRSP5/WSU, IAREC, Prosser, WA

Manager: Bill Howell, NRSP5/WSU, IAREC, Prosser, WA

*Other Participants*

Robert Stevens, Interim Director, WSU-IAREC, Prosser, WA

Lorraine Seymour, Associate in Research, WSU-IAREC, Prosser, WA

NRSP5 Committee members absent:

Dave Hogg, Rueben Moore, Simon Scott, Marc Fuchs, Adib Rowhani, Thomas Bewick, Curt Rom.

Chair: Dr. Patricia McManus

Secretary: Ms. Lorraine Seymour

The meeting was called to order at 8:45 AM.

## **I. Opening Remarks:**

Eastwell welcomed attendees and provided opening remarks.

Stevens, Interim Director of IAREC, extended his welcome and presented an overview of the research, teaching, and extension provided by this center giving background of funding sources and offered support for the mission of NRSP-5.

McManus motioned to accept the meeting minutes from 2005 as presented. Approved by email vote.

Eastwell gave an introductory statement regarding the current status of NRSP-5 and context of the resources needed as the program gets restructured due to funding decreases. In recent years, funding from NRSP was at approximately \$250,000 per year (approximately \$60,000 short of true operating costs) and this funding will be incrementally reduced to \$150k in Federal fiscal year 2006, \$96k in 2007, and \$46k in 2008. In this context the NRSP-5 group should determine how to position itself to remain viable until an alternate program emerges to undertake the current role of NRSP-5. As a result of the NRSP-5 annual meeting in CA two years ago with the administration of Foundation Plant Services, a proposal for a "National Clean Plant Network" emerged that would provide foundation level material of fruit trees, nut trees and grapevines.

## **II. Review of NRSP-5 resources (walking/driving tour):**

The group was guided to the WSU ELISA Testing Service Center where the lead technician was introduced. The ELISA lab is self-sustaining service center deriving approximately half of its funding by providing testing services for granted research programs, and the remainder from certification programs. The laboratory processes over 25,000 samples annually.

In the greenhouses, Howell discussed the uniqueness of the facility as a hub for the introduction of new cultivars into the U.S. and for the international distribution of cultivars. Howell introduced the nursery worker who handles the importation permits and data management for NRSP-5. Howell led the group to the greenhouses where indexing on woody plants in the greenhouse was demonstrated. In addition to the greenhouse tests, some fruit deforming viruses are tested in the field in order to reveal fruit symptoms. Virus-free indicator plants are grown on a near-by research farm, and seed for rootstock production is produced in orchards on the headquarters unit. A virus therapy demonstration was provided by the project's research technologist. NRSP5 is, and has been for decades, the only facility performing such therapy for temperate tree fruit clones in the United States. The group visited the eight screen houses that contain the virus-tested foundation material, and the one screen house that hosts the collection of diseased trees that are positive controls for the virus assays. Field blocks were observed where the causal agent(s) of green crinkle disease and rubbery wood are

being determined in long range studies looking at various combinations of latent viruses.

Because of the long term nature of virus testing protocols, the production of unique clones required for virus indexing and knowledgeable technical assistants, it would take almost a decade to restore the infrastructure even after a single year without funding.

### **III. Reports**

*Projection of future direction for NRSP-5:* Eastwell introduced the NRSP-5 website ([www.nrsp5.prosser.wsu.edu](http://www.nrsp5.prosser.wsu.edu)) where the activities of NRSP-5 are listed, as well as a description of the common virus diseases of fruit trees. This resource is used by pathologists, regulators and growers internationally. A webpage for a "National Clean Plant Network" has been added. The function of this proposed network is to provide a reliable source of propagation material nation-wide that is free of virus-like agents for the fruit tree, nut tree, and grapevine industries. This network would involve the cooperation and support for programs that would manage foundation blocks representing several climates of the U.S. and wide spread distribution of material to protect against catastrophic events at any one facility.

Eastwell mentioned that the USDA-APHIS permit office is now questioning the issuance of departmental permits. In the near future, we may need to apply for a permit each time we accept foreign material; this is prohibitively costly in time. The permit office now considers field indexing as a field release which is complicating the permitting process. Thompson suggested that it should be the commodities that should pursue the permits and NRSP-5 role should be as a middleman. Guerra suggested that having an APHIS person here at the IAREC to work on getting the permits through APHIS would make the process faster; Burr suggested that this may not be helpful.

*NRSP-5 Activities report:* Howell indicated the main objective of NRSP-5 is to produce and distribute virus tested clones of deciduous trees from domestic and foreign sources. Over 550 different cultivars and clones have been tested in the past 20 years. About 598 buds were distributed for research and certification during the past year. Recipients of the propagation materials are nurseries, growers, researchers, and professionals in certification programs. Usually about 40% of the accessions received by NRSP-5 are infected with viruses. Although NRSP5's annual MRF allocation of about \$250,000 over the past decade accumulates to a substantial investment, it pales in comparison to the approximate \$80 million spent to control the devastating *Plum pox virus* outbreak in PA. Without NRSP5 and the associated state certification programs, such outbreaks would likely occur with greater frequency and the infrastructure needed for the commercial industry to continue functioning in the presence of such outbreaks would be absent.

#### *Budget review:*

A general discussion of budget issues followed. In response to a question by Eastwell, Cavalieri suggested that the budget needs to have separate line item for the amount in reserves.

A brief discussion of cost recovery ensued. Thompson suggested increasing fees for budwood testing, which may reduce the amount brought in for testing. Howell mentioned that illegal importation is not heavily penalized and getting amnesty for this material once it is here is easy, so the cost of legal importations must be kept to a minimum. In response to a question, Eastwell indicated that the funds for NRSP-5 are derived in the following ratio: 50% from MRF, 25% from WSU (in-kind contributions), 12% from research grants, and 13% from fees. In addition, WSU absorbs the negotiated 46.8% overhead charge usually associated with federal grants. In reality the program will require approximately \$600,000 or more annually.

McManus motioned that Eastwell is to distribute to the committee for approval, a revised budget reflecting the changes suggested by Cavalieri. Passed by email vote; the revised as approved by the committee by email vote.

Burr asked whether the National Farm Bureau might be an appropriate organization to provide support for the program. Eastwell brought up the concern that there has been some concern between the National Clean Plant Network that we are proposed for fruit trees, nut trees and grapevines, and the National Clean Plant Program that is a nursery program and marketing tool for containing fungal diseases.

Burr asked for information on the involvement of national grape groups in the network. Eastwell indicated that the National Wine Grape Initiative identified the acquisition of grape germplasm as one of their priority areas, and is interested in seeing a program of this type. Burr suggested that one of the strengths of the National Clean Plant Network is that it would not focus on just one commodity. Iezzoni suggested that the nurseries will see this crisis more acutely than the growers; Cavalieri added that many of the large fruit companies are producing their own trees, and that the growers will become more concerned.

Guerra asked what the potential is for adding other crops/plants. Eastwell responded that grape and fruit programs are underfunded and that we need to support these before adding additional species. Burr estimated that the impact of the ornamental industry was \$90 billion to the US economy with \$3 billion from the tree fruit industry.

Eastwell expressed concern that many people in industry and federal agency are taking different approaches to address the availability of virus-tested material and that we need to focus this energy. Cavalieri reported that, based on a meeting in Washington, D.C. in March, Bewick (USDA-CSREES) may have discretionary funding to establish a task force to help further develop the concept of a National Clean Plant Network. Eastwell indicated that a list of potential participants had been submitted to Bewick. The list included APHIS, ARS, and people from the nursery and production industries. Iezzoni asked that grower representation be increased. The program would likely include one or two satellite blocks to help protect against disease outbreak and natural disaster.

Burr suggested that the next meeting be held in Maryland. After some discussion, it was suggested that the meeting be held in the first week of March, 2007. Eastwell is to contact Foster of APHIS to inquire about access to meeting facilities etc.

McManus motioned that the meeting be held the first week of March in Maryland near the USDA-APHIS site. Approved by email vote.

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm.