

NFGEL STEERING COMMITTEE
Meeting Notes
Tuesday - Wednesday, May 20 – 21, 2014
Washington Office, Washington DC

Attendees (in person): John Exline (committee chair)

Gary Man
Larry Stritch
Barbara Crane
Keith Woeste
David Gwaze
Valerie Hipkins

Attendees (on phone): Tom Blush

Dave Levinson

Agenda:

Tuesday, May 20, 2014. Bison Room (2nd Floor)

1:00pm – 4:30pm (with a 20-30 minute break approximately at 2:30pm)

Review NFGEL Program of Work

- Overview and trends
- Restoration, silviculture, and genetic improvement projects
- Conservation and TES species projects
- Forensics/special use projects
- Budget and staffing

Wednesday, May 21, 2014. Bison Room (2nd Floor)

9:00am – noon (with a 20-30 minute break approximately at 10:30am)

- Finalize NFGEL Charter
- Finalize process of soliciting project proposals from the field

noon – 1:30pm

- Lunch

1:30pm – 4:30pm (with a 20-30 minute break approximately at 3:00pm)

- Align with Agency priority areas (to guide NFGEL's priority work)
- Make budget and staffing recommendations relative to program of work and lab priorities
- Review Lab Methodology and Services

Review NFGEL Program of Work

See powerpoint presentation, "NFGEL Steering Committee 2014.pdf", that was used to guide the afternoon session.

Finalize NFGEL Charter

There was much discussion about whether NFGEL needed a charter at all. It was decided that the lab would finalize the charter and present it to SLMBOD in August or September 2014. SLMBOD would recommend appropriate signatories for the document.

Specific Charter Comments

- Stress that NFGEL is a National asset (not just a Forest Management asset).
- State that this is a re-chartering process in Background section.
- List Steering Committee membership by position (resulting in eight members, not including the NFGEL Director).

Action Item: Valerie will incorporate new comments into the charter and distribute the revised document to Committee members at least two weeks before the next conference call.

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Finalize process of soliciting project proposals from the field

Align with Agency priority areas (to guide NFGEL's priority work)

As per an action item from the prior committee conference call, Valerie drafted a proposal call-letter to solicit project ideas from the field. This draft letter was provided to the committee for review. Much discussion ensued regarding the use of an annual call letter soliciting project ideas from the field that the Committee could then review and prioritize. Based on NFGEL's small budget allocation, it was determined that we would only be able to fund one to three proposals per year. Assuming we would get 30 – 50 proposals per year (based on the number of inquiries received at the lab per year), that would be a funding rate of only 2 to 10%. There was great concern that such a low funding rate would result in employees not submitting proposals in the future. Also, the time and resources needed to review and prioritize proposals did not seem justified for a 2 to 10% funding rate.

An alternative thought was for the committee to identify an Agency priority that could be targeted in a proposal call-letter. This would reduce the total number of proposals and focus the laboratory's fiscal work on an Agency priority area. For example, a call-letter could be issued that asked for projects only relating to a single subject such as: white pine conservation, identification and monitoring of invasive plant species, plant speciation and pollinator adaptation, or climate change implications for high elevation plant species (all as examples).

To further explore a call-letter approach, it was decided that a survey monkey tool would be used to perform a needs assessment.

Action Item: Valerie will design a survey using SurveyMonkey. This survey will be shared with the committee before being sent out to Agency employees. The target date for sending out the survey is by end of FY14.

Make budget and staffing recommendations relative to program of work and lab priorities

Review Lab Methodology and Services

General discussion ensued on these topics. There was a realization that the current staffing and budget levels make it difficult to access certain new technologies (next-gen sequencing with the heavy bioinformatics requirement, for example), or incorporating greenhouse breeding/common-garden information with the molecular genetic variation generated in the lab. The Committee will re-address these issues after results of the SurveyMonkey are obtained.

Next Conference Call

Action Item: Valerie will send out a doodle poll to determine a time for the next quarterly conference call. The call should occur in late July to early August.

Physical Steering Committee Meeting

It was suggested that the Committee start holding physical meetings at the beginning of each fiscal year. It was decided the next meeting should occur in October 2014 in Placerville CA to give the Committee an opportunity to meet the NFGEL Staff and to tour the laboratory.

Action Item: Valerie will send out a doodle poll to determine a date for the next physical meeting.

Steering Committee Meeting Notes

Action Item: Valerie will post the Steering Committee meeting notes to the NFGEL website.