

**NFGEL STEERING COMMITTEE**  
**Conference Call Notes**  
**Wednesday, November 20, 2013, 9-10am pacific**

**Attendees:** Kara Chadwick (committee chair)  
Gary Man  
Larry Stritch  
Tom Blush  
Dave Merritt  
Valerie Hipkins  
Absent: Barbara Crane and Randy Johnson

**Agenda:**

- (1) Introductions
- (2) Summary of NFGEL
- (3) Summary of NFGEL Website and Sharepoint Site (information contained within sites, purpose of sites, access to sites, review Steering Committee contact information on web site)
- (4) Review Steering Committee charge
- (5) Decide upon date, location, and duration of first physical Steering Committee meeting.

**Introductions**

This conference call was the first meeting of the newly formed NFGEL Steering Committee. All members on the call introduced themselves, providing their job position and location. Backgrounds for the absent members were provided by Valerie.

**Summary of NFGEL**

Valerie summarized the history, organization, staffing, budget, and project workload of the lab. All lab related information can be found on the NFGEL website (<http://www.fs.fed.us/NFGEL/>), including the current lab charter and all annual reports.

**Summary of NFGEL website and Sharepoint site**

The NFGEL website is located at: (<http://www.fs.fed.us/NFGEL/>). Two documents contained on the site that are of particular current importance are the “FY13 Annual Report” and the list of on-going projects (“October 2013 Open Project Status”). Both documents are found under ‘Annual Reports and Workload Updates’ on the website.

All members have been invited by email to be members of the NFGEL Sharepoint site: (<https://ems-team.usda.gov/sites/fs-fm-nfgel/SitePages/Home.aspx>). The intent of this site is to have a place to house Steering Committee documents and information.

**ACTION ITEM** – each member should ensure that they can access both sites. Contact Valerie for assistance if you are experiencing any problems.

**Review Steering Committee Charge**

Kara reviewed the Committee charge.

Members will:

- (1) oversee and ensure the accomplishments of the agreed upon work of NFGEL,
- (2) assist in setting national priorities for NFGEL workload, and
- (3) assist in securing necessary resources to accomplish the program of work.

General discussion ensued on several topics:

**New Charter.** NFGEL’s last charter was finalized in 1999 and can be found on the website (<http://www.fs.fed.us/NFGEL/overview.shtml>). An update to the charter is needed since our current charter is 15 yrs old. Valerie has drafted a new charter as a starting point for discussion and review. The draft charter is on the Sharepoint site (<https://ems-team.usda.gov/sites/fs-fm-nfgel/SitePages/Home.aspx>).

**ACTION ITEM** – Review the draft charter (located on the sharepoint site) before the next Conference call the first week of February 2014.

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Project Prioritization. Review boards were discussed as a mechanism for prioritizing projects. There were some pro's and con's expressed (pro: a review board made up of Directors could get support and strategic insight for NFGELs body of work; con: Directors may not be able to technically evaluate proposals and may have limited time to devote to the process).

Budget. Discussion centered around matching the current available funds to 'off-the-top' projects. After removing fixed costs (salary for current staffing levels, rents/utilities, and some other non-discretionary costs), NFGEL has approximately \$40,000 to cover all other needs (chemicals, supplies, equipment repair, office supplies, etc). These funds are used for the 'off-the-top' projects.

Assessing Need from the Field. Larry suggested polling the field and obtaining feedback on if people have used NFGEL in the past, how much of this kind of work is being done with other partners, how much of these kind of studies do people want done, and if people are willing to pay for work.

**Decide upon date, location, and duration of first physical Steering Committee meeting**

Physical Meeting. There was agreement that members would like a physical meeting this fiscal year (barring travel constraints). We discussed holding the meeting in Placerville or Washington DC. A Meetings Management package will be needed if the meeting cost exceeds \$7000. A cost comparison of three locations is still needed even if the meeting does not need to be entered into the Sharepoint site (below \$7,000).

Conference calls.

**DECISION** – the Committee will have quarterly conference calls. The next call would be in February.

**ACTION ITEM** –Valerie will send out a Doodle poll for our second call to be held the first week of February 2014. We will choose whichever time works best for the most members.

Agenda topics for the February 2014 Conference call:

- Discuss draft revised Charter
- Finalize the role of the Committee (workplan for the year)
- Finalize quarterly meeting schedule
- Finalize the location and date of the physical Steering Committee meeting
- Determine time of next call

Notes prepared by: Valerie Hipkins, December 5, 2013