



**Minutes of the Illinois Nutrient Research & Education Council Meeting
August 12, 2014
Illinois Department of Agriculture, Room 66
State Fairgrounds, Springfield IL**

A regular meeting of the NREC Council was held on August 12, 2014 at the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

Attendance

Council Members in Attendance: Jim Larkin, Matt Hughes, Howard Brown, Gary Hudson, Chris Matlock, Ed Corrigan, Cindy Skrukud, Dale Hadden, Marcia Willhite, German Bollero, Dave Creech, Jessica Dexter. Matt Duncan was absent but excused. Dr. Robert Hoelt (NREC Research Coordinator), Jean Payne (NREC Administrator) and David Reid (NREC Legal Counsel) also attended.

Guests in attendance were Mark Gebhards, Rich Guebert, Lori Laughlin, Lauren Lurkins and Tricia Braid.

Chairman Gary Hudson called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m

Review & Approval of March 7, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Secretary Dale Hadden presented and the Council reviewed the minutes of the March 7, 2014 meeting. Dale made a motion to approve the minutes, Matt Hughes seconded, motion carried unanimously.

Financial Report

Treasurer Matt Hughes reviewed the financial statements and the budget to date. Jim Larkin reported that IDA expects payments to NREC for the spring 2014 tonnage season to be between \$1.7 to \$2 million and that IDA staff continues to follow up with a few registrants who are tardy in their payments to NREC. Jim agreed to report to the Council the following week on the status of the unpaid assessments. Dale made a motion to approve the Treasurer's report, Dave Creech seconded, motion carried.

2014 Semi-Annual NREC Project Reports

Dr. Hoelt presented an update on the outcomes of the 2013 NREC projects and a summary of the on-going projects in 2014. There will be a field tour of the ISU Nitrogen Management project on August 26, 2014 for those who would like to attend to view the research site and visit with the investigators on this project. Bob also reported that a farm site in Douglas County for the UI nitrogen management project has been selected for this project and work will commence there in the fall. Dale asked about the cover crop projects and the potential concern about getting the cover crops seeded and established given the likelihood of a late harvest. Bob replied some would be hand seeded or aerially applied. Gary asked when research papers would be published on the projects and the results provided; Bob replied that results could potentially be ready for publication after the 3rd year of research, which would be at the conclusion of 2015. Bob also noted that some of the research details and results would be presented at the Extension meetings this winter.

NREC Executive Committee Report

Gary reported that the NREC Exec Committee had a conference call on July 14, 2014 to discuss two project submissions that NREC received that were unsolicited. One of these was a research project and the other an education project. The Exec Committee discussed these and felt that the investigator on the research project should be encouraged by Dr. Hoelt to submit an RFP for this project in the next cycle. The committee discussed

the education project and referred it to the NREC Outreach & Education Committee to review the proposal and make a recommendation to the full Council.

Outreach & Education Committee Report

Ed Corrigan, Chair of this committee, reported that the committee had a conference call on August 5, 2014 to review a proposal from the Illinois Council on Best Management Practices (CBMP) asking for NREC financial support to help fund communications to farmers on the forthcoming Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (INLRS).

The committee discussed and determined that the significance of the release of the strategy was suitable for NREC funding consideration. Ed read the recommendations of the Outreach & Education Committee which are as follows:

Recommendation #1: The NREC Outreach & Education Committee recommends that NREC adopt a policy to consider short-term grants for projects that NREC determines are a unique and high priority need relative to nutrient education issues.

Recommendation #2: The Outreach & Education Committee believes that the release of the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy is a unique event and communication to farmers regarding the purpose of this strategy relative to reducing nutrient losses using voluntary practices is a high priority; therefore the committee recommends to NREC that it announce it will consider a short term grant for the purpose of funding a project to communicate to farmers the release of the INLRS.

Discussion on Project and Policy on Handling Mid-Year Funding Requests

The Council discussed the fact that there is no current policy on funding projects received outside of the normal RFP cycle. David Reid suggested that a policy could be added on the handling of short term grants. Matt added that we have no policy prohibiting funding mid-year projects; the Council then discussed whether adding a new policy on funding mid-year grants was necessary. Dale felt the Research Committee is well suited to review and recommend the funding of research projects and that research projects should only be considered during the official RFP process. Marcia felt that education projects should be considered for funding mid-year if they have merit. Cindy suggested that NREC could issue an RFP when critical education needs arise outside of the normal RFP process, this would ensure transparency in the review and approval process.

Matt Hughes made the following motion: *NREC should not develop a policy on funding unsolicited grant requests; if NREC receives an education based proposal mid-year it should be referred to the Executive Committee and the Executive Committee then refer the proposal to the Outreach & Education Committee for a recommendation regarding whether the project is a “unique and high priority need relative to nutrient education issues.” Further, when proposals are received outside the normal RFP the Outreach and Education Committee could determine the merit of issuing an RFP to fulfill a critical education need, and the Committee’s recommendation will then brought back to the full Council for a decision on whether to issue an RFP. Dale seconded the motion; motion carried unanimously.*

The committee then discussed the potential timing of an RFP for communication on the INLRS. Matt felt that there is a larger need for educational efforts supported by NREC, outside of a RFP scenario. Dale asked if the guests present who submitted the education proposal on the INLRS could explain the need for this project. Lori Laughlin, Tricia Braid and Lauren Lurkins then explained the desire of several farm groups within CBMP to have a significant communication to inform farmers of the INLRS. The proposal asks for \$100,000 for this effort. Jessica Dexter expressed her concern about NREC funds being utilized on a communication effort during the official comment period for the INLRS as this could be perceived as a policy issue and not a nutrient education issue.

The Council discussed the ILNRS further; Marcia stated that IEPA would be seeking comments on the proposal once it was released in October 2014. The Council further discussed the timing of an education effort funded by NREC on the INLRS. Howard Brown made a motion as follows: *NREC should fund an educational effort on the INLRS after the public comment period on the ILNRS is closed. Chris Matlock seconded the motion; motion carried unanimously.*

Matt Hughes stated that he felt that given the importance and timing of the INLRS, that rather than issue a RFP seeking a communication project on this subject, that \$100,000 instead be transferred into the education budget line of the NREC budget to help financially support specific costs associated with efforts to provide education to farmers and the industry on the INLRS. Matt felt this could be accomplished within NREC's mission rather than soliciting and approving a project for this purpose. The committee discussed this concept. *Dale Hadden made the following motion: NREC will allocate \$100,000 in its existing budget for 2014 to support specific costs associated with providing education to farmers on the ILNRS as outlined in CBMP's proposal (and with changes to account for the delay in the proposal's release date). The farm groups within CBMP will front the costs and then send invoices to NREC for reimbursement. Howard Brown seconded, motion carried unanimously.*

RFP Process for 2015 Projects

Dr. Hoeft reported that NREC will issue RFPs for 2015 projects right after the Labor Day Holiday. The proposals must be returned in early November, evaluated by the Research and/or Outreach Education Committees for recommendation to the full Council, with the Council making a funding decision in early January 2015. There was a brief discussion regarding whether the NREC fiscal year should coincide with the crop year instead of the calendar year; the Council felt the fiscal year should remain on a calendar year basis.

2015 NREC Assessment

Jean Payne stated that according to statute, the Council must report to the IDA Director by year end of the recommended assessment level for the upcoming year. *Howard Brown made a motion to keep the assessment at 75 cents per ton; Dave Creech seconded. Discussion: Dale stated that it is important that these projects demonstrate useful results to farmers to continue to support the 75 cent assessment level. Motion to keep the assessment at 75 per ton carried unanimously.*

Having no further business, Gary asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting; motion made by Dale Hadden, seconded by Chris Matlock, motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Jean Payne, reviewed by Secretary Dale Hadden.