



**Minutes of the Nutrient Research & Education Council Research Committee  
July 29, 2013  
Office of the Illinois Fertilizer & Chemical Association**

Committee Members Present: Dale Hadden (Research Committee Chair), Jim Larkin, Ed Corrigan, Marcia Willhite, Jessica Dexter, German Bollero, Matt Duncan, Cindy Skrukruud, Dr. Robert Hoeft (Research Advisor) and Jean Payne (NREC Administrator). Howard Brown was absent but excused.

Chairman Hadden called the meeting to order at 10:04 am, and proceeded with introduction of those present. He asked the committee to review the minutes of the February 1, 2013 Research Committee Meeting; motion made by Marcia Willhite to accept the minutes, seconded by Ed Corrigan, motion carried.

**Research Project Reports**

As required, all projects funded in 2013 had submitted a semi-annual report to NREC by July 1, 2013. Dr. Hoeft summarized the progress of the on-going NREC projects as follows:

**Ammonia Safety Training:** This project is completed; the program is available on-line via the IFCA, IDA, ICGA and IFB websites and IFCA reminds the industry on a consistent basis of its availability.

**KIC Program:** N-Watch was a significant part of this program to assess residual N after the drought with 8,000 soil samples collected. There are 36 N rate trials in the priority watersheds. Bob is following the program to ensure sound protocols are utilized for the rate trials as well as soil sample collection to ensure the on-going quality of the on-farm research. The KIC project manager work closely with Dr. Emerson Nafziger on these projects.

**Illinois Discovery Farms:** This project is awaiting word on USDA approval of the remaining 50% of funding for the site located in McLean County.

**Cover Crop Program:** The project began last fall at Dekalb, Monmouth, Brownstown and Urbana; Dixon Springs will begin this fall with Dr. Rachel Cook now being on board at SIU. Additional on-farm sites will be around the vicinity of the research centers. The project is looking at 7 different cover crops.

**P & K Recommendations:** Dr. Fernandez began the project but his last day with UI is July 30. Dr. Bollero will take over as principal investigator for this project. Dr. Fernandez will continue to stay in touch on this project.

**Salt Fork Project:** The new USGS gauge was installed at St. Joseph and there 29 N-Watch sites. Lowell Gentry with UI is assisting Dan Schaefer with evaluation of fall 2012 cover crop effectiveness with nutrient sequestration.

**P Runoff Study:** UI did get the rainfall simulators back from SDSU, and those will be implemented this fall when the majority of the work will commence.

### **NREC Funding**

Jim Larkin reported that 55% of spring 2013 tonnage reports are returned to IDA to date; IDA has invoiced \$629,663 in NREC assessments so far. For comparison purposes, 2,252,686 tons were reported in Spring 2012; in 2013 IDA is estimating 2 million tons, down slightly due to a wet spring. There are only six companies who haven't paid, and the most owed by any one company is \$200. IDA is following up with these registrants.

Ed Corrigan and Matt Duncan provided feedback from the ag retail perspective on the acceptance of farmers of the program; the information provided by the retailers on the purpose of NREC has been very helpful in assuring support for the program.

### **Water Quality Update**

Jean gave a short report on current water quality issues; Marcia gave an update on the Illinois Nutrient Assessment & Reduction Strategy; the next meeting of the Assessment Workgroup is Aug 8.

### **Discussion of 2014 Research Priorities**

Bob asked the committee members to use the research survey sheet to write down ideas for specific nutrient research. The committee took 15 minutes to complete the assignment. In the meantime the committee also reviewed the RFP format and made a few grammatical changes.

Dale led a discussion on how feedback from Council members on the written proposals should be handled; it was agreed that non-NREC members attending Council meetings should not be making comments on projects when not all project applicants can respond because they are not present. The committee felt this needs to be addressed for equity purposes. If anyone attending Council meetings has a proposal they are involved in, the future procedure will be for those with an interest in the project to leave the room. If questions come up about specific projects that only the researcher can answer we should leave time in the approval process to ask and get answers to the questions during the ranking/evaluation process. The committee members all agreed and this recommendation will be passed along to the full Council.

Bob collected the committee's worksheets and led a discussion of the 2014 research priorities.

Nitrogen was listed as the highest priority although phosphorus came in a close second from a sediment standpoint. A critical issue is loss of N to water supplies which results in environmental concerns and concerns to the growers not having that N for crop production. Timing of N application ranked high; how can we better manage nitrogen applications systematically? Dr. Hoeft discussed how an N study could be accomplished to evaluate N management systems—timing, rate, split applications, inhibitor effectiveness, and cover crops also over intensive tiled systems. Optimization of the N management system is the ultimate goal. For growers, nutrient benefit and yield remains critical but shouldn't be accomplished at the expense of the environment. Long term research on N management systems should probably be done on public property to assure continuity.

**Timeline for RFP Process:** The committee discussed and determined the following timeline for the RFP process, evaluation, peer review and committee evaluation/recommendation to full NREC Council:

1. Current NREC projects that had indicated they would seek multi-year funding are required to send NREC a letter requesting funding for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. This includes the following projects: Cover Crop Study, P & K Recommendations, Phosphorus Runoff, Keep it for the Crop and Discovery Farms.

2. NREC will issue a request for proposal (RFP) on September 3, 2013 for funding in calendar year 2014. This will include a statement that NREC will give priority to projects that seek to result in knowledge and applied methods that minimize environmental impact, optimize harvest yield and maximize nutrient utilization.
3. RFPs are due back to NREC by November 1, 2013.
4. The NREC Research Committee will review the proposals and participate in a conference call on November 15, 2013 to determine which appear worthy of funding and those that need to go to peer review.
5. The Research Committee will meet in person on December 17, 2013 to review the proposals again and the peer review reports, and prepare a recommendation to the full Council.
6. The NREC Council will meet on January 7, 2014 to make the funding decisions for the 2014 calendar year.

Dr. Bollero offered to assist Jean in developing and reviewing the wording of the RFP solicitation documents.

The committee briefly discussed future NREC Council meeting dates and agreed to suggest that Ag Day at the State Fair in August 2013 should be suggested to the NREC Chair as a potential next meeting date.

Having no further business, Chairman Hadden asked for a motion to adjourn at 2:05 pm. Ed Corrigan made the motion, seconded by Jim Larkin, motion carried.

Minutes recorded by Jean Payne