

ESCOPE Budget and Legislative Affairs Committee
Monthly Conference Call
June 26, 2012
NOTES

Participants:

Bret Hess (WAAESD)	Ernie Minton (NCRA)
Tim Phipps	Karen Plaut (NCRA)
Mike Harrington (WAAESD)	Paula Geiger (NIFA)
Tom Burr (NERA)	Jeff Jacobsen (WAAESD)
Steve Slack (NCRA)	Jim Richards (Cornerstone)

Approval of April Minutes: Motion to approve (Brett Hess), Second (Tom Burr). Approved.

2013 Budget Update: Last week the House Ag Appropriations bill was marked up. Cornerstone sent out a report summarizing this. Other than AFRI, everyone took proportional cuts (~ 3%) regardless of account size. \$317K was cut from “improved pest control” in the House. They were supposed to start on the House Floor this week, but it has been delayed until after the 4th of July holiday.

Farm Bill Update: The Farm Bill is marking up on July 11th. Senate passed its Farm Bill last Friday. Most of our things are in good shape—no real damage to the research title. House is expected to have similar provisions on Title 7. Opportunity for ill-conceived amendments still exists.

Special Grant Programs that are still listed include IR-4 and rest of Improved Pest Control—under 450IC approved authority; Global Change UV Monitoring is the biggest. NIFA doesn’t view those as “earmarks,” but rather just special research grant category.

Crop Protection Update: The Budget and Advocacy Committee has endorsed the consolidation of the Crop Protection Program, in theory. A Working Group (30-40 folks from around the country with a variety of interests) has been formed to provide feedback to NIFA on the consolidation effort. A Core Team drafted a document about what might be included in the consolidated program. Comments are currently coming in from the Working Group. Input from several different groups/individuals has come in. Core Team is touching base this week with subgroup conveners. A second draft of the document will be completed soon and a final draft will be presented at the Joint COPS in July. There is a small window of opportunity to provide some input into the program for FY2014.

IR-4 seems to still want to be an independent line. They see themselves as distinctly different and feel that they are doing many things that don’t support Crop Protection (e.g., International Trade Agreements). The big concern they have is related to indirect cost and whether or not this will be allowed. There is a need to recognize that appropriators appropriate based on specific budget lines and clearly it is possible to preserve these things with functional and programmatic integrity (i.e., no change to IDC). IR-4 also has to cope with concerns from industry.

Review of Roadmap Priorities: Survey results were sent out with meeting notification. It was suggested that we focus on the top 2 from each of the 7 challenge areas. There are also some that are cross-cutting, such as water. This input should be provided to NIFA through a formal letter to Sonny R from both committees and ESCOP (no pressing need to do this before Joint COPS). The specific priorities should be reported at the BAC meeting by Mike and Dan Rossi (representing the Science Committee). Mike and Dan can draft a memo for ESCOP to consider at the Savannah meeting. Mike will suggest this to Lee (ESCOP Chair).

This committee supports all 7 challenges and the top two priorities from each of the seven challenge areas in addition to a couple of cross-cutting issues like water.

There were 50 responses. People were asked to pick the top 2 priorities in each challenge which is why some add up to 175%.

It was suggested that priorities be considered anything over 50% and then include water, etc. as cross-cutting issues. This would drop 2 items off the list, making it a bit more focused. Mike will speak with Dan about this and get feedback from the S&T Committee. Group agreed to poll the S&T Committee to see if they have a strong opinion.

Some things may be higher priority based on region, as well.

The draft communication would include some explanation as well as the list so that it makes sense to readers.

Challenge 4 work is both domestic and international (coordinating with other countries).

Committee is supportive of moving ahead and working with the Roadmap committee to draft a letter that informs BAC, AFRI, and others.

2010 Summary of AFRI Program: In 2010 the AFRI program received and reviewed a total of 1,571 competitive grant applications, requesting \$3,984,288,212. From these submissions 403 awards totaling \$232,649,478 were made and an additional 1012 proposals were recommended for funding totaling \$2,879,693,931. This is a huge shortfall in funding and a major waste of scientists' time as it typically takes 6 to 8 weeks to develop a single investigator proposal. Integrated team proposals can take 6 months. There are also transactional cost/opportunity costs for all the proposal's whether funded or no and also time lost to reviewing all proposals. This is why AFRI must be fully funded to the authorized level of \$700 million and more. The 2010 report can be found at: http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/pdfs/2010_afri_synopsis.pdf

Next Meeting: There is no call scheduled for July but there might be one if needed because of new information on July 24th. If no new news, next meeting will be held on August 28th.