

**Minutes, S290 Technical Committee meeting**  
**Thursday, February 24, 2005**  
**University of Arizona Research Center, Tucson, Arizona**

The meeting was called to order at 8:45 by chair Behe. Present were Barton, Behe, Brumfield, Coston, Dennis, Hall, Harkess, Haydu, Hinson, Hodges, Little, McNeil, Rainey, Schuch, VanBlokland.

**Agenda:** The agenda was approved as presented.

**Approval of minutes:** Minutes of the fall meeting of the committee, held in Atlanta, had been posted on the committee's internet site. On a motion by Hall, seconded by McNeil, the minutes were approved.

**Administrative Adviser's report:** Coston updated the group on the status of the replacement project. He noted that while the project had been in the southern region, like most others it now is national in scope. The current S290 project has been extended to 9/30/05 pending completed review of the replacement project, and is officially DC309. Because the directors' review system is being changed, this project will be used as a training tool exercise for that group. A new number for the committee will be assigned after approval.

Coston mentioned changes to Hatch money in the administration's budget proposal, which would cut funds in half this year, and eliminate them next year. There will be political give-and-take. It is important for members of this and other multistate projects to report results and accomplishments if/when asked to do so. He cited a recent cost/benefit study as evidence of high returns to forms of public investment that include hatch funding.

**Report from Chair:** Behe requested that Appendix Es for the project be completed. Hall identified states that have completed this form. Behe asked that we recruit others who might be interested into the project. It was suggested that those who are associated with the project but have not participated be contacted regarding their intent to participate. This suggestion was supported by Coston.

**CSREES Advisor report:** did not attend.

**Agenda items**

*WebPage update:* Hall reported that revisions to the site have been made. The name to be used on the banner is Green Industry Research Consortium. This will remain the public identity after the project is approved and given a new number, and the same address will be used to access the site. Objectives are on the front page of the site. There is an area for announcements, individual websites are highlighted, an historical track of activity through minutes of meetings since 1992 (more recent minutes include photos from tours) is included, annual state reports are included, and a publications area will be added.

## **Manuscript reports**

*Production cost updates Zones 5 and 6, McNeil:* These budgets are being finalized for container and field production nursery, and landscapers. He intends to electronically redo the 'floor plans', and mentioned that there are a few other items to be completed. It was agreed that there would be a document to review by the summer meeting.

*Landscape consumer survey, Behe:* Michigan responses were removed for separate analysis because it is quite different from other states' response. Responses from other states have been analyzed, and a manuscript was submitted to Journal of Environmental Horticulture in early February 2005.

*Greenhouse Southern Regional bulletin, Hall:* This material was sent to NRAES about 2 years ago. Eighteen reviews, often with contradictory opinion and recommendations, were received. The document was modified and resubmitted about a year ago. Hall recently received notification that this work is in the layout stage, and will be published at some point in the future.

A presentation by Schuch introduced the group to ornamental horticulture production in Arizona. She discussed climatic information, values, acreages, kinds of plants, container, in-field trees, and salvaging plants from the desert prior to development. Arizona's rapidly expanding population and other external factors were discussed.

## **Current studies**

*National Nursery study, Hall:* Tables have been prepared and are ready for review. A table containing the main body of data and the 46 individual states will be placed on line for download. The data collection procedure has been presented before. Hodges established a protocol that can be used in the future. Data were analyzed at University of Tennessee by Brooker, Hall and others. Results are almost complete and all participating states will be notified by email notification when available. A review committee of Warnick, Posados and Fields had been appointed at the fall 2004 meeting.

There was a discussion about consistency between the committee's 'trade flows and marketing practices' study results and those reported by NASS. Wholesale value of farm sales was one example. NASS estimates usually are lower, and this is the case again in the 2004 survey. NASS' interim procedure of surveying/reporting 17 states also is a concern, because information also is needed about other states. Given the success of the S290 survey and these concerns, NASS officials are aware of committee activity in that area and there may be some potential for cooperation with NASS to improve and expand the collection and reporting process. A subcommittee composed of Dennis, Hodges, Hall, Hinson, McNeil, Little and Haydu was asked to pursue these issues.

*Economic impact study, Hodges, Haydu and Hall:* A draft table was presented, but this is not to be released yet. The study used all secondary information based on the NAICS system. Three major sectors were modeled – production, landscape services, and trade (retail). Hodges discussed the methodology generally, and indicated there will be a report for each sector and state, and a series of detailed reports. Reviewers appointed were Dennis, vanBlokland and Rainey. The report is expected to be sent to reviewers about April 15.

*Price study, McNiel:* There has been little additional work beyond a presented paper and abstract at AAEEA meeting and an SNA presentation in 03.

*Cost of production, zones 7 and 8, Hall and Hinson:* Planning discussions about this work have occurred. The procedures and the final product may be reformatted to increase usefulness to users. Previous budgets and work by Stegelin and McNiel will be used as a basis.

*State promotional programs:* No report.

*Specialty cut flower budget, Brumfield:* A grant proposal was rejected and funding still is being sought. The California Cut Flower Association has been contacted about its interest in funding. There was discussion that other researchers are looking at a different multistate project for cut flowers, and that perhaps we can attract those to S290. Wein at Cornell was identified as the leader of that group.

*Labor survey, Behe for Mathers:* A grant from HRI for \$21,000 was approved. Other states may be interested in participation. A graduate student has been identified, and Mathers would like to fund this student with the grant, thus changing distribution of the funds. The requirements of the study were discussed, including the need for face-to-face interaction with growers to get the survey to appropriate workers. Mathers and Behe will work out an alternative procedure.

Mathers also suggested a proposal to HRI to fund problem weed species and weed inventory in the industry.

*Business analysis, Hodges:* As reported before, the software for business analysis has been developed, workshops have been held, and a first record has been entered. This demonstrates that growers can and will provide confidential information over the internet. A RMA workshop in 10 states will include an introduction to this program. It will be expanded in various ways and to other segments, but the first objective is to get the wholesale grower component working correctly.

*Consumer Satisfaction with Horticultural Products, Dennis:* Ethnicity differences in regret/dissatisfaction are being evaluated using previously collected data. Initial results indicate Caucasians have less regret, perhaps because this is the largest consumer group and is targeted by sellers. It was argued that this result also might be an income impact, and that perhaps the target should be broadened. Overall, the research may introduce

additional research areas, lead to different segmentation, and promotion to a different group of people. From this work, a paper will be submitted to a professional journal.

*Radio Frequency Identification, Harkess:* Work has started at Mississippi State to relate the capabilities of RFID to the industry, including cost of tags, their ability to withstand weather, and requirements being introduced by retailers. Little and Hinson will cooperate on this research.

*Study of rewholesalers/distribution centers in the green industry, Hinson:* There is a continuing increase in sales by wholesale growers to rewholesalers rather than to the traditional channels. This change has received little attention from the committee, but it suggests there are some needs in the marketing system are being met by different kinds of firms. A subcommittee of Hinson, Hall, Rainey, Hodges, Little and Barton will discuss research opportunities.

Brief *state reports* were presented.

#### **Future Meeting Sites:**

Summer 2005: Barton discussed potential for a Delaware meeting, pointing out some topics of interest including roadside vegetation management, a program to suggest alternatives to invasive species that consumers might plant, and native plants development. Alternative sites discussed were Long Island, NY, and meeting at the SNA trade show in Atlanta. The committee chose the Delaware location. Dates will be June 28 to 30, 2005.

Winter 2006: The committee chose Monterrey Bay, CA, in mid to late February. McNiel will organize the meeting.

Summer 2006: Haydu suggested a meeting in the Northwest US, but no decision was made.

#### **Elections:**

Results of election of officers

Chair - Robert McNiel.

Secretary - Ronald Rainey.

The Committee unanimously commended outgoing President Bridget Behe and Secretary Roger Hinson for a job well done over the past 5 years.

The meeting was adjourned 3:00pm.