MINUTES
Project Management Committee
Summer 2025 Meeting
July 8-10, 2025
Virtual Meeting

MOTIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

Motions/Consensus Items:

1. A motion to approve the 2025 PMC & CLC Joint meeting minute and April 10, 2025 Special meeting minutes with typographical corrections as suggested was made by Alvin Simmons, seconded by Liwei Gu; **unanimously approved.**
2. A motion to recess the meeting for the evening at 4:23 pm on July 8, 2025 was made by Alvin Simmons, seconded by Jerry Baron; **unanimously approved.**
3. A motion to move forward with coordinating attendance at meetings and conferences that are external to IR-4 events, attended by IR-4 full-time staff, by using a shared document that staff self-populates and is managed, by headquarters was made by Mary Hausbeck; seconded by Alvin Simmons; **unanimously approved.**
4. A motion to adjourn the regular session at 3:19 pm on July 9, 2025 and to move to Executive Session was made by Alvin Simmons; seconded by Jerry Baron; **unanimously approved.**
5. A motion to recess the meeting for the evening at 4:00 pm was made by Keith Pitts; seconded by Simon Zebelo; **unanimously approved.**
6. A motion to move forward with decommissioning the Wapato Residue Laboratory, authorizing IR-4 National Laboratory Director, Debbie Carpenter, to oversee the decommissioning, was made by Keith Pitts; seconded by Mary Hausbeck; **approved (1 abstention, Alvin Simmons).**
7. A motion was made that IR-4 is committed to working with ARS Management to reestablish the Wapato Residue laboratory once qualified scientific staff and analytical instrumentation are available, by Jerry Baron; seconded by Mary Hausbeck; **approved (1 abstention, Alvin Simmons).**
8. A motion was made to approve the modified 2026 priority allocation as presented with savings applied to addressing the shortfall in the contract lab costs by Matt Hengel; seconded by Simon Zebelo; **approved (1 abstention, Alvin Simmons).**
9. A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 1:28 pm by Alvin Simons seconded by Simon Zebelo; **unanimously approved.**

Votes Made Between Regular Meetings:

1. The PMC voted to accept the 2025-2026 funding distribution as presented. **Approved by majority via written consent (1 abstention: Alvin Simmons).**

Action Items:

1. **Action Item (Hengel and Baron):** Establish times for a group of PMC members, Stakeholders, RFCs and Growers to meet to come up with a path forward for field trial funding.
2. **Action Item (Baron):** Consensus was made to create a communications plan and move forward with notifying EPA and impacted parties about the Vital Records Control issue.

3. **Action item (Hengel):** Establish a working group comprised of Keith Pits + Chemist, Maggie Elliot, Matt Hengel, Debbie Carpenter/Designee + 1 Chemist from HQ to strategize and develop qualifications for the recommissioning of the Wapato Residue Laboratory.

Members:

Jerry Baron; IR-4 Executive Director
Doug Buhler; Administrative Advisor-NCR
Liwei Gu; Regional Director-SOR
Mary Hausbeck; Regional Director - NCR
Matt Hengel; PMC Chair; Regional Director-WR
Marcel Holyoak; Administrative Adviser – WR
Steve Lommel; Administrative Adviser- HQ
Joe Munyaneza; Administrative Advisor - ARS
Keith Pitts; CLC Vice Chair
Chris Philips; USDA_NIFA
Alvin Simmons; USDA-ARS
Simon Zebelo; Regional Director - NER

Presenters:

Alice Axtell, IR-4 HQ
Bill Barney; IR-4 HQ
David Beaudreau; DCLRS
Jimmy Byrtus; IR-4 HQ
Debbie Carpenter; IR-4 HQ
Krystal Chojnacki; IR-4 HQ
Christina Dineen; IR-4 HQ
Dirk Drost; MUF
Josh Kindel; IR-4 HQ
Cristina Marconi; IR-4 HQ
Johanna Mazlo; IR-4 HQ
Philip Moore; IR-4 HQ
Thomas Pike; IR-4 HQ
Hannah Ross; IR-4 HQ
Robert Welker; IR-4 HQ

Tuesday July 8, 2025 11:00 am to 4:00 pm ET

Matt Hengel called the meeting to order at 11:02 am.–

1. Welcome and Introductions.
   - M. Hengel welcomed the group, reviewed virtual meeting etiquette, and initiated introductions around the room and on Zoom.

2. Approval of minutes & new agenda items. (Handout)
   - M. Hengel asked the PMC if there were any additional changes to be made to the minutes, several typos were corrected; none additional offered.
   - **A motion to approve the 2025 PMC & CLC Joint meeting minutes and April 10, 2025 Special meeting minutes with typographical corrections as suggested was made by Alvin Simmons, seconded by Liwei Gu; unanimously approved.**
   - J. Baron wanted to add an item: Biopesticide Regulatory Support Program Change of Personnel.

3. Administrative Advisors Updates
   - Hatch/NRSP- 4 Funds
     - J. Baron reported that: during the mid-term review of the NRSP 4 project the review committee proposed a 15% reduction of funds; IR-4 submitted a budget with a justification for maintaining the funding level; visiting the review committee members to education on the work of IR-4; and ultimately the oversight group chose to keep the proposed 15% cut.
     - S. Lommel reported that: a contingent of the review committee felt that the NRSP funds were a minor portion of the overall IR-4 budget and wanted to see the funds spent on specific items; the review committee recommendations will be presented

for vote at the BAA meeting for Ag Innovation; moving forward it would be beneficial to do a carve out of NRSP funding to it is clear what it is spent on; and that NRSP has the authority to spend 1% of Hatch funds.

    - D. Buhler reported that the off the top funding issue is one that has been on the forefront of the review committee for several years; and a strategy might be to come back with a new NRSP proposal addressing some new issues.
    - A discussion was held regarding the status of the Hatch funding (new appropriations bill has full funding for Hatch) and the 9 year funded research facilities competitive grant as a big win for research stations.

- Status of Executive Director Search
    - K. Chojnacki updated that the Executive Director position has now be posted and accepting applications.
    - S. Lommel reported on a salary and position cap in place at NC State put in place due to the lack of a state budget and potential federal funding cuts.
    - J. Baron reported that we had hoped to have some overlap with Jerry and New Hire.
    - A discussion was held regarding the timeline of recruitment and the possibility of an interim Executive Director.
- NCR: D. Buhler reported that like the other institutions MSU is working through all the delays.
- WR: M. Holyoak reported: that the CAES Dean retired and there is a new Dean, Ashley Stokes, coming in from the University of Tennessee and getting her connected with IR-4 stakeholders; the lab has been moved to temporary quarters for seismic renovation and can move back after a year; there is new leadership at the UC Davis Office of Research; there is a hiring freeze for non-academic staff; UC Davis is getting a cut in the State budget; and a dispute underway over intellectual property between state extension and UC Davis that is delaying the hiring of new extension specialists.

4. NIFA Update
    - C. Philips reported that this year is the time for the new four-year RFA and that there are additional reviews now required to release the RFA; alternative grant avenues have been explored but ultimately told that they were not an option; and that the turnaround time would be 30 days.
    - A discussion was held regarding if two weeks would be possible to return the grant and that there would be no additional/new requirements over the last grant.

5. CLC & Friends of IR-4 Update
    - D. Beaudreau reported the House Agriculture appropriations bill was marked up and the IR-4 funding level is flat at $15 million and the Seante will mark it up next; the CLC is working encourage NIFA to release RFA for IR-4 so the funds don't get sent back to the Treasury; and engaging elected officials on the Hill to help with the distribution of funds. A discussion was held regarding getting representatives from Crop Life to join the meetings regarding distribution.
    - IR-4 is at the top of support for MAHA
    - Regional Host Institutions are handling the delays in incoming funding.
    - K. Pitts reported the pesticide stakeholders have been working with EPA to fill knowledge gaps.

6. Unit Updates

- NER (Handout): S. Zebelo provided a report on NER activities including: completion rates of residue trail and reports submitted; looking forward to receiving more environmental horticulture trails to conduct in the new facility; quality assurance accomplished during this period; priority setting sessions underway; Megan Hickman welcomed a new daughter and Marylee Ross received an award from the University of Maryland.
- NCR: M. Hausbeck provided a report on NCR activities including: an excellent State Liaison meeting recently held and filled SLR vacancies; NCR FRDs are adapting to the eFDB but could use some more in-person and targeted training; and hosted Jerry and Josh Kindel the new Environmental Horticulture Program Manager.
- SOR (Handout): L. Gu provided a report: that the field program is going well and Kristen is doing a great job; new FRD in Homestead; promotion of the IR-4 Project in the SOR region is underway; looking to complete 17-18 ASR's this year; a Chemist is retiring after 23 years and a new hire has been made with some transition overlap; QA team has been busy with audits and have had the most audits this year than any other year of the program; and correcting issues with UFL overcharging the IDC cap.
    - A discussion was held regarding pass through IDC and working with other institutions to ensure they are distributed to subawards and purchase orders.
- WR: M. Hengel reported: the field program is progressing; personnel changes in Oregon State and training provided to them; FDB's are coming in and are going through QA; there have been a few retirements in both field and lab personnel; recruiting new SLR's to the WR; in spite of the temporary lab relocation the lab continues to produce and are working with the retrofit crew to navigate in the interim; and quality assurance audits underway.
    - A discussion was held regarding navigating retirements in CA region 10 and supporting trials in the future.
- ARS: A. Simmons reported: that the internet access issue ARS folks were having with the IR-4 site has been resolved; working on getting funding renewed for the 9 projects within ARS; Wooster site had an EPA audit and there was a note about facility files using wet ink; Wapato Lab Coordinator is retiring in December and wrapping up projects that are underway; reminded folks to spend all the ending ARS 5 year Cooperative Agreement funds; currently requesting a new 5 year agreement from Alvin's in-house funding to only cover QC/QA component and not Environmental Horticulture; the difficulties consistent flat funding is causing operations and maintaining maintenance agreements; and that travel has been limited in ARS including travel to conferences.
    - A discussion was held about the maintenance contracts for laboratory equipment.
- HQ (Handout): J. Baron reported: that IR-4 Headquarters is now at full staffing with the hiring of the Environmental Horticulture Program Manager; Michael Braverman is transitioning away from work at IR-4; visits to NCR and ornamental stakeholders with Josh Kindel; increasing number of EPA audits; supporting the laboratories; company meetings have been conducted and are wrapping up ahead of the FUW; over 100 new requests were submitted; and a successful EPA tour of mid-Atlantic agriculture was held.
    - J. Baron further updated on the Path Forward 2.0 deliverables including: eFDB leadership transitioning to Jimmy; updates to eQA software underway; and the initiation of the IR-4 Intranet.

Break at 1:15. The meeting reconvened at 1:30 pm.—

7. Program/Platform/Committee Updates
    - Food Program
        - Submissions (Handout)

- T. Pike reported: on 2025 submissions and that it is on par with last year; that there were less tolerances submitted to EPA thus far and the potential reasons such as changes in administration and staffing, lack of pollinator data now needed and amended reports; and crop grouping update on Crop groups one and two.

- Field Residue Studies (Handout)
  - C. Marconi reported: on the status of 2024 and 2025 residue program; and reviewed the number of trails per region and the reduction over time due to cost increase per trial and performance data needed; the status of outstanding field data notebooks and the need to get these books in ASAP; submission challenges both internal and external to IR-4;
  - A discussion was held regarding the number of books at HQ QA and whether or not the eFDB are is helping to ease the delays of receiving books.
- Status of the 2025 iAdvantage electronic Field Data Notebook Update (Handout)
  - P. Moore reported on eFDB improvements including: guidance and training for users; quick response times; revising eFDB as needed; demonstrating government efficiency; reduced calculation errors; reduced paper handling; no transcription into reports; and it includes a timestamped audit trail.
  - A discussion was held regarding additional training to address some of the pinch points, savings from less paper storage, potentially less time spent in the field, and whether or not the data is GLP compliant.
- Laboratory activities (Handout)
  - D. Carpenter reported: on the status of each analytical lab and the challenges and backlogged studies they each have; the total backlog is 46; and laboratory training is ongoing; HQ resources are being used to address quality of data for two labs.
    - A discussion was held as to if the same baseline for backlog status was used to quantify the backlog over the years.
- Quality Assurance Unit (Handout)
  - J. Mazlo reported: on activities undertaken to strengthen the QA Unit as a national team; the committees QA staff participate in; updated on QA activities associated with the ARS sites; trainings held for new FRDs; engagement with the eFDB implementation; field notebooks audits; and updates to eQA and eDocs.
  - J. Mazlo reported: on 2024 EPA inspections as compared to 2025; shared the trend of inspections from 2018 to 2025; the number of studies included in the audit; the new EPA inspectors; and the impacts of increased EPA inspections.

Product Performance (Handout)
  - A. Axtell reported: on the 2025 priorities out of the 24 FUW; the upward trend of product performance trials; and shared the status of final reports.
- Integrated Solutions (Handout)
  - A. Axtell reported: on the new timeline for IS activities; engaging stakeholders by forming working groups of subject matter experts; updates in the IS database in regards to PCR layout; the establishment of an IS PCR vetting system; regional priority setting meetings; there will be a cap of 12 new IS priorities a year; implementation of a proportional funding model for national and regional priorities; and outreach efforts both planned and underway.
  - A discussion was held regarding the fact that this update was needed
- Biopesticide Regulatory Support Update (Handout)

        - B. Barney provided a report on: five projects submitted and/or pending EPA review; six projects with submission packages in development; and four projects currently being vetted under the new process.
    - International/Minor Use Foundation (Presentation)
        - D. Drost reported: on the priorities of the Assisting Specialty Crop Exports (ASCE) initiative; reviewed submissions to be made in 2025 and 2027; the archive project; global priority setting outcomes; board development and other changes; and challenges and Opportunities.
- Environmental Horticulture (Handout)
    - J. Kindel reported on: onboarding and outreach initiatives; the October EH Priority Setting Workshop; biennial cycle graphic update; the 2024 and 2025 study program; the 2025 budget; and whether or not to return to the historic program name.
    - A discussion was held regarding the political atmosphere, the need to reach out to stakeholders, and feedback submitted thus far.
- Communications (Handout)
    - H. Ross reported: print digital and messaging updates; recent social media activity; recent LinkedIn traction; event promotion; working to strengthen programs and platforms; Intranet is launched and working well and a virtual tour launched; and intranet feedback.
- NEC & Training Committee (Handout)
    - C. Dineen reported: on the planning activities for the 2026 NEC including a draft agenda; updated on National SOPs including those finalized, or out for review; training on national SOPs have been assigned in eQA; SOPs in progress and upcoming; advisories to national SOPs; and virtual trainings offered.
- Technology Committee (Handout)
    - J. Byrtus reported: on a review of three software considered for electronic signatures; the benefits and downsides of each; cost implications; and implementation.
    - A discussion was held regarding industry use of esignatures and EPA's view on use of esignatures;

A motion to recess the meeting for the evening at 4:23 pm on July 8, 2025was made by Alvin Simmons, seconded by Jerry Baron; unanimously approved.

<u>Wednesday July 9, 2025 11:00 am to 4:00 pm ET</u>

Matt Hengel reconvened the meeting at 11:00 am. --

8. Priority allocations for workshops (Handout)
    - A. Axtell reported: on key dates leading up to the Food Use Workship; reviewed resource allocation for new residue trials and resulting new "A" Priorities; resource allocations for product performance trails and resulting "H+" priorities; and the 2026 Integrated Solutions funding distribution including five national priorities, four regional priorities and two sponsored projects.
    - J. Baron reported on: the ability of the labs to perform analytical analysis without a backlog on the residue trials; there is more work for labs then capacity; the increasing costs and use of contract labs for overflow work; if we should work backwards form lab capacity to determine what we can put in the field
        - A discussion was held regarding: how many trials we would need to cut to balance out; if the Wapato lab will remain online; options for balancing the funding; or taking the dual approach of reducing the number of trials and

sending out more samples to contract labs; how this will impact FRDs; the intensity of methods required for some analysis; Storage stability causing delays; the intensity of hemp projects; chemistry scores at FUW and more difficult projects are worth several A's; reducing efficacy rather than residue projects; and redirect funds from efficacy and other platforms.
    - The PMC will try to develop a solution ahead of the 2025 FUW.

9. Field trial funding policy – current process and challenges (Handout)
    - J. Baron presented on: handling modification to the research plan for field trials; reasons for trials dropping ahead of planting and how that is handled; the procedure was to not reduce funding for regions when this happens; if trial is cancelled late in the process then 50% was paid to the researcher; accountability for field trials that are cancelled and researcher gets 100%; and proposed new parameters for reimbursements or a back-up process.
        - A discussion was held regarding scheduling projects near one another, drawing from the B list to re-use those same sites, working with the RFCs, PMC
        - **Action Item (Hengel and Baron):** Establish times for a group of PMC members, Stakeholders, RFCs and Growers to meet to come up with a path forward for field trial funding.

10. Biopesticide Regulatory Support Program Change of Personnel
    - J. Baron reported: Michael Braverman has announced his second retirement from IR-4; current staffing is one part time person; and a need to recruit to a new Biopesticide Regulatory Program Manager in the future.
    - A discussion was held as to whether or not there are biopesticide consultants that could help in the interim and triaging projects that we can move forward with current staffing.

11. Status of Training Modules (Handout)
    - D. Carpenter reported: Rob Welker is working on various modules focusing on GLP items; reviewed the process for conducting a review of the proposed completed slides; the slides will be housed on the intranet; working in unison with updates of advisories to SOPs so the slides are current; the approach is staged and working on one module at a time; and asked the PMC to review them and share any comments.

12. Vital Records Control (NJ Archives) issue (Handout)
    - J. Baron provided an overview of the issues with VRC including: 47 missing boxes; 40 of them have the data the supports active registrations; years of requesting them; determining the path forward including making a disclosure to EPA.
    - A discussion was held regarding notifying EPA and other impacted parties.
    - **Action Item (Baron):** Consensus was made to create a communications plan and move forward with notifying EPA and impacted parties about the Vital Records Control issue.

13. PMC Operational Procedures (Handout)
    - J. Baron reported: an operational manual for the PMC has been started; the task is taking a while to compile because the information is in various documents; and proposed establishing a large manual consolidating all the projects.
    - A discussion was held regarding prioritizing the PMC chapter first and including the lab guidance document.

14. Coordinated meeting coverage process
    - J. Baron reported: that this item was discussed prior to consolidate coverage at meetings; Alice developed a spreadsheet to track it; and asked if the PMC thought it was a good idea that they take formal action for implementation.
    - A discussion was held regarding how travel is currently handled, it can help reduce travel costs, if headquarters would take the lead on housing it, and having staff self-populate it.
    - **A motion to move forward with coordinating attendance at meetings and conferences that are external to IR-4 events, attended by IR-4 full-time staff, by using a shared document that staff self-populates and is managed, by headquarters was made by Mary Hausbeck; seconded by Alvin Simmons; unanimously approved.**

15. Awards (Handout)
    - K. Chojnacki reviewed the three awards typically issued at the National Education Conference from the regions and the PMC's role in selecting three recipients of the National Recognition of excellence.

Break at 1:35 pm. The meeting reconvened at 1:55 pm. –

16. Future Meetings (Handout)
    - 2025 Food Use Workshop – Denver, CO September 9-11, 2025
    - 2025 Environmental Horticulture Workshop – Kansas City, MO October 7-8, 2025
    - Fall PMC - Kansas City, MO October 8-10, 2025
    - NRPM - Raleigh; October 27-29, 2025
    - National Education Conference – Charleston, SC; February 3-5, 2026
    - Spring joint PMC/CLC meeting - Washington; March 3-5, 2026
    - J. Baron reviewed an

17. Executive Session

A motion to adjourn the regular session at 3:19 pm on July 9, 2025 and to move to Executive Session was made by Alvin Simmons; seconded by Jerry Baron; unanimously approved.

A motion to recess the meeting for the evening at 4:00 pm was made by Keith Pitts; seconded by Simon Zebelo; unanimously approved.

<u>Thursday July 11, 2024 – 11:00 am to 4:00 pm ET</u>
Matt Hengel convened the Executive Session at 11:02 am. --

Break at 1:40 pm. The meeting reconvened at 2:00 pm. –

The members reconvened into regular session at 1:28 pm with the following motions or actions:

- **A motion to move forward with decommissioning the Wapato Residue Laboratory, authorizing IR-4 National Laboratory Director, Debbie Carpenter, to oversee the decommissioning, was made by Keith Pitts; seconded by Mary Hausbeck; approved (1 abstention, Alvin Simmons).**
- **A motion was made that IR-4 is committed to working with ARS Management to reestablish the Wapato Residue laboratory once qualified scientific staff and analytical instrumentation**

are available, by Jerry Baron; seconded by Mary Hausbeck; approved (1 abstention, Alvin Simmons).

- **Action item (Hengel):** Establish a working group comprised of Keith Pits + Chemist, Maggie Elliot, Matt Hengel, Debbie Carpenter/Designee + 1 Chemist from HQ to strategize and develop qualifications for the recommissioning of the Wapato Residue Laboratory.
- **A motion was made to approve the modified 2026 priority allocation as presented with savings applied to addressing the shortfall in the contract lab costs by Matt Hengel; seconded by Simon Zebelo; approved (1 abstention, Alvin Simmons).**

18. Adjourn

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 1:28 pm by Alvin Simons seconded by Simon Zebelo; unanimously approved.