

Editor's Note: *IR-4 Highlights* by the Executive Director is an outreach feature of the Newsletter, focused primarily on articles in this issue.

IR-4 Highlights

Most of my articles written for Newsletter issues deal with our partnership initiatives, especially with our external stakeholders like the crop protection industry, the Environmental Protection Agency, California's Department of Pesticide Regulation and Canada's Pest Management Regulation Agency. However, I would like to focus this time on the internal partnerships within the IR-4 Program as evidenced in the recently conducted Peer Review held at IR-4 Headquarters on May 20th to 22nd. The last review of the program was held in December 1997 with a formal report being issued in January 1998. Members of that Review Team were Dean Plowman/Chair and former ARS Administrator, Steve Balling/Del Monte Foods, James Carlson/Washington State University, Jere Downing/Cranberry Institute, Jay Ellenberger/EPA, Larry Hendricks/BASF, Ray McAllister/American Crop Protection Association (now CropLife America) and Ray Ratto/Ratto Brothers. Jim Parochetti, CSREES IR-4 National Program Leader, organized the Review Team. Steve Balling and Jere Downing were Commodity Liaison Committee Members at that time and Ray Ratto continues as an active CLC member. The Review Team made 48 different recommendations which were seriously considered by the Project Management Committee, Administrative Advisers, IR-4 Headquarters and Regional staff, ARS staff and yours truly when I joined the IR-4 Team in May 1998. To say the recommendations had an important impact on the program would be an understatement. They were incorporated into the 2001 to 2005 Strategic Plan which was formulated in 1999 and published in 2000. Some of the initiatives in the Strategic Plan which addressed the Peer Review recommendations were the 30 month completion schedule, closer working relationships with the EPA, access to newer chemistry from the crop protection industry, expansion of the Biopesticide Program, better documentation of the program's benefits, better communication of the benefits of the crop grouping system, development of a database on new chemistries available for minor crop uses, continuation of GLP emphasis, focus on FQPA transition/Reduced Risk products and keeping IPM practices as an overall focus. In my 10 page response to the 2003 Review Team addressing the 1997 Review Team's recommendations, I pointed out that we have been able to address all of the recommendations and have developed a number of new programs and initiatives that those of you who have been reading these columns and following the program for the past five years can recognize.

This year's Peer Review Team was headed by Chuck Laughlin/Retired CSREES Administrator, Steve Balling/Del Monte Foods Research Director and the only carryover member, Larry Chandler/ARS Northern Crop Science Lab Center Director, Debbie Edwards/EPA/OPP Registration Division Director, Phil Hutton/EPA/OPP Biopesticide and Pollution Division Deputy Director, Janis McFarland/Syngenta Crop Protection Regulatory Affairs Head and Lee Sommers/Colorado State University Experiment Station Director. Jim Parochetti again helped organize the Review Team for CSREES along with Nancy Ragsdale from ARS. The Review Team was asked to assess all aspects of the program focusing on organizational structure, operations, current resources, and program direction. The first challenge was preparing a Briefing Book that was sent to the Peer Review Team before the meeting to provide adequate and in-depth information on the program's operation, budgets, staffing, priority setting, etc. Our four Regional Directors, Marty Marshall/Southern Region, Marion Miller/Western Region, Bob Hollingworth/Northcentral Region and Dave Soderlund/Northeast Region, along with Paul Schwartz/ARS Manager, did an excellent job in providing information on their respective teams. Jerry Baron, Dan Kunkel, Tammy White and I provided information on the Headquarters operations.

The first day concentrated on presentations from PMC members and staff after Jim and Nancy gave the charge and objectives for the review. Dan Rossi, our Northeast Region Administrative Adviser, welcomed the group to Rutgers University/Cook College who served as the hosts because of Headquarters being one of the Cook College Centers of Excellence. Gary Lemme, Chair of the Administrative Advisers from the Northcentral Region, also gave his welcome. We were also fortunate to have our other two Administrative Advisers, Neal Thompson/Southern Region and Michael Parrella/Western Region, in attendance. Michael was able to give Marion's report for the Western Region while Bob, Marty and Dave gave their respective regional presentations. Bob Hollingworth discussed the program's history, the PMC operations, the 2001 to 2005 Strategic Plan and how the regions cooperated while I had the opportunity to discuss the functional/operational overview, accomplishments, 1997 review recommendation responses, the QA Program, the Headquarters operations and the crop protection industry partnerships. Jerry presented our special program initiatives (Biopesticides, Ornamentals, Methyl Bromide Alternatives, Plant Biotechnology and Data Mining) while Dan discussed our EPA partnership and registration strategies. Paul provided information on how the ARS Team partners with the land grant components of the program. The Review Team had opportunities to have group discussions with the Registration Team/Coordinators and Rocky Lundy representing the CLC.

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The Review Team worked hard until 10 or 11 PM each evening and provided us with the preliminary conclusions in an exit conference held on May 22nd. They started off with a list of “kudos” that I would like to share with you as follows: excellent leadership and staff, model of cooperative partnership with the EPA, crop grouping approach leadership role, strong collaboration between Headquarters, regions and ARS, regional flexibility in workload adaption, proactively replacing Section 18’s with Section 3’s, dedicated to mission/go extra mile, support internal staff/professional training and development, excellent registration output, committed to 30 month timeline, Reduced Risk chemistry emphasis, electronic submissions of PCR’s to IR-4 from stakeholders and IR-4 petitions to the EPA, focus on technologies that would not be developed without IR-4 support and great potential for Data Mining Project. Wow! It took all of us who heard

these very positive comments a few minutes to catch our breaths. However, after reflection, we all knew we had done our best to prepare for the review the last three months and the last five years implementing strategies to address the last Peer Review Team’s recommendations. We await the final recommendations from the current Review Team that already are an agenda item for this summer’s PMC Meeting in Ottawa.

Overall, the Peer Review process has been a positive experience for the IR-4 Program as we addressed the 1997 recommendations and developed new strategies, programs and approaches. We look forward to continual process improvement as the 2003 recommendations are studied and addressed.

Article by Bob Holm

IR-4 Project Welcomes New Colleagues

IR-4 recently welcomed two new colleagues to the Headquarters staff. William (Bill) Barney, the new Associate Coordinator of Interdisciplinary Working Groups, will be responsible for evaluating minor use clearance requests; coordinating research programs with State and Federal research scientists; preparing field and laboratory research protocols; writing and submitting regulatory packages to the EPA; and assisting registrants with product labeling.

Bill brings over thirteen years experience in project management, study direction and field investigation from Grayson Research LLC, where he conducted a variety of research studies with crop protection chemicals, and performed similar functions for Environmental Technologies Institute. His prior experience also includes work as a technician for Syngenta and research technician with the Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering at the Tobacco Biophysics Laboratory at North Carolina State University.

Bill holds a Master of Science Degree in Entomology from North Carolina State University, and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Entomology from Colorado State University. He has five publications to his credit. Bill can be reached by email at barney@aesop.rutgers.edu or by calling IR-4 Headquarters at 732-932-9575 ext. 603.

IR-4 also welcomes Sherri Novack as the Communications and Publications Coordinator. Sherri has over 15 years of marketing and communications experience in the education, transportation, hospitality, and consumer products industries. She has traveled extensively bringing awareness of the products and services, of the companies she represented, to various public groups. Sherri will be responsible for the overall communications and marketing of IR-4 to various constituencies. Sherri holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration with a focus in marketing from Thomas Edison State College in New Jersey.

“One of our goals for IR-4 is to provide the best available crop protection technology to US minor crop growers,” stated Executive Director, Bob Holm; “to help us get there, we need to continue in developing an outstanding Headquarters Team to coordinate the overall program. These two professionals are a welcome addition to our team.”

Article by Sherri Novack