



Agricultural Research Stations Committee Meeting

Wednesday October 23, 2024

10:00pm-11:30pm

250 Ag Hall

Attendees: Amaya Atucha, Jarred Chambers, Jeff Endelman, Luiz Ferraretto, Christelle Guédot, Christina Hamilton, Brian Luck, Deena Patterson, Mike Peters, Doug Sabatke, Damon Smith.

Not present: Erin Silva, Troy Runge.

Minutes by: Muhamed Sadiku

Attending as public meeting: None

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order by Brian Luck at 10:00am.

Welcome and Introductions

Brian Luck welcomed the committee and introductions were made.

Approval of April 4, 2024 Meeting Minutes

The previous meeting minutes were reviewed. No changes or amendments were suggested. Amaya Atucha moved that the minutes should be approved as submitted. Deena Patterson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

ARS Director's Report

- Fire at West Madison Station
 - The fire started from straw bales that had just been stacked and spread rapidly.
 - The Madison Fire Department did an excellent job containing the fire, preventing it from reaching nearby chemical storage and fuel tanks
 - The emergency planning items proved effective in handling the fire.
 - Nearly all lost equipment has been replaced through insurance, and researchers' specific equipment needs were addressed.
 - The successful growing season allowed for replacement of lost forage and straw from other stations.
 - Two lingering issues are restoring temporary power to the chemical storage shed and fuel service, which is expected to be resolved next week.
 - The fire-damaged building will likely be rebuilt by 2027.

Questions arose about preventing future fires. Prevention measures include allowing bales to sit in the field longer and segregating equipment and forages in separate facilities, though more storage is needed.

- Greenhouse Lights Upgrade
 - New LED lights are being installed in all ARS control greenhouse facilities, replacing outdated sodium vapor lights. The replacement will take approximately 18 months to avoid disrupting ongoing research.
- New USDA Facility Updates
 - Groundbreaking for a \$76 million facility with new animal housing and labs occurred, with construction expected to start in 2025. A new office building at Marshfield Station is also planned, with design and construction set for 2025-2026.
- Other Facility Projects:
 - Delays in the West Madison Germplasm building project; greenhouses at Sturgeon Bay will be re-skinned and boilers replaced.
- Staffing
 - Low turnover over the summer; new hires at Lancaster due to retirement and a staff member's passing.
- ARS Awards Banquet
 - The event will move to a late afternoon reception at Union South to increase attendance, recognizing researchers and staff for their contributions.

Crop Chargeback Discussion

The new fees are posted on the ARS website and will apply starting in 2025, with 2024 under the previous fee structure. A request sheet is being developed for faculty who may negotiate alternative rates if minimal station resources are used.

Wind Turbine Lease at Marshfield Station

Alliant Energy is interested in leasing land for potential wind turbine installation. Key points included:

- Revenue Potential
 - Annual payments could reach \$32,000 if no turbines were built and escalate to \$50,000-\$60,000 with two turbines.
- Research and Infrastructure Concerns
 - Concrete turbine foundations, which would be partly left in the ground, may affect future research but not current operations.
- Placement Flexibility
 - The station has final jurisdiction over turbine placement to protect research plots.
- Campus and Environmental Considerations
 - Renewable energy aligns with campus goals, including carbon credit discussions.

The committee expressed a mix of support and caution, largely leaving the final decision to the station director with input from campus real estate.

Capital Equipment Challenges

- The \$0.00 lease program for capital equipment, supported by Holland, is facing challenges as most dealers in Wisconsin have withdrawn, leaving only one dealer, Richie Implement, supporting the program.
- The program allowed stations to have flexible access to tractors and equipment, but with declining dealer participation, obtaining new equipment has become difficult.
- Efforts are being made to renegotiate agreements and involve more dealers or expand Richie Implement's service area.
- The leasing program was beneficial due to tax and warranty advantages for dealerships, but these incentives are no longer seen as valuable.

The committee discussed the importance of capital equipment for research purposes at length.

- The director noted that the campus has provided some funding for specific research equipment needs, like upgrading the sprayer at Hancock.
- College leadership, with strong advocacy from Dean Gillaspy, is working to secure more funding for research-focused equipment, allowing stations to better serve researchers.

Animal Ag Operations

- The college is exploring bringing animal research station operations under the agricultural research stations, with oversight provided by Agricultural Research Stations rather than the Animal and Dairy Science Department.
- This merger aims to improve efficiency by consolidating management and aligning resources, aiming to operate as a unified team.
- Planning has been ongoing, and a tentative organizational chart is expected.
- The merger, if approved, is set for early operation by January 2026, with full integration by July 1.
- With this structure, animal and plant research coordination would be enhanced, leveraging shared staff across units as needed.
- Although no immediate staff reductions are anticipated, retirements and attrition might reduce overall staffing needs.
- The restructuring also promises improved tracking and management of research projects college wide.

Adjourn

Amaya Atucha made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Luiz Ferraretto seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:18am.

