



Strategic Plan

INITIATED JULY 2005

Developed and written by the members of the

NTEP Policy Committee

INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan will direct the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) as it progresses into the 21st Century. This plan focuses on clientele needs as well as opportunities for improvement in programs and services offered by NTEP. This plan also responds to changes within the turfgrass industry and society, in general. Finally, this plan continues and enhances NTEP's leadership role within the turfgrass research community.

Members of the NTEP Policy Committee developed this plan as a dynamic document. This document will enable NTEP to continue to be proactive rather than reactive. NTEP will continually analyze and refine the goals and objectives of this plan. An annual review of this plan will be conducted by the Policy Committee. Input from our clientele will be sought to ensure that the plan addresses the needs of the turfgrass industry.

Since its inception, NTEP has served as a leader in cultivar evaluation. This role has continued to increase in importance as the industry has grown and the interest in breeding and development of new and improved turfgrasses has escalated. The number of experimental lines and new cultivars in NTEP trials has risen dramatically over the last few years. The increasing demand for improved turfgrasses and the inherent challenges of evaluating these grasses emphasizes that NTEP should chart its future programs and activities carefully.

TRENDS AND ASSUMPTIONS

There are a number of significant trends and assumptions that will impact NTEP's future. These trends include the following:

1. A changing economy with narrower profit margins, more competition, and greater clientele expectations;
2. An expanding technology base and continuing information explosion;
3. An increasing demand from clientele for accountability and applicable results;
4. A growing concern over quality of life and environment (i.e., soil, air and water quality);
5. An increasing emphasis of government to regulate public policy relating to environment, health and food safety;
6. A shifting pattern of demographics, including movement from rural to urban areas, an aging population and an increase in discretionary spending and leisure time.

These trends will influence the decisions that NTEP must make to effectively commit its resources for program priorities and to satisfy expectations and needs of its clientele.

CLIENTELE

NTEP's clientele, as assessed by the NTEP Policy Committee, have diverse interests, expertise, technical background and expectations. The following list of clientele has been identified (no prioritization is intended by the order of the clientele listed):

- Public and private turfgrass plant breeders
- Public and private sector researchers
- Seed distributors, marketers and retailers
- Technology transfer educators
 - extension educators
 - industry technical representatives
- Private consultants/agronomists
- Professionals
 - seed producers
 - sod producers
 - golf course superintendents
 - golf course builders and architects
 - grounds managers
 - sports turf managers
 - lawn care service operators
 - landscape contractors
 - landscape architects
 - vegetation managers
- Home owners (indirectly)

MISSION

The National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) serves a fundamental role in the turfgrass industry. Its mission is to provide leadership for the evaluation and improvement of turfgrass cultivars by:

Providing a mechanism for uniform turfgrass evaluation;

Advancing the science of evaluations;

Collecting and disseminating turfgrass performance information;

and

Enhancing the transfer and use of information and technology relating to turfgrass improvement and evaluation.

As a not-for-profit organization, NTEP uniquely links the public and private sectors of the turfgrass industry through their common goals of turfgrass development, improvement and evaluation.

OBJECTIVES

The following objectives will serve as program focus for NTEP:

1. Focus on clientele needs.
2. Enhance quality and scientific merit of trials including data collection, analysis and reporting.
3. Develop new partnership opportunities and continue on-site testing programs.
4. Establish policies for evaluating genetically modified grasses (GMGs).
5. Develop staffing and training plans.
6. Increase industry awareness of NTEP's contributions and accomplishments.
7. Lead, monitor and publish the results of turfgrass cultivar evaluations.
8. Cooperate with USDA-ARS and other industry organizations in developing and implementing the National Turfgrass Research Initiative (NTRI).
9. Investigate new opportunities and strategies for revenue generation, efficiency in program costs, and growth of financial assets.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

The following strategies and actions are proposed to accomplish the objectives of the NTEP Strategic Plan. The NTEP Policy Committee will annually review and update this plan. When an objective is accomplished or is deemed to be no longer a priority, that objective will be deleted from the plan and a new objective or objectives will replace it. To enhance the completion of actions within the plan, objectives and actions in the plan will be prioritized and an implementation timeline will be developed and monitored.

Objective 1

Focus on clientele needs

Strategy: Determine clientele needs and expectations.

Actions: Survey clientele and conduct stakeholder listening sessions.

Strategy: Assess impact of present programs on the industry.

Actions: Develop survey instruments to quantify the value of NTEP to the turfgrass industry and society, in general.

Objective 2

Enhance quality and scientific merit of trials including data collection, analysis and reporting

Strategy: Improve quality of evaluations and data collection.

Actions: Develop web-based training programs for data collection, trial establishment and maintenance.

Improve identification of diseases by contracting with an independent lab for analysis and diagnosis.

Develop standardized disease and insect screening procedures.

Cooperate with turfgrass entomologist and pathologist groups to increase the quality and quantity of pest information collected on NTEP trials.

Review findings from automated data collection studies and implement those findings that are practical, efficient and cost-effective.

Fund additional research on innovative data collection techniques.

Strategy: Improve data analysis procedures to improve accuracy.

Actions: Review Additive Main Effects and Multiplicative Interaction (AMMI) analysis of field validation trials for Kentucky bluegrass and if appropriate, integrate AMMI procedures into NTEP data analysis.

Incorporate AMMI procedures into data analysis for all NTEP trials, if appropriate and if needed, conduct field validation trials for other species.

Strategy: Enhance reporting procedures.

Actions: Enhance web site and make data easier to access.

Investigate methods for web site users to sort and/or locate data making cultivar selection easier and more precise.

Objective 3

Develop new partnership opportunities and continue on-site testing programs

Strategy: Strengthen existing coalitions and develop new ones that will help meet clientele expectations and needs.

Actions: Establish jointly funded projects with TPI, STMA and similar organizations.

Continue jointly funded projects with USGA and GCSAA.

Develop new on-site trials.

Objective 4

Establish policies for evaluating
genetically modified grasses

Strategy: Take a leadership role in determining procedures for evaluating genetically modified grasses.

Actions: Develop an advisory committee from individuals who are working with genetically modified grasses.

Work with policy makers.

Discuss evaluation of GMG's with university researchers.

Objective 5

Develop staffing and training plans

Strategy: NTEP is too dependent upon limited staffing resources. In the event that the Executive Director is disabled, who would run the organization? A staffing plan with position descriptions and duties and responsibilities is needed.

Actions: Develop and annually update a staffing plan including full and part-time staff.

Strategy: A plan to cross-train staff, so individuals can cover for one another during sickness or absence is also a dire need.

Actions: Determine the needs for an assistant administrator or office manager.

Annually update position descriptions for all current staff.

Prioritize critical staff functions and ensure that others are trained to cover these aspects in case the primary staff person is sick or absent.

Develop and update annually an office procedures manual that outlines in a step-by-step fashion key operations and tasks.

Explore possibility that turfgrass scientists within one or more state universities might be interested and able to be trained in some duties and responsibilities of NTEP.

Objective 6

Increase industry awareness of NTEP's contributions and accomplishments

Strategy: Actively seek ways to promote the contributions and accomplishments of NTEP, and increase its visibility to the industry.

Actions: Seek multiple ways to get information to our clientele.
Enhance the use of the website.
Write articles for trade journals and other publications on NTEP and the turf industry, in general.
Develop periodic news releases for industry trade magazines and news items on our web site.
Develop automatic e-mails and/or listservers to contact or forward information to our clientele and others.

Objective 7

Lead, monitor and publish the results of turfgrass cultivar evaluations

Strategy: Involve individuals from both public and private sectors in the planning, executive and dissemination of results from all evaluations.

Actions: In conjunction with clientele, develop and distribute a schedule for upcoming evaluations.

Request and obtain input on the proposed management regimes for each evaluation.

Publish the criteria used to select standard entries.

Visit each site at least once in the course of the evaluation period.

Request and obtain input on the content and format of reports.

Objective 8

Cooperate with USDA-ARS and other industry organizations in developing and implementing the National Turfgrass Research Initiative (NTRI)

Strategy: When possible and where opportunities arise, cooperate with USDA-ARS and other organizations in implementing the objectives of the National Turfgrass Research Initiative that may benefit NTEP and its clientele.

Actions: Work with the turfgrass program at the National Arboretum in establishing and maintaining NTEP trials, demonstration trials and other appropriate research and/or turfgrass management opportunities.

When new turfgrass scientist positions are created as a function of NTRI, consult and work with USDA-ARS National Program Staff, administrators and scientists concerning NTEP's role and possible collaborative efforts with each position.

Objective 9

Investigate new opportunities and strategies for revenue generation, efficiency in program costs, and growth in financial assets

Strategy: Investigate, cultivate and develop possible new opportunities that serve clientele needs as well as generate significant revenue.

Actions: Consider and develop, if feasible, new trials, such as salinity tolerance, low maintenance and promising new species.
Consider and develop, if feasible, germplasm screening trials (preliminary trials).

Obtain and consider recommendations from a reputable investment counselor concerning security and growth of our current financial assets.

Reduce dependence of NTEP as the primary funding source for the promotion (lobbying) of NTRI.