NTEP Listening Session
14 February 2004
Meeting Room 32-B San Diego Convention Center
Tom Voigt, Chair, NTEP Policy Committee presiding

Dr. Voigt began by introducing the members of the NTEP Policy Committee present at the session. These included Clark Throssell with the GCSAA, James Murphy of Rutgers University, Mike Kenna of the USGA, Gwen Stahnke of Washington State University, David Williams of the University of Kentucky, Kevin Morris of the NTEP, Chris McDowell of Pickseed, Ike Thomas of Turfgrass America, and Leah Brilman of Seed Research of Oregon.

Dr. Voigt then presented the agenda for the session and encouraged all present to participate in useful discussion.

The first agenda item was to identify the needs of members relative to the NTEP mission.

1. What are the useful programs and/or services that NTEP provides?

Tom Voigt noted that the program was an excellent extension tool, i.e., field day presentations.

James Murphy stated that there is a need for more work on lower maintenance, open areas like common areas in parks.

Craig Edminster stated the program is a very useful tool for evaluating new plant material.

2. What programs and/or services are not useful or not needed?

Tom Voigt stated the website and CD publications were very useful.

Russ Nicholson stated that some golf course superintendents do not have computer access, and therefore hard copies of NTEP reports should still be made available for purchase.

Craig Edminster suggested placing a notice on the website that hard copies are available for purchase.

Bernd Leinauer stated that some trials have too many entries. Kevin Morris agreed, but replied that it can be difficult to control or restrict the number of entries.

3. What are programs and/or services that NTEP could provide in the future?

Bernd Leinauer suggested more trials on new species, e.g., *Poa* hybrids.

Russ Nicholson suggested that current trials provide good information across climates but it would be very useful to know the origin and linage of entries. This would allow for comparisons with parents. Also, it is always useful to know if an entry is commercially available.

Matt Herb suggested that NTEP provide links to seed companies on the official NTEP website.

Tom Voigt suggested that NTEP *offer* to provide links to seed companies, but not provide them without permission.

Dick Olson stated that turf performance under irrigation with effluent water needs to be evaluated. This opinion was supported by Bernd Leinauer.

The second agenda item was NTEP Testing Programs

1. **Which trials are most useful, least useful?**

Dick Olson stated that seedling vigor ratings in trials may not be appropriate. He further stated that if vigor was to be evaluated, a standardized method should be determined. Tom Voigt suggested that percent ground cover during establishment may be a better method of measuring establishment speed than seedling vigor.

Tim Ford stated that seedling vigor is heavily related to the condition of seed lots, e.g., seed age, storage conditions, etc.

Leah Brilman stated that dormancy is also a factor of the environment where seed is produced and when the seed is produced.

Kevin Morris stated that the actual dormancy status of entries is unknown.

Devesh Singh suggested that the rating be called something besides seedling vigor.

Tom Voigt suggested requesting companies provide the age of seed lots. Kevin Morris replied that sometimes that is known.

Dick Olson suggested pre-chilling all entries. Kevin Morris replied that would probably help.

Zenon Lis inquired how decisions are made concerning which universities are awarded trials. Tom Voigt replied that the process involved advisory committees for each trial which evaluate each institution that has requested a trial. Kevin Morris then fully explained the process including evaluation of previous trials of the same species (data collected, maintenance levels, etc.) and the final approval of advisory committee recommendations by the policy committee.

Clark Throssell stated that trials are sometimes placed slightly out of what would be considered the normal geographic range for data on adaptation. Kevin Morris reiterated that this was true.

Leah Brilman stated that some universities don't have the ability to conduct trials, so in areas like the western United States there are not enough viable locations.

Kevin Morris stated that genuine interest from universities is absolutely essential for successful trials.

2. Suggestions for refinements/enhancements

Doug Brede stated that knowledge of the genus and species of all pests is important. Kevin Morris replied that NTEP does ask for that information, but some cooperators do not provide it. Mr. Morris further stated that the use of one lab for disease identification for all NTEP tests is under consideration. Dr. Brede stated if the proper identification is not provided then that data should be left out of the reports. Mr. Morris stated that sometimes data is omitted for this reason.

Tim Ford stated that there is excessive variation in establishment ratings across locations.

Bill Meyer stated the need for a list of diseases for each species to be evaluated, and the need for pathologists to inoculate to make sure we get disease. He suggested this should be done by the advisory committee for each trial, and the committee should determine at least one location that will inoculate with the appropriate pathogens.

Leah Brilman stated that program reports lacked significant insect data in the last 2 or 3 data sets. She further stated the need for entomologists to cooperate.

Craig Edminster suggested standardized screening procedures for new plant materials, maybe in greenhouses and growth chambers, much like the model in alfalfa evaluations.

Leah Brilman agreed and stated also that these kinds of studies would be publishable which would be good for the cooperators.

Tim Ford suggested coordination of pest data with PVP requirements, and also that it might be useful to have endophyte data in appropriate species. Leah Brilman stated that Rutgers had done quite a bit of work on endophyte levels.

Leah Brilman suggested separate trials for velvet, colonial, and creeping bentgrasses. She stated these species have very different management requirements and that current trials are often mismanaged.

Mike Kenna suggested the possibility of a trial for seashore paspalum.

Kevin Morris reported that the onsite bentgrass trials were complete and asked if similar trials should be conducted in the future. Bill Meyer stated several superintendents had asked him if any of the tests were conducted on greens in play, and not on practice greens. Dr. Meyer felt a need for tests under real playing conditions. He also suggested careful consideration of where onsite tests would be located. He further stated that most universities don't apply fungicides until diseases cause significant damage, whereas golf courses apply fungicides much more often. Dr. Meyer felt that this difference helps explain differences in data between onsite and university trials. Lastly, he stated that he thought the superintendents would like to see trials under heavy traffic and wear. Leah Brilman concurred and stated that sometimes trials are managed for the weakest cultivar, which makes it more difficult for the top cultivars to stand out.

Mike Kenna stated the onsite tests were conducted under a whole range of management and use levels, but yet 2 or 3 cultivars came out on top at all locations. He reported that the tests cost the USGA 300K to build greens, establish contracts, etc.; all in all it was a huge effort and investment. Dr. Kenna's feeling from seed companies was that additional onsite testing was not needed, and that data from onsite trials was not better than current trials.

Crystal Fricker stated that the onsite trials were the first time that Dr. Joe Duich felt that NTEP trials were close to the real world. She further stated that there were differences between the onsite trials and university trials. Lastly, she stated superintendents appreciated the data from onsite trials. Tom Voigt stated that his onsite trial was very useful.

The next agenda item was data reporting and dissemination.

1. Is NTEP data reported and distributed in an appropriate manner?

Tim Ford stated that some marketing people prefer hard copies and would likely be willing to pay from them.

Kevin Morris reported that there is a printable format on the website for both individual tables and entire reports.

Leah Brilman expressed a need in tests with traffic treatments to include information on when traffic was applied, what kind of traffic, etc., in general need more information to properly evaluate traffic data. Tom Voigt suggested the possibility of including digital images of recently trafficked plots. Leah Brilman suggested also using a photo of an untrafficked plot for comparison.

Matt Herb stated that the data indicate that some locations did not report numerical differences between many varieties in some trials. He further stated it would be desirable to report that all equivalent ratings are the same, i.e., all cultivars rated 6.8 should be ranked equally.

Russ Nicholson inquired about the status if using digital evaluations instead of subjective evaluations for data collection. Kevin Morris replied evaluation of digital data collection and analyses is under study at Arkansas and Illinois. He further stated that the technology will work for some response variables, but not for all.

Bill Meyer suggested extending tests to 6 or 7 years for economic reasons. He recommended 6 years, and that the length of tests should be evaluated for each species.

Mike Kenna asked the group if breeders would be interested in a two-step process, first evaluation of performance for 2 or 3 years, then another 4 year trial afterwards for marketing purposes. Kevin Morris stated this idea has not had much support in the past. Leah Brilman stated it would depend on cost of both trials. Mike Kenna proposed that the revenue to NTEP would have to be over the entire 7 years. He suggested that the first trial would be to evaluate possible entries into the second trial.

The last agenda item was an open discussion.

Leah Brilman asked how to encourage more participation from golf course superintendents in this forum. Russ Nicholson suggested using a survey. Teresa Carson suggested use of the GCSSA website. Kevin Morris suggested the possibility of customer advisory committees. Joe Lang reported he was unable to find information about the listening session in the GCSAA program. Clark Throssell replied that it was advertised several different ways, but was not in the directory.

Tom Voigt suggested that NTEP listening sessions might occur on a biennial basis, and that it is desirable to encourage more participation from golf course superintendents in the future.

Pat McClain raised the issue of lengthening the time of trials. Tom Voigt replied it is under consideration, but there has not been much broad-based support. Further, Dr. Voigt reported that lengthening some and shortening others is under consideration. Dr. Voigt then asked the group why the length of trials was an issue. Pat McClain replied from a marketing standpoint it would be extremely useful in that it slows down the process of putting new cultivars on the market. He further stated that in the past, going from 4-5 years was a good decision. He suggested possibly making the Kentucky bluegrass trial longer, and the perennial ryegrass trial shorter. He suggested each trial should be evaluated to balance the cost with the benefit. Tom Voigt replied that the issue would be on the policy committee agenda. Mike Kenna stated that NTEP is a service to both breeders and end-users. He encouraged input from all groups in making decisions based on species. Charlie Rodgers stated that shortening trials is better for breeders and lengthening is better for marketers.

Devesh Singh stated there is no way to discern if the materials that were tested in trials are the same thing that eventually becomes available on the open market. He suggested tests to identify genetic differences and PVP traits.

Craig Edminster stated that generally the NTEP final reports indicate larger differences among entries than earlier data from the same trial. Leah Brilman stated that marketing decisions are made long before final reports are completed.

Crystal Fricker stated that genetic testing would insure that the same cultivar that was tested is the same as what is available on the market. She stated that currently this is not always the case. She further stated that the length of trials is a financial issue for companies, and suggested consideration of short term evaluations at a limited number of sites, followed by a longer trial for marketing purposes. Leah Brilman raised the issue of the use of data from the preliminary trials for marketing decisions. Mike Kenna suggested that the experimental trials would probably have far fewer entries and very few checks, which would make the data less useful in marketing. Zenon Lis suggested that lengthening the trials might result in fewer entries.

Devesh Singh inquired if the management regimes at each location were dictated by NTEP? Kevin Morris replied that they were, and that they are determined by the advisory committee for each trial. Dr. Singh inquired about regional data. Kevin Morris replied that most trials include regional data in reports.

Kevin Turner complimented the program, and stated that NTEP data is very, very powerful. He suggested that the idea of extending tests comes from the market and that it is likely that data from the proposed preliminary tests would also be used by marketing people. He suggested lengthening the interval between trials, and the possibility of conducting some trials one on one with universities.

Kenneth Hignight suggested that lengthening tests would be good. He further stated that when tests were lengthened previously, the number of entries went from 100 to 120, and if the duration were increased again, the number of entries may reach 200. He suggested that if this were the case, limiting the number of entries from each company might be necessary.

Charlie Rodgers, a plant breeder, stated that if he knew tests were going to be shorter in duration, he would put in more entries. This would potentially double the land requirements, and he suggested input from cooperating universities. Kevin Morris suggested that the preliminary trials would only be conducted at a few sites. Tom Voigt stated that some universities would have plenty of land, and others would certainly not. Gwen Stahnke stated that most universities in the western USA would probably have limited land.

Mike Kenna raised the issue of trials conducted at universities versus trials conducted on private, company-owned land and asked for comments from the group. Craig Edminster asked when the current policy of having only university trials was instituted. Kevin Morris replied it was in the early 1990's. Ken Hignight suggested the possibility of private companies conducting trials, but not using the data from those trials in NTEP reports. He further stated it was more of an environmental issue than an issue of honesty. He felt that a breeder would rate his own entries higher not because he selected it, but

because he is partial to the traits that were used to select it. Russ Nicholson suggested that digital data collection would remove that bias. Tom Voigt replied those methods are still under study and not ready for broad use. Leah Brilman stated that 'green' is relative among individuals. Dr. Voigt stated it was his goal to provide the most useful data possible. Zenon Lis suggested consideration of aerial photographs for evaluations. Dr. Voigt replied they would be useful for some traits like color, but not for others such as density, turf quality, etc.

There being no further discussion, Kevin Morris stated that if anyone had comments to offer privately, individuals should submit them to a policy committee member or to him. He also asked all present to please encourage participation among colleagues. Lastly, Tom Voigt assured all present that the issues raised during this discussion would be taken under consideration by the policy committee.