



The American Chestnut Foundation Vermont/New Hampshire Chapter  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Heritage Park, Woodstock, VT  
Saturday November 9, 2019 10 am-2:30 pm

Board members present: Yuriy Bihun (President), Daane Crook (Treasurer), William Coder (Acting Secretary), Terry Gulick, Gary Hawley, Curtis Laffin, Douglas McLane, James (JP) Powers, James Talbot, William Widmer  
Member absent: Gary Robertson (Vice President)  
TACF Staff present: Kendra Collins, Regional Science Coordinator.

Note: Items involving some follow-up are underlined>.

**1. National Meeting Recap**

Meeting discussion opened at 10:12 AM with some news from the national meeting in Gettysburg.

Yuriy noted that a chair made with salvage chestnut wood by former BOD member Adam Nudd-Hoymeyer brought \$15,000 to TACF national in a very successful raffle.

Kendra provided an update on the Darling transgenic tree regulatory process: With USDA application nearing submission, it is anticipated that the USDA public comment period could begin in January/February 2020. EPA and FDA processes are somewhat later and not expected to be as challenging. Kendra noted that there are currently some state forests, and properties certified by Forest Stewardship Council or Sustainable Forest Initiative which would exclude trees with transgenic content.

**2. Review and Approval of Minutes from August 21 2019 BOD Conference Call**

Upon a motion made by Terry and seconded by JP, minutes as submitted were approved unanimously.

**3. Review and Approval Treasurer's Reports**

Daane noted that two additional significant expenses had been received after generating the November 1 Treasurer's Reports. The first is from the NH Forest Society (SPNHF) for approximately \$2200 relating to Tom Rush Forest Seed Orchard expenses. Yuriy noted that although SPNHF is continuing to fund raise on account of expenses for the seed orchard, the

chapter is bearing the bulk of the setup costs. Another recent expense item was approximately \$750 for Yuri's travel expenses to attend the national meeting in Gettysburg. Upon a motion made by Curt, and seconded by Terry the November 1, 2019 Treasurer's Report (two documents) were approved unanimously.

#### **4. Budget review and potential budget items for 2020**

Review of the 2019 budget document resulted in only minor adjustments to create a 2020 budget. Income item 1b, Donations, was bumped up to \$1500. On the Expense section item 2d, Orchards, was adjusted to \$6500, and item 2j, New Display, was deleted.

Expense expected in the Outreach category include the Constant Contact license of ~\$175, and printing of some of the brochure update (in progress). In the near term, Yurij will be getting 250 sheets of FAQ cards (yielding 500 cards) printed.

Under Orchards expenses, items mentioned were ~\$500 seed orchard expenses, \$750-1000 for planting signage (including Essex), and possible fencing expenses for another GCO site and a potential educational planting in Temple NH. Orchard expenses are eligible for expected ongoing Manton Grant funding, which was at the rate of \$5000 for 2019. An application will be submitted this winter and hopefully a Manton Grant for 2020 would become available in April.

Regarding donations, membership renewal contributions beyond the \$40 level default to the national organization. If one wants to make donate to the chapter it is necessary to explicitly designate your intention.

#### **5. Governance Committee Report on BOD Roles and Responsibilities (Jim Talbot)**

A document previously circulated describing roles and responsibilities for board member and executive committee was discussed further.

**Committees:** A question arose regarding whether the committees listed in the document are all actually active. Jim clarified that several committees named in the chapter By-laws (e.g. Nominating, Science Oversight, Membership, Educational, Salvage) are not necessarily currently active. (Later agenda items for this meeting reflect recent activities of Nominating and Salvage Committees; Nominating's active participants are listed in their recent report.)

It was observed that two committees spun out of 2017 strategic planning appear to overlap with the functions described in the bylaws: Orchard is akin to Science Oversight; and Membership and Outreach overlaps with by-law Membership and Educational functions. Governance has no similar bylaw-based committee.

**Orchard Committee:** Kendra noted that she has effectively been holding down much of the Orchard/Science committee workload; (note: Doug's GCO initiative also fits into the Orchard Committee role). She asked BOD members present to more actively participate in overseeing orchards. Doug, Yurij, Gary Hawley, and JP agreed to participate.

**Membership and Outreach:** Curt (and Carol), Doug and Terry have been most active in these areas. Bill Coder and Daane also participate.

**Salvage:** see the Salvage Committee agenda item discussion below.

Kendra noted that Zoom is available for conducting virtual meetings across the regional divides.

It was suggested that the Governance document might mention more gender and age diversity as a policy; Gary Hawley volunteered to write up a proposal. Jim offered to seek diverse reviewers to check the document for any hints of age or gender bias.

## **6. Nominating Committee Report (Yurij Bihun, Doug McLane & Daane Crook)**

The Nominating Committee report noted that there will be one known vacancy on the board as of the next annual meeting and listed seven potential candidates for future board membership, not all of whom had been vetted for interest. Several others were suggested in the discussion. Kendra suggested considering Carrie Deegan and Gabe Roxby from SPNHF and Paula Murikami, a USFS collaborator, and volunteered to sound them out. Yurij said he will check with Jeremy Gardner (listed in the Nominating report). Gary Hawley's suggestion of having student representation was also viewed favorably.

## **7. Executive Committee Succession Strategy (Yurij Bihun)**

The topic of succession plan for President led to discussion of how the responsibilities of that position might be spread to more people. Yurij noted that queries from membership or external sources might be directed to the board Secretary. Yurij offered to remain the primary editor/writer of the annual newsletter after stepping down as President. Yurij observed that absent a nominee for President that the Vice President would likely have to assume that role. Doug was asked if he willing to serve as VP, why not as President. He responded that managing details is a challenge for him but noted that the secretary keeping track of details would be of great benefit. Doug expressed willingness to consider a one-year trial as President with the assistance of a Vice President who could track details. Acting Secretary Bill Coder offered that he is comfortable with tracking most details while lacking the science and horticultural background for leadership in those areas. Terry moved that Doug be nominated for President, paired with Bill Coder as Vice President; the motion was seconded by Curt. Discussion of the motion: Bill noted that it may be easier to find a candidate for Secretary than Vice President, but others suggested that a Vice President role of managing details may not expand the workload much beyond the secretarial role of tracking details. Bill asked that the motion be tabled, while recognizing that executive nominations need to be resolved by the February conference call.

## **8. Report of Membership and Outreach Committee**

In the interest time the report distributed before the meeting was left to stand on its own, however Curt noted that there was a slight downward revision of membership from 216 to 212.

## **9. Breeding Program Updates (Kendra Collins)**

### **a. Strategy Plans**

Kendra cited a need to begin a full review of the Chapter Specific Science Plan Outline, as circulated before the meeting, with the Orchard Committee with a goal for chapter

updates of the end of the calendar year. She expanded upon a few of the points in the Chapter Specific Science Plan:

- strengthening selection processes at the breeding orchards, combining phenotype and genotype data;
- in seed orchards using small-stem assays to help speed up progeny testing;

#### **Breeding Orchards:**

It is intended that selection from the breeding orchards for seed orchards be made more stringent by observation of additional phenotype traits beyond canker size on trees which are at least two years beyond inoculation. Such blight resistance phenotype traits can be correlated with the genotyping done using leaf samples. It is also intended that each chapter's population have its own prediction model. Lines that don't transition to the seed orchards can be still be conserved in backcross conservation orchards to represent unique mother trees for transgenic diversification.

#### **Seed Orchards:**

A major challenge in seed orchards is determining the top ~1% of blight resistance trees. Small-stem assay allows for speedier progeny testing. Kendra noted that the greenhouse at her office could be used for some of the small stem assays but that it involves a lot of work to grow many trees for this method.

Kendra also noted that the science staff is considering incorporating additional sources of resistance into the seed orchards via some other crosses. Because it will not be clear for a while whether seed orchards will be the end point or if another orchard generation is needed, it is recommended that the chapter not expand beyond our existing three seed orchards.

Russell-Abbott State Forest in Wilton, New Hampshire has a few surviving trees from a 1940s planting by a USDA office in Connecticut. They are likely "CJAs", which were Chinese/American crossed with Japanese or crossed together. These might provide an additional source of blight resistance for the VT/NH Chapter program.

#### **b. Regional Harvest Updates (Kendra Collins)**

Kendra harvested nuts from several open pollinated Americans, including from a GCO at the UVM Horticultural Plan, Green Mountain National Forest, and about 125 from John Sargent in Wilton, NH. Kendra also harvested OP B3F2s from the two selected backcross orchards at Valley View Farm in Shelburne, VT.

Curt harvested nuts from Pelham and Merrimack NH, and Doug also harvested from a couple of crosses. Doug should send Kendra the details of what crosses were made and how many nuts came from each one to get those crosses into the database.

#### **c. Breeding Orchard Ownership**

The owner of Otter Brook Farm in Peterborough has passed away and the onsite staff were told that farm operation will cease as of 2020. The breeding orchard trees there have not been inoculated yet. Kendra intends to write an overview of what the next steps would be at the Orchard with the hope that the estate will support allowing completion of the selection process. At the very least the chapter should be given access to the orchard.

High Shelter Farm in Perkinsville, VT (Grace and Randy Knight) is up for sale. In addition to a breeding orchard some of the chapter's chestnut wood is stored on site.

The germplasm agreement in both cases says the TACF retains ownership of the trees and must be given at least be given 60 days' notice to recover them. But it is not practical to do so without having any breeding selections. In both sites holding off removals for two years is highly desirable.

Kendra will check into the transfer provisions of the germplasm agreement.

#### **10. Salvage Committee Report (Yurij Bihun)**

Yurij stated that 200 board feet are in Randy Knight's barn; Yurij needs to figure out the sizes and create an inventory. Gary Robertson holds wood from the Caanan tree salvage that the chapter paid for this year. Gary R. needs to let us know what he intends to do with it.

Terry asked what happened to that Shaftsbury (VT) tree but Yurij was not aware of it. At least one of several Berlin VT trees is also salvageable. Yuri will survey the Berlin site this spring

A location for storage will also need to be identified based on an inventory. It was previously noted that some wood being kept at High Shelter Farm may need to be relocated. Yurij might offer Adam some wood free in exchange for making another chair. Suggestions on specialty lumber suppliers welcomed. Current Salvage Committee members are Yurij, Gary H. and Gary R.

#### **11. Displays and educational outreach**

Yurij noted a reluctance to part with the large display currently at Terry's home, despite having two more portable displays. Although he felt it was more suitable for the VT Farm Show, others noted that the portable display on a table top was probably sufficient. Terry asked for suggestions on how to update the VT display contents prior to the next even in January. Perhaps Curt could share what he did in updating the NH portable unit with Terry. Board members are asked to help staff booths at these shows:

VT Farm Show Jan. 28-30, 2020, Champlain Valley Exposition, Essex Jct, VT  
NH Farm and Forest, Feb 14 & 15, 2020, Manchester, NH

#### **12. Meeting Plans**

Wednesday February 12, 2020 7 PM – 9 PM was set for the next conference call meeting.

Yurij suggested considering location and speakers for the 2020 Annual Meeting to be held somewhere in NH. Doug suggested Plymouth, NH with possible venues of Plymouth State, Quincy Bog, or Forest Service Office. Potential speakers mentioned: Rick Van De Pol, Tom Wessels, Bernd Heinrich, Rubin Wall-Kimmerer, and Rowan Jacobsen (Author of "The Most Controversial Tree in the World"). The NH contingent will need to investigate locations and speakers before the February conference call.

### 13. Adjournment

Terry moved to adjourn, seconded by JP at about 1:45 PM. No objections voiced.

### 14. Follow-up / Action items

- a. Yurij to have 250 pages (500 cards) of FAQ cards printed.
- b. Yurij to contact Jeremy Gardner re: interest in BOD.
- c. Kendra to contact Carrie Deegan, Gabe Roxby and Paula Murikami re interest in BOD.
- d. Jim to circulate Governance report to gender and age diverse reviewers.
- e. Kendra to review germplasm agreement for transfer of ownership provisions and provide follow-up steps for Otter Brook orchard.
- f. Orchard Committee to meet on the chapter's response to the Chapter Specific Science Plan Outline.
- g. Doug to send Kendra details on crosses and seed numbers from each one.
- h. Several actions identified for Salvage Committee: inventory and storage, follow-up on Canaan tree wood, survey Berlin tree.
- i. Can Curt share information on updating the display contents with Terry?
- j. NH contingent needs to begin planning for Annual Meeting. Form committee?