

## **Montana Potato Advisory Committee**

Tuesday November 12, 2024

Holiday Inn – Downtown, Missoula, MT

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Paul Streich at 10:01 am.

### **Roll Call**

All Committee members were present. Members of the public present included: Andy Fjeseth, Larry Krum, Nina Zidack, (more)

### **Public Comment**

Chair Streich called for public comment. There was no public comment.

### **Meeting Minutes from November 7, 2023**

Jonathan Schutter made the motion to approve the meeting minutes from the April 18, 2023 meeting. Tim Lake seconded the motion. All Committee members voted to approve the minutes.

### **Financial Report**

Andy Fjeseth presented the Committee with their budget snapshot. The Committee discussed the budget numbers. Mr. Fjeseth noted that there was \$95,739 available for FY25 grants. Tim Venhuizen moved to accept the financials as presented. Mr. Lake seconded. All Committee members voted to approve the financials as presented.

The Committee discussed the current assessment rate, which is 2.5 cents per hwt. The Committee discussed whether or not they should consider raising the assessment. Larry Krum discussed the ins and outs of that process and noted that it would require state rulemaking to get done. The Committee had further discussion and decided to leave the assessment at its current rate. Mr. Venhuizen moved to keep the assessment at its current rate. Laci Holbrook seconded. All Committee members voted to keep the assessment at its current rate.

Mr. Lake discussed the advertising and marketing budget and noted any changes. The Committee intends to continue to use the ads that were created last year. The Committee gave feedback on the new booth banners and discussed ways to improve the images that are included. Committee members plan to share professional photos with Carli to help with the development of the materials.

Tim noted that he is serving his last term, and that they would need to identify a replacement to handle the advertising program for the future. Tim mentioned that he felt Carli Highbanks would make a great replacement for him. Carli indicated she was willing to take on this role in the future. The Committee generally discussed the usefulness of still advertising in the industry magazines and how they are/are not using them. Mr. Fjeseth mentioned that there is a new Specialty Crop grant program that is aimed at enhancing the

competitiveness of specialty crops and how this program could be a possible source of funding for the Committee to consider when it comes to trade shows

### **2024 Research Presentations**

- Nina Zidack gave an overview of the blackleg testing that had been completed for the 2024 crop. Nina noted that 72 tests were conducted, and that all grower tests were performed using grant funds and no growers were directly charged. The Committee discussed with Nina the results of her research. The Committee asked if Nina felt there was more research to be done in this area. Nina noted that there was a definite need, and discussed some of the other projects in this area currently underway at MSU.
- Will Brunz gave an update on the canine PVY detection research project. He discussed the process they undertook to test the dogs. Will noted that they did not receive a lot of “hits” at the 7 day mark. The results were similar at the 10 day mark, but between 10-14 days the dogs got to a 100% hit rate mark. The Committee asked questions of Mr. Brunz about his research. Mr. Brunz noted there were zero false positives during the research. Mr. Brunz shared his new proposal for this year’s grant. The Committee asked Mr. Brunz about the efficacy of the research and how likely it would be to carry on if the funding from the Committee were to stop.
- Paul Nugent shared the results of his optical sensor research. The goal of the research was to be able to identify PVY without ever stepping foot into a field. Paul noted that they are getting about 85% accuracy with this research, and he noted that it was not a great number, but that this research is in its infancy, and he felt that it was a good number to work from. Paul discussed his proposal to continue the optical potato yield monitoring project and noted some of the data they had received to date.
- Janak Joshi provided updates on his research from the past year. He was specifically looking at potential contamination sources for *Dickeya dianthicola*. He noted that they were expecting to find some of this contamination within water, but that the data did not prove that out. He noted that it was also difficult to find any contamination in soil. Very complex to know the survival rates of these diseases within the soil. They identified some beneficial bacteria. Mostly this year it has been traveling and analyzing results in the lab. Next year will be more of the same but leveling it up to consider some of their findings from this past year.

### **New Grant Applications**

- Aritra Choudhury presented his Fungi against Fungi project which aims to identify fusarium dry rot. The Committee discussed Mr. Choudhury’s proposal and asked questions.

Larry Krum provided an update on his work over the past year. He noted that they shipped 3.081 M hwt, which was a slight decrease from 2023. Larry noted that the prospects for. Have shipped about 65,000 hwt so far this fall. Larry talked about the updates to the database. There will be an investment of \$121-125,000 investment over the three-year

period to launch the new system. The cost of the new program from Georgia is \$10,000 and then about \$4,000 p/y thereafter. The rugged laptops needed to implement the new system are in the \$2-3,000 range. The new system would reduce the workload for about 2 staff, which will hopefully lead to increased efficiencies. Email the finished certificate to the MT customer, and then that can be emailed to the customer by the end of the day. Once the trucks are through, the certificate is emailed automatically. Grower profiles can be created and delineated between locations. Can also set up grower-specific varieties. Larry ran through this this fall, biggest issues with the laptops is battery life and readability in various climate conditions (i.e., sunlight, etc.). Larry talked about trying to set up some space/time to do a demo for growers so they know what to expect moving forward.

Tim Venhuizen gave an update that Steve Hoeven will be the leadership candidate for this year. Steve will be attending the fly in to DC and the convention in Wisconsin. Tim V moved to fund Steve and a to-be-determined returning candidate. Jonathan seconded. All in favor.

The Committee circled back on the new proposals for 2024. Tim V noted that he felt it would be good for the applicants to show up to the meeting. They discussed the disjointed process between the advisory committee and the research subcommittee. The Committee discussed the need to get more of the research committee members attached to the advisory committee. At the very least, the advisory committee members should be participating in the research reviews. After much discussion, Tim Venhuizen moved to fully fund Aritra and Paul's proposals. Jonathan Schutter seconded. All Committee members voted in favor of the motion.

Tim Lake moved to fund Will Brunz project at \$9,000 with conditions (including illustrating how the project can scale). Tim V. seconded. Two Committee members voted in favor, while four opposed the motion. Motion fails.

The Committee decided to take no action on Jessica Kansman's application and chose to meet at a later date when they could ask question of Ms. Kansman about her proposal. The date for that meeting was to-be-determined.

Chair Streich adjourned the meeting at 1:28 pm.