

FINAL PROJECT REPORT
WTFRC Project Number: TR – 10 - 100

Project Title: Technology Roadmap Support

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City: Washington
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Cooperators: NONE

Percentage time per crop Across All Crops
 (Efforts focused on policy, program structure and procedures, and precedents for all crops)

Total project funding request: \$102,000 Total
Year 1: \$33,000 **Year 2:** \$33,000 **Year 3:** \$36,000

Other funding sources NONE

WTFRC Collaborative expenses: NONE

Budget

Organization Name: James Nicholas Ashmore & Associates
Contract Administrator: James Nicholas Ashmore
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Item	Year 1 2010	Year 2 2011	Year 3 2012
Salaries	\$33,000	\$33,000	\$36,000
Benefits			
Wages			
Benefits			
Equipment			
Supplies			
Travel			
Miscellaneous			
Total	\$33,000	\$33,000	\$36,000

Objectives:

1. To protect funding for ongoing research programs and to seek funding for new proposals identified as significant and beneficial to the Washington tree fruit industry;
2. To work with the Northwest Horticultural Council to insure that Commission research initiatives are integrated with and complement other tree fruit industry goals and objectives;
3. To continue cooperative efforts with the Northwest Horticultural Council, the U. S. Apple Association, and other specialty crop stakeholder groups in working with the Congress and the Administration in their efforts to reauthorize the General Farm Act; and to seek collaboration and assistance from other agricultural groups on shared concerns, and work to educate the Congress, the Administration, and the public about the significant benefits accruing from the Specialty Crops research programs as well as emphasizing the unique position of the Washington tree fruit industry and its economic importance to the Region and to the nation;
4. To insure that Federal research activities and requests for research proposals are strategically targeted and responsive to the needs of the Washington state industry and to insure that the Commission has the flexibility to choose to participate fully in the process;
5. To keep the Commission informed of developments in the Congress and the Administration that impact on ongoing and/or future research funding;
6. To pursue specific activities related to high priority research initiatives, including but not limited to the following:
 - a. USDA-ARS apple rootstock breeding program, Geneva, New York;
 - b. Expansion and enhancement of pear genomics, genetics, and breeding efforts and insure that those efforts address the needs of the Pacific West Region;
 - c. Development and implementation of the newly-funded Roadmap project to identify and prioritize engineering technology research to develop new pesticide application technology and its implementation for orchard structures;
 - d. Expansion of automation and precision agriculture research efforts that will benefit the Pacific Northwest; and,
 - e. Expansion of research and extension efforts in sustainable tree fruit production and handling, including the implications for proposed regulations affecting such handling.

Significant Findings/Results (To Date):

Generally speaking, the objectives set forth above were met or exceeded. There are some instances where there was progress toward the goal, but much remains to be done.

In addition to the above objectives, the project included on as needed basis work on several issues that affect Washington producers, and in those instances, there were contingent benefits from working collaboratively with industry partners and with other agricultural groups.

The three years covered by this project (2010 – 2012), covered a wide range of topics, focusing essentially on three major areas:

- Working with the Congress, the Administration, and our partners to ensure full and successful implementation of the Specialty Crop research provisions of the 2008 farm statute;
- Working with the Congress and the Administration (within the economic realities of a severe recession coupled with a strong political push to control Federal spending and reduce the Federal budget deficit), to secure funding for research programs/research areas important to the Washington State industry; and,

- At the same time working with our coalition partners, the Administration, the appropriate committees of jurisdiction in the House and Senate, and the Washington State Delegation to secure continuation of the Specialty Crop provisions in the reauthorization legislation passed by the Senate and reported by the House Committee on Agriculture.

We have, I believe, been remarkably successful in all three areas, and it is important to note that the Commission's willingness to work within the system and help insure that the 2008 Act was implemented successfully played a major part in securing the inclusion of strong specialty crop provisions, including language relative to the Clean Plant Network, in the reauthorization legislation that has passed the Senate and is pending in the House.

The Washington Delegation offices have been extraordinarily successful to us with respect to protecting to the extent possible appropriations legislation for research programs important to the industry.

It is important to note that the Congress has not completed action on farm bill reauthorization legislation. The controversial areas are outside of our control (the level of spending cuts for agriculture overall and also how and where those cuts are made and should the SNAP program face substantial cuts that will remove a number of people from food stamps). While this does not directly impact on our provisions, our programs could be vulnerable if the Congress or Administration demands further cuts in agricultural spending or changes how those cuts are proposed to be made.

It is also important to note that if the Congress and the Administration fail to reach agreement on farm bill reauthorization legislation in the current Congress, we will have to start over when the new Congress convenes in January 2013. If that happens, there will be a new adjusted baseline that will result in less money available to the Congress for any new reauthorization of Federal farm programs.

We did respond on an as needed basis in several significant areas. Specifically, we worked with the Commission Manager and U. S. Apple Association and senior officials in ARS to address problems that arose in the management of the apple rootstock breeding program. We were, I believe, able to work to insure that this kind of problems would not occur again and we were successful in limiting further fall out that could in fact have threatened the continuation of the program.

In another area, we were able to work with a broad-based coalition of agricultural groups to support restoration of funding for the chemical use survey program run the NASS, an agency of the Department of Agriculture. In a recent related matter, I have worked with Dr. Mike Willett of the Northwest Horticultural Council to develop language addressing timing issues for the chemical use survey that we propose to submit to the Congress for consideration should there be a conference on the differing versions of the farm bill reauthorization.

With respect to pear genome, genetics, breeding research we have made slow, but steady progress. At our request, Senator Murray included in an earlier Senate agriculture appropriations bill language directing USDA to provide a report to Congress about their plans/intentions in this area, asking specifically as to how the Department intended to be more responsive to the needs of the commercial pear producers.

Even though the Senate appropriations bill to which Senator Murray's report language was attached did not become law, ARS agreed to develop a report responsive to the Murray language. That report was eventually transmitted to the Senate by letter from Secretary Vilsack, and while it does not provide specifics, it does appear to endorse movement in this area. While I would like to see more specifics, the Vilsack letter provides a means of furthering the dialogue in this area; and, the

Department has asked for a “roadmap” of how the industry sees this moving forward. That “roadmap” is under development for review and submission to USDA.

Another area of activity involved cooperation with the Commission Manager and with the Northwest Horticultural Council in contacting and working with the Washington Delegation in support of the candidacy of Harold V. Austin to be named to the National Organic Standards Board. We were able to work on a bipartisan basis with the Delegation and with appropriate senior staff and with their support, Harold Austin was appointed and now serves on the NOSB.

We also worked with CropLife America relative to the tree fruit industry’s interest in developing a roadmap leading to the development of pesticide application technology leading to a closed end type of application that will significantly minimize the potential for pesticide drift to occur.

In a related matter, we worked with Dr. Mike Willett of the Northwest Horticultural Council relative to concerns about modifications to EPA spray drift policies and also relative to concerns over the use of science in the development of Biological Opinions pursuant to the Endangered Species Act. That effort involved working with a wide range of interest groups and included the Delegation offices as well as CropLife America.

With respect to trade matters and science debates regarding tolerance issues, we worked with Northwest Horticultural Council and with the Minor Crop Farmer Alliance to develop suggested language relative to the TASS program that will be submitted to the Congress should the House and Senate actually get to conference on differing versions of the farm bill reauthorization. That language seeks to address issues associated with non-tariff trade barriers.

This effort involved discussion with CropLife America and others regarding interest in addressing possible questions arising from difficulties in getting tolerances established that will allow movement of U. S. commodities into foreign markets. Jim Cranney of California Citrus and others met with a CropLife America committee to discuss these matters and suggest possible involvement of CODEX. Mr. Cranney and Dan Botts and others from the Minor Crop Farmer Alliance were invited to the CropLife America annual meeting to continue and expand on these discussions in an effort to develop a way forward to obtain relief.

It has been an active and productive 3 years, and we have made remarkable progress. Much, however, remains to be done. While at this point it is reasonable to argue that specialty crops are in the best position that they have ever been in, we are in difficult times. Change is inevitable, and it is extremely important that we strengthen our ties, work closely with our partners and with our Delegation, remain flexible and prepare as best we can for any of the possible outcomes.

Discussion/Going Forward

This three year project has demonstrated the value of securing and maintaining the relationships with our Delegation offices and with the appropriate committees of jurisdiction and with the various agencies and appointed officials in the Administration.

This three year project has demonstrated the value of maintaining our strong commitment to openness and transparency, to a willingness to share information, and to our belief in the importance of having agricultural research awards made on a competitive basis recognizing the best available science and emphasizing multidisciplinary and multi-crop proposals that benefit a wide range of interest groups and regions. It has also demonstrated the value of being flexible to changing economic and political conditions so that adjustments can be made and we can continue to make progress toward our goals.

Because of the uncertainty surrounding the ability of this Congress to complete action on farm bill reauthorization legislation, it is important that in the last quarter of 2012 we continue to remain flexible and work to establish a factual base that will increase our chances for success in any of the possible outcomes, including deferring action on these issues until the next Congress.

That is a complicated process which we have already begun, especially with respect to the pear breeding issue, the baseline issue (how it might be adjusted), and how to move forward on the NASS chemical use issue and the TASS nontariff trade issues. We are prepared to remain helpful to the industry and to follow up as necessary dependent on the outcome of the meeting/discussion between the Minor Crop Farmer Alliance and CropLife America on the MRL/tolerance/CODEX issues.

In summary, we have come a long way and we have accomplished quite a bit. Much remains to be done in both the short and long term. Eventually, farm bill reauthorization legislation will be passed and signed into law. Following that, the industry will be faced with working with the Administration and Congress in implementing the new law and making it work.

We are likely to see changes in the economic and political situation (regardless of the outcome of the coming election). As such, we should “stay the course” and remain true to the principles and approaches that have gotten us to this point. We need to continue to emphasize the clarity of sound science, the importance of cooperation and consensus, and the commitment to work within the system and make the programs successful.

If we do this, I am convinced that we will continue to expand our opportunities and we will continue to have the contacts and channels of communication necessary to get the information necessary to formulate a consensus and move forward to work with political leaders in both parties to move forward toward our goals. This will result in significant and substantial benefits continuing to accrue to the Washington State tree fruit producers.

Executive Summary
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This three year project met all of its objectives and resulted in assisting the Commission be instrumental in the successful implementation of the 2008 farm bill; defending and securing funding for research programs important to the Commission and the growers; moving forward on new initiatives supported by the Commission; and supporting the inclusion of specialty crop research programs in the farm bill reauthorization legislation passed by the Senate and in the farm bill reauthorization approved by the House Committee on Agriculture.

In addition to achieving these major goals, this three year project included efforts to address problems in how USDA administers certain programs, including the apple rootstock breeding program and the NASS chemical use survey. This three year project also included efforts to assist the industry in addressing problems relative to the use and treatment of science in environmental and trade matters affecting the state tree fruit producers.

The three year project clearly demonstrated the importance of involvement with public policy individuals and agencies responsible for decisions affecting the Federal role in agricultural research priorities and funding. It was evident during the course of the project that economic and political changes outside of our control are determinants in directing the course of Federal agricultural research and agriculture policy affecting the ability of growers to make informed decisions and remain competitive in the market place.

Because economic and political conditions are essentially in flux and will inevitably change, it is reasonable to conclude from this project (and similar projects that preceded it), this industry will continue to need an informational gathering system and the ability to work together with our industry partners in formulating strategies to approach and participate in the system in such a way as to increase the likelihood of success.

In summary, this is the approach and attitude that the Commission has endorsed and remained committed to since we led the efforts to develop the National Technology Roadmap. My recommendation is that we stay the course and continue with this process and attitude. It has served us well, and I see no reason to change course.