

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

Project Title: Technology Roadmap Support
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Cooperators: NONE

Other funding Sources NONE

Total Project Funding: \$75,000

Budget History:

Item	Year 1: 2006	Year 2: 2007	Year 3: 2008
Salaries	\$24,000	\$24,000	\$27,000
Benefits			
Wages			
Benefits			
Equipment			
Supplies			
Travel			
Miscellaneous			
Total	\$24,000	\$24,000	\$27,000

Justification for Contract:

Working within the general structure of the four major research initiatives identified by the National Technology Roadmap for the Tree Fruit Industry and with the Commission Manager, act to continue to pursue greater implementation of these initiatives and assist in developing funding mechanisms and obtaining actual funding for specific research proposals benefiting the tree fruit industry in the State of Washington.

General Objectives:

1. To protect funding for ongoing research programs and to seek funding for new proposals identified as significant and beneficial to the Washington State tree fruit industry;
2. To broaden cooperative efforts with other tree fruit industry groups and expand those efforts to include other specialty crop groups that share a common interest in research proposals;
3. To use that expanded cooperative efforts to strengthen the ability to influence Congress and the Administration in designing and directing research funding to areas of interest to the Washington State tree fruit industry;
4. To keep the Commission informed of developments in both the Congress and the Administration that impact on ongoing or future research funding;
5. To identify and take advantage of opportunities that could arise that would aid the tree fruit industry in its efforts to secure broader and more sustainable research funding for the four major research initiatives identified in the National Technology Roadmap; and,
6. To pursue specific activities related to high priority research initiatives, including but not limited to:
 - a. Strengthening the funding base for the USDA-ARS apple rootstock breeding program in Geneva, New York;
 - b. Expanding USDA-ARS pear genomics, genetics, and breeding efforts in the Pacific Northwest;
 - c. Increasing better understanding of the importance of expansion of the automation, engineering and technology initiative to establish a basis for moving forward with specific research funding in this area.

Significant Findings

1. Working with the Northwest Horticultural Council and the U. S. Apple Association protected funding for ongoing research programs beneficial to the Washington State tree fruit industry;
2. Working through the tree fruit industry associations, especially the Northwest Horticultural Council and U. S. Apple Association, reached out and participated in the Specialty Crops Research Initiative and insured that the views and concerns of the Washington State industry were addressed;
3. Working through the Specialty Crops Research Initiative and with tree fruit industry organizations met with Administration and congressional personnel and that effort led to the inclusion of significant and substantial provisions in the general farm legislation that was enacted in the 2nd Session of the 110th Congress;
4. Working with the Commission and leaders of the Northwest Horticultural Council reported developments associated with congressional efforts to finalize the general farm statute and took such action as necessary to insure that the views and concerns of the Washington State industry were made known to the key committees of Congress and to the Administration;
5. Working with key USDA research leaders and key staff of the House Committee on Agriculture took steps to insure that the implementation of the new general farm statute was undertaken promptly and responsibly and that funds under the Specialty Crops Competitive Grants research program and funds under the Specialty Crops Block Grant program were released as soon as practicable; and working with the Commission Manager and officials of the Northwest Horticultural Council considered and evaluated options that were available

- under these programs to address the specific needs and objectives of the Washington State tree fruit industry;
6. a. Working with ARS leadership continued to stress the importance of providing a stable funding base for the apple rootstock breeding program at Geneva, New York, leading to a decision by ARS leadership to reallocate funds to accomplish that objective; during those discussions sought to identify and insure that the specific interests and concerns of the Washington State tree fruit industry would be addressed;
 - b. Working with Commission and with U. S. Apple Association, met with leaders of the USDA research agencies to stress the strong interest and commitment to enhance research efforts in pear genome, genetics and breeding in the Pacific Northwest; significant results in this area are that USDA – ARS has formally endorsed the underlying interest and that USDA has shown a willingness to engage in discussions regarding what that enhancement would look like and how to provide stable funding for that effort;
 - c. Working with the Commission Manager and with U. S. Apple Association and Northwest Horticultural Council, met with USDA leaders to urge and then design an “Engineering Workshop” that was held in the DC area and that led to significant and substantial advances in identifying new research partners and new sources of funding for research to begin to address the research needs under the engineering, automation, and sensor technology initiative identified in the National Technology Roadmap.

Results and Discussion

Significant and substantial progress has been made to date in terms of establishing and expanding open lines of communication with key civil service personnel in leadership positions within Federal research agencies and with Members of the Washington State and Pacific Northwest congressional delegations.

Working cooperatively with related tree fruit industry groups and other specialty crop organizations, we have secured a place at the table in any discussions of farm policy in the United States.

We have helped to establish new and innovative methods for the selection of research proposals to be funded and for the delivery of those funds. We have begun a process that could lead to significant and substantial advances in research benefiting the tree fruit industry and other specialty crops.

While we have made substantial and real progress, much remains to be accomplished and there are new and exciting opportunities if we can sustain further progress. It is essential that we remain patient and work to secure the advances that we have made while laying the groundwork necessary to proceed further towards our goals of competitive research funding, a stable funding source, and some assurance of greater flexibility and transparency in Federal research funding allocations and decisions.

Our tasks in going forward will demand careful attention to detail, continued understanding of the demands that are being placed on the Federal government, and a deliberate commitment to advance our own interests in such a way as to also insure that our partners in this Specialty Crops Research effort remain united in a common purpose.

Those tasks would be difficult under any circumstances; however, the economic crisis currently facing the United States will put enormous pressure on the normal congressional budget/appropriations process. And, all of this will come about while we have a new Administration settling in with a new Congress and with new problems and new priorities.

That is the reality that we will be facing when the 111th Congress convenes in January 2009 and the incoming President-elect is sworn in on January 20, 2009, and his Administration takes over the reins of government.

While there will be problems to overcome and there will be new responsibilities to educate and inform and monitor developments carefully, there will also be new opportunities that will be available. What my experience in Washington has taught me, especially my work with the Commission over the years, is that it is essential that we remain committed to openness and transparency and to sound science and continue to emphasize that we believe that funding for research needs be done to the extent possible through competitive procedures.

I am convinced that we have a strong story to tell, that we have established a great reputation for attention to detail and for patience, and that what we are seeking is sound public policy.

Executive Summary

The Commission has expended a total of \$75,000 over the last three years to support efforts to pursue increased funding for research efforts falling within the general structure of the four major research initiatives identified in the National Technology Roadmap for the Tree Fruit Industry. Within that structure, the Commission sought to fund efforts that would encourage new and innovative methods of identifying, selecting, and awarding on a competitive basis funding for research efforts benefiting the tree fruit industry in the United States.

Following a general strategy emphasizing openness and transparency and a strong commitment to sound science and working through and with tree fruit industry groups and other specialty crops organizations, much has been accomplished.

Efforts funded by the Commission contributed significantly to the enactment of the new provisions of the general farm statute providing for mandatory spending for Specialty Crops Competitive Research Grants and new provisions establishing funding for state Specialty Crops Block grants.

The Washington State tree fruit industry and others in the Specialty Crops effort now clearly have a seat at the table in any discussion of U. S. farm policy.

In addition to these general gains, Commission funding specifically supported efforts that encouraged and laid the groundwork for enhancing the apple rootstock breeding program in Geneva, New York, and the recent decision by ARS to act to provide stable funding for this program. This funding also supported efforts to encourage the expansion of research into pear genome, genetics, and breeding into the Pacific Northwest.

Further, Commission funding supported efforts supporting the USDA Engineering Workshop, leading to decisions by USDA to include in its RFP under the Specialty Crops Competitive Research grants program a call for research in this area.

This funding has maintained and expanded open channels of communication with congressional delegations from the State of Washington and the Pacific Northwest and with key congressional staff in both the House and Senate. This funding has also done a similar job with respect to opening and expanding channels of communication with key personnel in the civil service charged with initiating and funding Federal research efforts.

While much has been accomplished, much remains to be done. And continuing efforts will be complicated by the severe economic pressures confronting our country and the implications of that crisis to the budget/appropriations cycle in the Congress. Further complicating continued progress is that there will be a new Administration taking office in January 2009 and that will require more extensive efforts to inform and educate the new policy personnel.

We have succeeded in opening the door. It is important that the Commission remain committed to these efforts and take such steps as necessary to push forward and take advantage of the exciting opportunities that are now possible because of the gains that have been made over the last three years.