**MINUTES of the *Pyrus* Crop Germplasm Committee Meeting, July 23, 2011**

**WSU Tree Fruit Research and Extension Center, Wenatchee, Washington**

**Attendees**:

Rachel Elkins (Chair), Kate Evans, Amit Dhingra, Tom Auvil, Denise Moore, Chuck Peters, Todd Einhorn, Nnadozie Oraguzie, James Susaimuthu , Stefano Musacchi, Enrique Sanchez, Bob McClain, Joseph Postman, David Sugar, Joan Bonany, Richard Bell, Chris Hendrikson, Jim McFerson, Scott Schaeffer, Tyson Koeppe, Marco Galli, Mark Bohning (phone), Peter Bretting (phone)

**CGC roles and responsibilities**:

The CGC Rationale was distributed – members were encouraged to read through.

**Membership update and nominations**:

A list was distributed of current and potential members. Of those, Margie Luffman, Jim Cummins, Rick Hilton and Robert Skirvin were removed. Richard Bell agreed to contact Carol Miles and Gary Moulton. An updated list will be circulated with these minutes.

**NPGS and NGRL reports** (Bretting/Bohning):

The 2011 Office of National Programs report was distributed. The current budget, approved in early April, represents a $700,000 loss for system and lack of future budget information is making planning difficult. There does appear to be encouraging sustained support for plant breeding by the ARS administration (including a $6M increase in the President’s budget) however the House is expected to cut the total budget by 12%. The program 5-year review is due soon and will include a stakeholder workshop in November. Planning for the next 5-year cycle will start in spring.

The Senate adjourned in 2010 without voting on the FAO Treaty for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture although it is hoped to go through this year. Negotiations covering access and benefit sharing under the Convention on Biodiversity have concluded – ground rules will be sent out for exchange of material.

Considerable progress has been made working with the international community towards building the GRIN Global database, a Microsoft-oriented template infrastructure that will be implemented into the national system in approximately 2 months. It is hoped that other countries will adopt this infrastructure and develop national searchable databases.

**Joint CGC Chair/Operations Meeting, July 2010** (Bell):

In addition to their biannual meetings, the joint CGC chairs will be implementing a conference call meeting every other year (this fall). Richard Bell stressed the need to update our genetic vulnerability statement every 4-5 years as it forms an important basis for ARS congressional reports. He agreed to act as overall editor proceeding with the update as described in the minutes of our February meeting and will send out a copy of the 2004 report or the link to the website. It is important to cross reference this document in developing the White Paper. There is currently an international collaboration with Kyrgyzstan (Jim Koempel also has connections there), an area from which pear is lacking in the U.S. collection.

***Pyrus* collection report** (Postman):

Joseph Postman distributed handouts outlining the current composition of the collection and an inventory of the acquisitions from 2010 and 2011. Some of the tables presented could form the basis of the genetic vulnerability report (however the ‘real’ origin of some of the first generation U.S. material should also be added). The budget for the Corvallis Germplasm Repository has been fixed since 2005 but cuts are expected in this round. *Pyrus* is currently about 20% of the Corvallis collections but received proportionally less funding.

Phenotyping of accessions was discussed; currently data coming in with accessions is added to the database as is data describing the habitat of wild sourced material. Approximately 200 accessions have been fingerprinted using the standard SSR set agreed for *Pyrus*; the data should be available within GRIN global. Further evaluation could be achieved with grant funding (handout provided or Rachel Elkins can provide guidelines).

**Acquisition/ importation** (Licha/Susaimuthu):

A report from APHIS was distributed on behalf of Margarita Lichta.

James Susaimuthu described the National Clean Plant Network at Prosser. Virus testing costs $1800 and takes 2 years, however ‘clean’ material can be released after 1 year to the WA and OR industries. Viruses are detected 30-40% of the time and the Center will work to eliminate them using heat therapy if the sponsor agrees. There are 138 pears held in the public (USDA ARS or university) area; these are held free of charge to provide propagating wood as required. Private accessions, usually sponsored by nurseries, have a maintenance fee of $120 per year, consequently some are removed. There is currently no limit to the amount of time the Center will maintain public varieties, however they are running out of space so are offering material to germplasm collections. If a cultivar is requested frequently, the Center will keep it. APHIS at Beltsville uses an identical program with Prosser doing their field testing. Entry rate is about 200 accessions per year of pome/stone fruits with pears being about 10 per year. Collaboration with the Corvallis indexing program is underway. There are no agreements to speed things up with other countries. The NCPN cannot import tissue culture material on their permit; it would generally take an extra year to build up sufficient material. The NCPN is now a priority of the farm bill which has lead to new developments such as their website which allows users to track the progress of the material they submitted. The committee recognized Ken Eastwell’s hard work in building up the Center at Prosser.

**Letter to nurseries** (Elkins):

A letter to the nurseries asking them to assist the CGC to coordinate prioritization of material to import was circulated for comment together with a list of nurseries. This will be sent out as soon as possible.

There are limits to the number of accessions a year that can be brought in through APHIS (hence the need to coordinate foreign accessions through this committee) but not through the NCPN at Prosser. Joseph Postman confirmed that the NPGS are not encouraged to maintain patented cultivars as they are difficult to distribute freely, however if they are close to the patent expiring or if the germplasm is needed to compare to others, they can be accessed and held on a case by case basis. Patented cultivars can be brought in on MTAs but extra time is needed if they have to go through quarantine hence the value of accessing material that is already here.

**Explorations** (Postman):

An overview handout was distributed. Joseph Postman will be taking advantage of a treaty established with Albania to seek out wild temperate fruit relatives in September. The main effort will be on seeds as clonal material is frequently virus infected from Greece/Balkans. Proposals should be prepared for 2013 exploration, however it is not too late to put in for 2012.

Priorities for future exploration:- areas that come up in the vulnerability statement e.g Western China, would be one way of identifying priorities. Alternatively, focusing on traits of interest and sourcing material from e.g drought tolerance areas should be another approach. Once collection needs (or gaps) are identified, exchanging information with international collaborators could also be useful.

**Possible *Pyrus* germplasm workshop** (Elkins):

There is still from the committee in hosting a *pyrus* germplasm workshop; funds could be solicited from industry or other bodies.

**Meeting dates**:

The next CGC meeting will aim to coordinate with the NW pear review in early 2012.

Submitted by Kate Evans, July 27, 2011