

Minutes of Envirotron Committee Meeting 1/6/04

The following members were present:

Gerald Arkin (guest)
Kris Braman
CJ Chang
Ian Flitcroft (ex officio)
Gerrit Hoogenboom
Marc Van Iersel

Wojciech Florkowski and Bob Carrow sent their apologies.

Use of Envirotron facility in 2004

The following researchers have requested use of growth chambers in 2004:

Gerrit Hoogenboom with 3 post docs, 6 CG72 chambers January - July 1 2004
Scott Nesmith with Patricio Brevis, 2 PGW36 chambers March - June 2004

Immediately after the meeting there was a request from Brad Morris to conduct a follow up experiment to one that was completed in December 2003. I granted the request for 2 PGW36 chambers, January - March 2004.

NSF grant proposal

A group of researchers, including Andrew Patterson and led by Russell Malmberg in Plant Biology will shortly be submitting a proposal to NSF. The research will involve screening a large number of mutant arabidopsis plants using environmental growth chambers. The committee agreed that the Envirotron should participate in this proposal. The grant would be for four years with most of the growth chamber studies taking place in 2005 and 2006. I am presently negotiating with the grant writers to finalize the budget. At present the grant would provide the following: 2 full time research technicians III \$10K/year operating budget to cover maintenance/repair costs Computer + digital camera

The proposal may also include the purchase of several additional CG72 chambers. The total cost of these chambers, including installation and costs to operate these chambers will be included in the budget.

Composition of the committee

The committee discussed changing some of the departmental representatives to the committee. Dr. Arkin will ask Scott Nesmith to serve as the Griffin campus representative from Horticulture, with Marc Van Iersel continuing to serve as the committee's representative in Athens. Dr. Arkin will also ask Dr Ynes Ortega from the Center for Food Safety to serve on the committee, either in addition to, or in

replacement of, Dr Yen-Con Hung. Dr. Arkin asked that the Envirotron manager be made a full member of the committee and be appointed chair of the committee.

Cost saving

When used at capacity, as has been the case, the Envirotron consumes approximately \$80K of electricity per year. In an effort to reduce costs during this period of budget cuts, Dr. Arkin has asked that the facility be used at less than full capacity. The Envirotron manager has therefore requested that, if possible, researchers delay their experiments so that no more than half the chambers are in use at any one time. For the first six months of 2004 all the chambers will be occupied. The most effective cost savings can be made in the summer months when the cost per month to run the chambers is typically twice as high as the cost to run chambers during winter months. The manager will therefore schedule a break in use for the large chambers after June 30 until the Fall of 2004. The smaller PGW36 chambers will remain available through the summer months.

Rain Out shelters

Dr. Arkin has asked that the rain out shelters be renovated and maintained by the Envirotron manager, and will be considered as part of the Envirotron facility. Unfortunately the technician, Bill Slaughter, who maintained the shelters has retired. I will consider employing him for a few days to assist in renovating the facility. Dr. Arkin will assist in covering the costs of renovation.

Reclassifying Envirotron Manager Position

Dr. Arkin reported to the committee on his continuing efforts to reclassify the Envirotron manager position as a faculty position. No changes have been approved but Dr. Arkin is exploring possibilities with the present home Department of the manager (Crop and Soils) and also directly with the college administration. In the meantime the manager will seek opportunities (e.g. NSF proposal) to bring in extra mural funds to help support the facility.

Retirement of Bob Flewellan

Bob Flewellan has been temporarily assigned to the Envirotron by Dr. Arkin as a technician. He has assisted in general routine maintenance, cleaning and repair work. Bob has indicated that he will be retiring within the next six months, most likely at the end of March 2004. He expressed an interest in being rehired on a part time basis.