

Subject: RE: Talking about Gene Drive

From: "James, Stephanie (FNIH) [T]" <sjames@fnih.org>

Date: 4/12/2017 11:46 AM

To: Kenneth kaneshiro <kykanesh@hawaii.edu>, Kevin Esvelt <esvelt@mit.edu>

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Thanks for your rapid responses to my email, Kevin and Ken. We certainly agree that communications are not an end goal but only an important tool underpinning broader engagement activities. The intent here is not to sell, but to explain the technology. I appreciate your suggestion that any shorthand reference to messaging should be deleted from the final agenda.

As described in the NASEM report, engagement must take place at multiple levels and consider what they defined as communities, stakeholders and publics. Having good communications skills and tools to talk about the technology will be helpful at various levels. Interactions with the media are an important part of engagement at the "publics" level, which, as recent events around the IUCN and CBD meetings demonstrate clearly, is quite critical for the future of gene drive research. Because of this, we thought communications would be a good initial topic to bring research groups together around a common interest. Expanding to include community engagement practices would broaden the scope and lengthen the meeting, as that is a complex subject. However, I would be delighted if the group decided it is of mutual benefit to turn this into a regular forum for the various research teams to come together to discuss issues of common interest, and community or stakeholder engagement would certainly be a great subject for a future workshop.

Kevin, I think your suggestion of discussing terminology is a good one and we will make sure it is on the agenda if there is sufficient interest to move forward with planning.

We welcome suggestions from others as well.

All the best,
Stephanie

-----Original Message-----

From: Kenneth kaneshiro [<mailto:kykanesh@hawaii.edu>]

Sent: Tuesday, April 11, 2017 7:54 PM

To: Kevin Esvelt <esvelt@mit.edu>

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Subject: Re: Talking about Gene Drive

Aloha Stephanie,

Agree with Kevin on the point of effective communication to the broader community. When we convened our workshop last September, I received a phone call from a very influential community member accusing me of holding a “secret” meeting. He was quite upset that the workshop was “restricted” to invited participants. Once I was able to explain the focus of the workshop and that if he was interested in attending, he was more than welcome to do so. He did calm down and thanked me for allowing him to participate, although he did not attend. The point is that there is a lot of paranoia and concern in the community about issues such as GMO, etc. and that we need to be able to communicate effectively to the lay community if we wish to gain support from the general public.

Mahalo,
Ken

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On Apr 11, 2017, at 12:59 PM, Kevin Esvelt <esvelt@mit.edu> wrote:

Dear Stephanie,

Thank you for the excellent suggestion and the generous offer.

With respect to the attached draft agenda, might I suggest that the event focus on effective ways to discuss our work on gene drive with interested communities and citizens as well as journalists? Holding sessions on 'gene drive messaging', 'message testing initiatives', and even 'communication strategies' could be misconstrued as a concerted attempt to sell the technology to the public. Needless to say, this should not be anyone's goal.

A workshop designed to improve our ability to communicate effectively, productively invite concerns and criticism, and cooperatively work with communities who might be affected (as your the text of your message suggested) would be extremely helpful.

Many thanks,

Kevin

P.S. This may be a good place to invite suggestions for a suitable word to describe self-sustaining gene drive systems that could theoretically spread into every population of the target species. Ideally, it would have geographic connotations similar to 'local', which has proven quite effective, but describe the opposite. The term 'global', which originated at the NCSU workshop, fails communicate the fact that any potential effects would be limited to regions harboring the target species, while 'self-sustaining' does not communicate meaningful information. Please share any suitable candidates.

On Tue, Apr 11, 2017 at 5:16 PM, James, Stephanie (FNIH) [T] <sjames@fnih.org> wrote:
Dear colleagues,

The Foundation for the National Institutes of Health (FNIH) is considering sponsoring a one day workshop on the topic of "Talking about Gene Drive" - to be held just before the annual American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (ASTMH) meeting on November 4, 2017, in Baltimore, MD. We are sending this preliminary email to gauge the level of interest in such a workshop.

We are reaching out with this email to a broad group of researchers and supporters of gene drive because we believe there is an important window of opportunity right now to think collectively about how to discuss this new technology productively with the public. How each individual project and program pursues its own communications strategy will impact public acceptance of the technology more generally, so this seems like a subject ripe for interaction and cooperation.

The intent of the workshop would be to:

- discuss how gene drive technology is being described in the media and at venues such as the Convention on Biological Diversity
- consider ways to work together to enhance communication and clarify public perception about gene drive technology
- share some basic communications skills that might come in handy in the

future

A draft agenda is attached.

We are suggesting to hold this workshop in conjunction with the ASTMH meeting because many interested parties likely are already planning to attend that meeting (apologies to those who aren't!).

Please let me know by reply email if you would be interested in participating and/or if you have colleagues who might like to attend. If there is sufficient enthusiasm, FNIH will start organizing the logistics and get back to you with more information.

Best regards,

Stephanie

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For 13 consecutive years, Charity Navigator has rated the FNIH as an organization that exceeds industry standards.

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