



AWARD RECIPIENTS

2024 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

James P. Stack

Kansas State University



For nearly 20 years Jim has been dedicated to NPDN, his passion and expertise are a key piece of the network's success. He has served as director of Great Plains Diagnostic Network since 2004 and twice served as NPDN Executive Director. Jim provides a critical voice in strategic planning as well as day to day operations. As a well known expert in plant biosecurity and plant disease diagnostics he has given keynote speeches for agencies all over the world. Jim has served on multiple NPDN committees, manages the administration of PDIS, and is an outstanding ambassador for NPDN. 🌱

Martin A. Draper

Kansas State University



As a former Diagnostician and Director of Seed Health Testing Laboratory Marty was well poised to serve as a NIFA National Program Leader where he was a key leader for administration of NPDN. While at NIFA, Marty helped guide NPDN and its regions through strategic planning and implementation of professional development. Marty also provided a steady voice and key guidance through difficult times of budget cuts and financial uncertainty. He provided important guidance in documenting and reporting the impact of NPDN and elevating the network's accomplishments. All of these efforts were key to sustaining NPDN. Marty remained a strong advocate for NPDN through his time at KSU as a Department Head and Associate Dean. 🌱

Patrick J. Shiel



U.S. Department of Agriculture APHIS PPQ Science and Technology

Prior to his retirement, Pat spent over two decades serving as a liaison between NPDN and regulatory agencies. Pat always took time out of his busy schedule to be a conduit between NPDN and USDA APHIS PPQ. His communication of timely information to NPDN leaders set an example, encouraging trust and science-based response in the world of regulatory diagnostics. Relationships that Pat built made him a critical component to working through the logistics of several surge based diagnostic programs that were handled by NPDN labs. Furthermore, NPDN diagnosticians have long benefited from the many training sessions that he helped facilitate with his work behind the scenes. 🌱

Ray Hammerschmidt

Michigan State University



Ray's involvement in NPDN began when NPDN was created in 2002; he served as one of the founding members of what was known as the NPDN Operations Committee. Ray served as director of the North Central Region since its inception. He consistently worked to maximize funding to labs through his financial management of the regional center. Early in the development of the network Ray brought together University and State Department of Agriculture diagnosticians to collaborate as members in the North Central Region, creating the starting point for many meaningful networking opportunities. In his time with NPDN he served as Executive Director, on multiple NPDN committees, guided strategic decisions, and worked to raise awareness of NPDN amongst many University administrators and the U.S. Congress. 🌱

2024 OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARDS

Alicyn Smart

University of Maine



Alicyn Smart is the Deputy Executive Director of the National Plant Diagnostic Network and director of the Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab at the University of Maine (UM-PDDL) since 2017, which serves as the northeast regional center (NEPDN). Dr. Smart graduated from the University of Florida in 2015 as a Doctor of Plant Medicine. Alicyn was instrumental in developing and implementing the 2019 NPDN Strategic Plan and is currently a Committee Champion, functioning as a liaison between NPDN leadership committees having previously served as an executive member of the Communications, Proficiency and Protocols-Validation working groups. Dr. Smart is a co-leader in advocating for increased NPDN funding through the USDA-NIFA and the Farm Bill by educating the House Agriculture Committee, representatives from both Senate and House offices in Washington, DC about our vital role in national biosecurity and agricultural economy as NPDN diagnosticians. Alicyn is responsible for documenting NPDN Impacts and Annual Laboratory Capacity Evaluations to provide guidance, future directions and celebrate accomplishments of NPDN diagnostic labs. Alicyn is dedicated, laser-focused on the needs of growers and diagnosticians and infectious good-humored. We are thankful for Dr. Smart's role in organizing the 2024 national conference. 🌱

Allina Bennett

University of Florida



Serving as NPDN Professional Development Coordinator for less than two years, Allina Bennett took up the reigns of this national program and developed relationships with the NPDN national committees, reorganized the learning management system catalog to be more user-friendly, built a pipeline for new content, and supported the committees in moving long-planned projects into final stages. Several modules are now available for NPDN members to take to support capacity building and gain knowledge in diagnostics and accreditation. Of particular note is her energy and helpful attitude, supporting committees with a service mentality. However, more than simply fulfilling the requirements of her position, Ms. Bennett was named by several NPDN members as being available, helpful, and productive beyond their expectations. One nominator noted "Allina always makes time to talk through an issue and readily finds solutions that don't add to my workload." Another noted "...she always finds a way to get it done, and makes us all look good in

the process". 🌱

Karen Snover-Clift

Cornell University



Karen Snover-Clift stepped up to take on all *Phytophthora ramorum* qPCR samples from NPDN labs under the emergency program cooperative agreement with APHIS while coordinating the APHIS-provided trainings every spring and building out the first module of the new NPDN accreditation program. All of these are on top of directing the Cornell Plant Disease Diagnostic Clinic and participating in NPDN as an active member diagnostician. Ms. Snover-Clift volunteered to be the “hot seat” lab while Dr. Byrne took on the new *Phytophthora* program implementation and the UF lab lost their *P. ramorum* diagnostic certification due to personnel turnover (these three labs serve as the emergency *P. ramorum* program labs for APHIS, under a cooperative agreement for emergency diagnostics). Importantly, Ms. Snover-Clift made sure to always be “on call” so UF could coordinate shipment of ELISA-positive samples from anywhere

on short notice, ensuring the samples were processed in a timely fashion to support survey and trade decisions in more than a dozen states. 🌱

Stephanie Shea

University of Maine



Stephanie Shea serves as the assistant diagnostician at the University of Maine Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab (UM-PDDL) since 2021 and the NPDN accreditation program manager since 2023. Dr. Shea earned a PhD in 2021 from University of Maine in Ecology and Environmental Sciences. As the associate director of the northeast regional center (NEPDN), Stephanie coordinates monthly meetings, determines priorities and is tasked with tracking the activities of 13 diagnostic labs across 12 states. In 2023, Stephanie emerged as a leader in developing workshops, providing guidance and implementing the Core Accreditation Program for 70 NPDN diagnostic labs. Stephanie trains laboratory staff and diagnoses diseases for Maine growers, researchers and homeowners while educating fellow colleagues with written contributions to the monthly NPDN Communicator or serving on the Professional

Development Committee. Dr. Shea is energetic, consistently helpful and unflappable in the face of challenges. We are thankful for Stephanie's role in organizing the 2024 national conference. 🌱

Jan Byrne and Laura Miles

Michigan State University



Dr. Byrne and Ms. Miles are recognized for their efforts to quietly step into leadership roles in NPDN and regulatory diagnostics. These two diagnosticians at the Michigan State University Plant & Pest Diagnostics lab and NCPDN regional center volunteered to take on sole responsibility for a new *Phytophthora* diagnostics program for APHIS. This new program required creative thinking and implementation of DNA extraction and qPCR protocols that had been validated for research but not implemented for large-scale diagnostic workflow. Their willingness to implement these protocols and take a large number of samples at short notice ensured that once again, NPDN could say “yes” to our regulatory partners to support plant biosecurity in the US. Their screening efforts shielded the USDA-APHIS PPCDL from an overwhelming number of samples during a multi-front surge season while providing feedback to improve the protocols for capacity-building implementation in additional labs in the future. 🌱

2024 NPDN ROTTEN TUBER AWARD WINNERS

First place

Buggy ID

Zach Schumm, Iowa State University Plant and Insect Diagnostic Clinic

Second place

Mystery Yellow Antennae

Jill Pollok, University of Delaware Plant Diagnostic Clinic

Third place

The Homicide Case

Jill Pollok, University of Delaware Plant Diagnostic Clinic

The
**Rotten
Tuber**

