# Western Society of Weed Science Newsletter

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Fall 2026

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## President's Report

Much of the Western Plains and Mountain West experienced significant drought last year, affecting the farming, ranching, and research activities in which many of us are involved. Here in western Nebraska, we experienced very little winter weather. I'm hoping for a brutally cold and snowy winter that will help replenish our snowpack and reservoir levels—and perhaps make my midwinter elk hunt a bit more successful than last year. A good winter would also make a trip to Southern California in March that much more enjoyable!

Attendance at the 2026 Annual Meeting was down a bit, and I hope we can see participation rebound to more typical levels in 2027. If you can, please encourage your colleagues to attend and help us continue to build a strong and engaged society.

As I prepared this newsletter, I spent some time looking through previous fall editions. In the 2024 edition, Tim Prather wrote about introducing the Western Society of Weed Science (WSWS) to the Western Weeds Coordinating Committee (WWCC), an organization with substantial overlap among our members working in invasive species management and public land management across the West. At our upcoming **Annual Meeting**, we will hold a joint meeting with the WWCC. I hope this provides a valuable opportunity for members of both organizations to share their work, exchange ideas, and establish new collaborations.

Please remember to vote in the WSWS elections for President-Elect/Program Chair, Research Section Chair-Elect, and Education and Regulatory Section Chair-Elect. Voting closes December 1.

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WSWS Annual Meeting March 8 – 11, 2027, Irvine, California

# President's Report – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Students considering attending the 2027 Annual Meeting still have time to apply for several scholarships and travel support opportunities. The Growing the Future of Weed Science Scholarship, which supports an undergraduate student from a historically underrepresented group in attending the WSWS Annual Meeting, has an application deadline of November 30th. The Elena Sanchez Memorial Scholarship, which supports graduate student travel to the WSWS Annual Meeting, closes December 1. Also due December 1 is the Rita Beard Endowment Foundation Travel Support Scholarship, which supports students and early-career professionals working in invasive species management.

If you, a student, or a colleague may be eligible for any of these opportunities, please consider applying or encouraging them to apply. These scholarships help support the next generation of weed scientists and strengthen our society by bringing new perspectives and talent to our annual meeting.

I look forward to seeing many of you in March!

## Growing the Future of Weed Science Student Scholarship

WSWS Members,

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee of the Western Society of Weed Science is pleased to offer the **Growing the Future of Weed Science Scholarship** to support undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds to attend our annual meeting. The goal is to foster a more inclusive and representative future for the weed science discipline by ensuring our society continues to reflect the diverse world we serve.

A total of **$1,000 will be awarded to one outstanding undergraduate student** assisting with research relevant to weed science. The scholarship money must be used on expenses related to attending the 2026 WSWS annual meeting (e.g., travel, lodging, registration).

**Deadline: November 30, 2026** at 5:00 PM (PDST)

**Visit https://wsweedscience.org/diversity-and-inclusion/ for scholarship eligibility and application details** (scroll to bottom of page).

Warm regards,The WSWS Diversity & Inclusion Committee

**APPLY HERE:** https://wsweedscience.org/diversity-and-inclusion/

## Contact Us

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# Student Liaison Report – Olanrewaju Adeyemi

Fall is here, and I hope everyone is having a productive season with their research, coursework, and other professional activities. As we look forward to the upcoming WSWS Annual Meeting, I am excited to share a few updates from the Student Association.

On October 29, we successfully hosted our first Fall Webinar, "Interviewing for Industry Positions," in collaboration with the WSWS Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The event attracted over 30 attendees throughout the session. I sincerely thank our panelists, Ryan Rapp, Pat Clay, Wale Osipitan, and Jodie Crose, for sharing their valuable insights and experiences. Special thanks to the Diversity and Inclusion Committee for their support and collaboration in planning the event, and to everyone who attended and helped make it a success!

As we prepare for the annual meeting, we are also seeking donations for the student silent auction, which supports student scholarships and activities. We greatly appreciate members who have generously contributed over the years and encourage everyone to consider donating items to support the next generation of weed scientists.

The annual meeting also provides an excellent opportunity for students to become more involved in WSWS leadership. A new Student Liaison Chair-elect will be selected during the student business meeting, and interested students are encouraged to consider nominating themselves or a fellow student. This two-year position offers a valuable opportunity to represent student interests, develop leadership skills, and contribute to the society.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the annual meeting and to another exciting year of student engagement and professional growth within WSWS!

Yours in Service,

Olanrewaju Adeyemi, Student Liaison
**olanrewaju.adeyemi@usu.edu**

Greesmanth Alluri, Student Chair-elect
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# Student Paper and Poster Contest Information

Jason Adams, Chair

**Committee Members:** Judit Barroso (Past Chair), Rand Merchant, and Ian Waldecker (Student Representative)

The WSWS Student Paper and Poster Contest provides an excellent opportunity for students to improve their presentation skills and increase visibility within the society. Winners of each division also receive a plaque and cash award to honor their achievement.

- All graduate students are encouraged to enter one paper and/or one poster in the contest.
- Undergraduate students may enter in the poster contest and will be judged in a separate section. All undergraduate students who intend to participate must notify the committee chair.
- If students entering the contest do not wish to be judged (i.e. considered for awards) but would like to receive feedback on their presentations, please notify the committee chair.
- Contest rules and scoring criteria can be found on the Student Resources webpage (https://wsweedscience.org/student-resources/).

**Invitation to Serve as a Judge**

Our committee seeks non-student volunteers to participate as judges for the paper and poster competition. Volunteer judges are critical to the function and success of the student contest! Serving as a judge is an opportunity to invest in new and upcoming scientists in our society. Constructive feedback from judges provides students an opportunity to improve their presentation skills and excel in their professional career.

*If you are interested in volunteering, please email the committee chair (Jason.adams@syngenta.com).* Your help is greatly appreciated; thank you to those who have served as judges in the past and thank you for considering becoming a judge at the 2027 meeting!

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**Publications**

**WSWS ONLINE EDUCATION**

**WSWS Publications**

**WSSA Journals Website Online**

**2026 Proceedings**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Canadian Weed Science Society Annual Meeting**
**Nov. 23 – 26, 2026**
**Saskatoon, Saskatchewan**
**www.weedscience.ca**

**North Central Weed Science Society**
**and**
**Northeastern Weed Science Society**
**Joint Annual Meeting**
**Dec. 7 – 10, 2026**
**Columbus, Ohio**
**www.ncwss.org**
**www.newss.org**

**Southern Weed Science Society Annual Meeting**
**Jan. 25 - 28, 2027**
**Corpus Christi, Texas**
**www.swss.ws**

**Weed Science Society of America Annual Meeting**
**Feb. 8 – 11, 2027**
**Denver, Colorado**
**www.wssa.net**

**Western Society of Weed Science Annual Meeting**
**Mar. 8 – 11, 2027**
**Irvine, California**
**www.wsweedscience.org**

**Aquatic Plant Management Society Annual Meeting**
**Jul. 11 - 16, 2027**
**Austin, Texas**
**www.apms.org**

# Student Paper and Poster Contest Information -

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### Attention to Advisors and Students

The WSWS Student Paper and Poster Contest committee will be enforcing the policies below. The committee is focused on making the contest a fair, transparent, and enjoyable experience for all student participants.

- Information presented in the WSWS Student Paper and Poster Contest must be original and unique. If a topic has been used by the author in another presentation at a different weed science society meeting, additional data must be included to constitute a unique presentation.
- Oral and poster presentations entered for competition by the same person should be substantively different from each other (for example, not just changing the title or simply adding more data to the poster). There should be no overlap between the data presented in the poster and oral format by the author (if entered in a competition).
- Students attending institutions in states that are not WSWS members may participate in the student contest and are eligible for awards. But the research needs to be related/applicable to weed problems in the Western United States.
- All students entering the contest are required to submit an abstract not to exceed 250 words (word count in Microsoft Word). All abstracts exceeding 250 words will be docked points accordingly.

For detailed procedures of the student contest please refer to the Student Paper Judging Committee section of the Operating Procedures Guide, which can be found in the WSWS website under the Governance section (https://wsweedscience.org/governance/).

Please contact the committee chair if there are additional questions.

Jason Adams, Student Paper and Poster Judging Committee Chair
Email: **Jason.adams@syngenta.com**

# WASHINGTON REPORT

October 30, 2026
Lee Van Wychen

**WSSA Submits Comments on EPA Crop Desiccation Innovation Challenge**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced an initiative this summer to find practical, affordable ways for American farmers to dry crops before harvest while relying less on conventional chemical pesticides. EPA announced that the planned challenge could offer up to $30 million in total prize funding.

Nineteen Extension weed scientists and agronomists provided information to the U.S. EPA regarding crop and weed desiccation. Crops discussed included canola, cotton, corn, dry beans, grain sorghum, Irish potato, small grains, soybeans, grain sorghum, and various seed crops. I want to especially thank Stanley Culpepper and Bill Chism for helping organize these comments and John Byrd for his thorough review.

The overall consensus was that economically effective alternatives to conventional chemical desiccants and pre-harvest herbicides are extremely limited and do not exist for most crops. Thus, limiting access to economically effective desiccants and pre-harvest herbicides would likely cripple the ability of many farmers to sustainably produce food, feed, fiber, and fuel, thereby challenging their livelihood.

WSSA encourages EPA to establish a broad, scientifically rigorous, and farmer-focused Innovation Challenge that supports both technological development and practical implementation. The success of this initiative should be measured not only by the number of new technologies developed, but also by their ability to provide reliable crop dry-down, address weed management needs, and deliver meaningful economic and environmental benefits under real-world agricultural conditions. The comments are **available here**.

**Senate Ag Committee Passes Farm Bill**

The Senate Agriculture Committee was finally able to pass a Farm Bill on a party line 12-11 vote on September 16. The Senate Ag Committee was unable to advance a farm bill Aug. 6 after Democrats unanimously opposed the measure due to disagreements over Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) cost-sharing requirements for states. Chairman John Boozman (R-Ark.) proposed a one-year delay for SNAP cost-sharing requirements, while Democrats pushed for two years. The impasse prompted an indefinite recess until September, when Sen. Mitch McConnell returned to vote with the majority after a month's long bout with health issues. The future of the House and Senate bills still remains uncertain and will hopefully be considered after the elections.

**WSSA-NAICC EPA Tour**

The third annual Endangered Species Act (ESA) Farm Tour was held September 14-16 in Minnesota and South Dakota. The tour was hosted and sponsored by the National Alliance of

Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC), the Foundation for Environmental Agriculture Education (FEAE) and WSSA.

Approximately 40 people attended and included representatives from the EPA, USFWS, USDA, South Dakota State University, University of Minnesota, and Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative as well as WSSA and NAICC.



*WSSA members attending the EPA field tour, left to right: Jacob Felsman, Bill Chism, Greg Dahl, Dawn Refsell and Sally Reed.*



*Left: Split Rock Creek State Park, near Jasper, Minnesota. Tour participants discussed habitat restoration for the Topeka shiner, a freshwater minnow, and how ESA mitigation measures can help protect the species. They also walked through a Pesticide Use Limitation Area (PULA) to better understand its features and implications for adjacent agricultural production land.*



*Left: An aerial application demonstration showed how fixed-wing aircraft can manage boom width and offset. A follow-up discussion at an airport at Brookings, South Dakota, covered cockpit controls and the mapping programs pilots use to navigate around sensitive areas and account for environmental factors during application.*

To read more: **WSSA Press Release**

**<u>Congress Funds Government Until Dec. 11; Temporarily Blocks OMB Grants Rule</u>**

Congress has approved a short-term spending bill to keep the federal government funded through December 11, 2026, avoiding a potential shutdown when the new fiscal year begins

October 1. The House passed the measure 370-48 on September 1, following Senate passage on August 8, and President Trump signed it into law on September 2.

The continuing resolution also includes a provision that temporarily blocks the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) from issuing or finalizing its proposed revisions to the government-wide rules governing federal grants. The provision, which was added in the Senate bill in August, prevents the proposed rule—or a substantially similar rule—from being issued or finalized through December 11. The proposed OMB rule would give political appointees greater authority over federal grant decisions (as opposed to peer-reviewed grant panels) and has raised concerns among universities, scientific organizations, and other grant recipients about political interference in the grantmaking process.

The provision represents an important, but temporary, victory for groups that have opposed the proposed changes to federal grantmaking. Its inclusion is the result of advocacy from the higher education and research community as well as other diverse stakeholders. Prior to the legislation's passage, over a thousand state and national organizations sent letters to Congress urging them to prevent OMB from implementing its proposed revisions. The OMB rule is therefore likely to remain an issue in negotiations over fiscal year 2027 appropriations later this year, after the November 3 midterm elections.

**<u>September Congressional Visits</u>**

During September 28-30, Science Policy Fellows Sarah Reed and Jacob Felsman traveled to Washington DC for Congressional and stakeholder visits. This coincided with the second Congressional Visits Day hosted by the National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research (NCFAR) which was also attended by WSSA President Ian Burke and WSSA Vice-President Jacob Barney. We visited 26 Congressional offices and advocated support for passage of a Farm Bill, including funding for the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR). Jacob, Sally and I also met with Kip Tom, USDA's Special Advisor for Data Modernization, as well as representatives from CropLife America and the American Farm Bureau Federation. I also met with Office and Management Budget (OMB) staff to communicate the importance of both USDA capacity and competitive program funds.




*Left to Right: Sally Reed, Jacob Barney, Ian Burke and Jacob Felsman at the American Farm Bureau Federation*



*Left to Right: Staffers Aidan Miller and Emma Baran along with Sally Reed, Lee Van Wychen and Jacob Felsman outside the office of Senator Gary Peters (D-MI).*

**USDA Awards $121 Million to 36 Universities Through Research Facilities Act Program**

USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture Research Facilities Act Program (RFAP) has awarded $121 million in funding to 36 universities across the country to modernize, expand and build state of the art agricultural research facilities. Projects ranging from planning grants to large-scale construction of research complexes will strengthen the nation's capacity for cutting-edge research in food and agricultural sciences. **Explore funded projects.**

**Cover Crop Use Grows Nationally**

Cover crop interest and adoption continue to gain momentum, as a new survey found growers planted more acres to the conservation practice year over year, extending a long-running growth trend.

The 2026 National Cover Crop Survey, released in early September, found respondents planted an average of 397.9 cover crop acres in 2025, up from 377.5 acres a year earlier. The survey also showed a steady increase in adoption over time, with average cover crop acreage among participants rising from 313 acres in 2021 to a projected 415 acres in 2026.

**The survey** is conducted by the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC), USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Center program and American Seed Trade Association (ASTA). This year's survey was completed online by 657 farmers in 46 states and Puerto Rico.

Key Findings

- Acreage and Experience: Respondents averaged 397.9 acres planted with cover crops, with nearly half of the users having 10 or more years of experience.
- Yield Impact: Farmers reported average yield increases of 3.5 bushels per acre for corn and 1.4 to 1.5 bushels per acre for soybeans following cover crops.
- Weed Control: About 31.2% of all cover crop users noted better weed control, a figure that jumps to 87% among those who "planted green" into live stands.
- Livestock Grazing: One in three users grazed or harvested cover crops for feed, and 77% of those who grazed reported higher net profits.

**Sosnoskie Receives IR-4 SOAR Award**



The Jerry Baron SOAR Award honors external partners who exemplify the areas of Service, Outreach, Altruism, and Research (SOAR), while supporting specialty crop growers and the mission of The IR-4 Project. Dr. Lynn Sosnoskie, Associate Professor of Weed Science at Cornell University, is one of two recipients for this year's SOAR award. She serves as the IR-4 State Liaison Representative for New York and leads weed science research across vegetables, tree fruit, berries, grapes, and ornamental crops. Known for her proactive, transparent approach and fierce advocacy for growers, Sosnoskie bridges the gap between complex weed management challenges and sustainable solutions.

## APHIS Releases a Mite for Biocontrol of Russian Thistle

In September, APHIS prepared a final environmental assessment and finding of no significant impact relative to permitting the release of the blister mite, *Aceria salsolae* (Acari: Eriophyidae), for the biological control of Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus* L.) within the contiguous United States. Based on APHIS's finding of no significant impact, they have determined that an environmental impact statement need not be prepared.

Russian thistle infests about 100 million acres in the western U.S. It is native to the mountainous regions of southwest Asia and was accidentally first introduced in the early 1870s in South Dakota. Since then, it has spread over most of the central and western U.S. and southern Canada. It grows primarily in fallow or disturbed soil in arid and semiarid zones and is listed as a noxious weed in five states. It is highly flammable, contributing to a rapid spread of wildfires.

The blister mite, *Aceria salsolae,* is a recently discovered eriophyid mite species. Mite species are usually extremely host specific and therefore generally pose low risk to nontarget plants, making them a likely candidate for classical biological control of weeds. In addition, Russian thistle is an excellent target for biological control because it has no close taxonomic relatives in North America.

## Invasive Grasses and Wildfire Issue Paper Presented on Capitol Hill

On September 22, the CAST Issue paper: "**Integrated Management of Fire-Adapted Invasive Plants That Change Wildfire Regimes**" was presented on Capitol Hill as part of the National Coalition of Food and Agricultural Research's (NCFAR) Lunch-N-Learn series. Speakers included Greg Dahl, Western Society of Weed Science (WSWS) CAST Representative, Matt Baur, Western Integrated Pest Management Center Director and Tom Getts, University of California Weed Ecology and Cropping Systems Advisor. Thanks to Laura Woods, NCFAR, and Chris Boomsma, CAST, for their support for this event as well as WSSA and WSWS for their sponsorship.




*Left to Right: Matt Baur, Tom Getts, Greg Dahl and Lee Van Wychen.*

## Forest Service to Close 23 Research Facilities as Part of Reorganization

The U.S. Forest Service is closing 23 research and development facilities in more than a dozen states as part of a broader agency reorganization that includes moving its headquarters from Washington, D.C., to Salt Lake City, Utah. The agency says the closures will reduce building and maintenance costs by about $16 million. The 95 employees at the research stations slated for closure will be shifted to other sites, while research conducted at the affected locations will continue at other facilities.

The Forest Service had also considered closing 41 additional science and experimental forest sites, but those sites will remain open following pushback from researchers and other stakeholders. The Forest Service's network of 84 Experimental Forests and Ranges provides

sites for long-term research on forest and ecosystem management. This research addresses issues including wildfire, climate change, pests, and disease and provides information to help inform forest management decisions.

STATES AFFECTED:

| State | Locations |
|---|---|
| Alabama | Huntsville |
| California | Chico, Fresno, Hat Creek, Anderson (specific outbuildings) |
| Connecticut | Ansonia, Hamden |
| Florida | Tallahassee |
| Illinois | Evanston |
| Maryland | Baltimore |
| Michigan | East Lansing, Wellston/Harrietta |
| New Mexico | Albuquerque |
| New York | Cortland, Lakeville |
| Ohio | McArthur |
| Oregon | Portland |
| Pennsylvania | Long Pond, York |
| Texas | Nacogdoches |
| Wisconsin | Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin Rapids |
| West Virginia | Princeton |

**GAO Calls for USDA Strategy to Address Climate-Related Pests and Diseases**

A new **Government Accountability Office (GAO) report** finds that USDA has taken few actions to strengthen the resilience of farms and forests to climate-related risks from pests and diseases, while staffing and funding for some relevant programs have declined. However, WSSA is investigating the reports limited treatment of weeds and invasive plants as pests.

GAO recommends that USDA conduct a nationwide assessment of these risks and develop a strategy to address them, including improved monitoring, forecasting, education, and technical assistance. The report notes that USDA's Climate Hubs have supported research and outbreak forecasting, but the hubs and other programs face staffing losses and planned funding cuts.

GAO warns that failing to address these risks could increase federal costs for crop insurance and ad hoc agricultural assistance. The report cites an estimate that climate-related changes in pests and diseases could increase federal crop-insurance costs by $300 million to $2.2 billion annually by 2100.

**Get Bulletins Live Two Updates When New PULAs are Added or Changed**

EPA announced a new email subscription feature to help pesticide users quickly receive updates from the Bulletins Live! Two system, including notifications about new Pesticide Use Limitation Areas (PULA) and changes to existing PULAs. With this feature, whenever

Endangered Species Act requirements are updated in Bulletins Live! Two, subscribed pesticide users will receive an email with the latest information. To subscribe, please visit **www.epa.gov/endangered-species/bulletins-live-two-view-bulletins**.

Lee Van Wychen, Ph.D.
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# 2026 Membership Renewal Form

**To pay by credit card, please login to your account at www.wsweedscience.org**

**IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL MEETING BUT WANT TO REMAIN A MEMBER, FILL IN THE INFORMATION BELOW AND SEND $30.00 FOR DUES TO THE ADDRESS PROVIDED.**

**Last name First name Affiliation**

**Mailing address City State Zip code**

**Phone # w/area code e-mail address**

**Classification: Student ___ University ___ Federal Agency ___ State Agency ___ Private Industry (manufacturing and sales) ___ Private Industry (consulting) ____ Unemployed ____ Retired ____ other (specify) _____**

**Send to: WSWS/IMI,**
**360 Oak Ave, Ste #140,**
**Eaton, CO 80615**

**Questions? info@wsweedscience.org or (303) 327-8016**

# Western Society of Weed Science Objectives

- To foster and encourage education and research in weed science.
- To foster cooperation among state, federal and private agencies in matters of weed science.
- To aid and support commercial, private and public agencies in the solution of weed problems.
- To support legislation governing weed control programs and weed research and education programs.
- To support the Weed Science Society of America and foster state and regional