

**2024 WSWS Summer Board Meeting
Science Policy Report
Lee Van Wychen**

2024 Survey of the Most Common and Troublesome Weeds in Aquatic and Non-Crop Areas

We would greatly appreciate your participation in the 2024 Survey of the Most Common and Troublesome Weeds in Aquatic and Non-Crop Areas in the U.S. and Canada. The survey will remain open until Labor Day 2024. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KDQJFQS>.

New Science Policy Fellows (SPFs)

- Sarah Chu- Texas A&M. 3rd year Ph.D. student. Advisor: Muthu Bagavathinnian
- Joshua Miranda – Oregon St. 2nd year Ph.D. student; Advisor: Dr. Marcelo Moretti

Weed Science Presidents Travel to DC to Promote Ag Research Funding

During the week of May 6 – 9, five weed science society presidents visited Washington DC to advocate for federal agriculture research funding. They also attended the National Coalition for



From L to R: Lee Van Wychen, Executive Director of Science Policy; Dawn Refsell, NCWSS President; Todd Baughman, SWSS President; Tim Prather, WSWS President; Greg Dahl, WSSA President; and Erin Hitchner, NEWSS President

Food and Agricultural Research (NCFAR) annual meeting, which provided a great overview of federal agriculture spending and priorities. We also heard from USDA's Deputy Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics (REE), Sanah Baig and from the main House and Senate Ag Committee staff working on the Research Title in the Farm Bill. This included:

Brandon Honeycutt with Senate Ag Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow
Jeremy Witte, with Senate Ag Committee Ranking Member John Boozman
Ricki Schroeder, with House Ag Committee Chairman G.T. Thompson
Emily Pliscott, with House Ag Committee Ranking Member Austin Scott

We visited 25 Congressional offices to discuss our top priority issues: 1) to restore funding for the USDA Crop Protection & Pest Management (CPPM) program and 2) increase funding for the IR-4 program.

1. Support the USDA NIFA Crop Protection and Pest Management (CPPM) program at \$21 million in FY 2025. The President's Budget Request for FY 2025 slashed this program by 85% to \$3 million. The CPPM was funded at \$21 million in both FY 2023 and FY 2024. The CPPM tackles real world weed, insect, and disease problems with applied solutions through the concepts of integrated pest management (IPM). The CPPM funds Extension IPM personnel as well as a competitive IPM grants program.
2. Support the USDA NIFA IR-4 Project funding at \$25 million in FY 2025. The IR-4 Project was funded at \$15 million in FY 2024. The President's Budget Request for FY 2025 is \$15 million. There is a phenomenal need for specialty crop research and pest management solutions. The IR-4 Project conducts research and develops the data needed to facilitate the registration of crop protection products, including reduced risk and bio-based pesticides, for major food crops such as fruits and vegetables, as well as herbs, spices, ornamental plants and other horticultural crops. The IR-4 Project provides an incredible return on investment as it contributes \$8.97 billion to the annual U.S. GDP.

The Congressional visits were very successful. The House Appropriations Committee has restored the USDA NIFA CPPM program funding to \$21 million for FY 2025 and it appears the Senate will also do the same. The House Appropriations Committee also provided a \$750,000 increase for the IR-4 Program for FY 2025. We are waiting to see what Senate Appropriations Committee will do, but any increase in funding in this very difficult fiscal year is very much welcomed.

We also met with several other agricultural groups, including the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC) and the National Farmers Union (NFU). One of the outcomes of those meetings is a tour that is being planned for EPA and FWS staff to review ESA issues. The tour is being co-sponsored by WSSA and NAICC during September 3-5 in Wisconsin. We will discuss mitigations for endangered species like the Massasauga Rattlesnake and the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee, view the unique challenges posed by the Central Sands hydrology and irrigated potato production, and view IPM practices being used in cranberry production.

Finally, the group will tour the Winfield United Innovation Center in River Falls to the latest research in spray drift reduction technologies.



Steve Mirsky (back to camera) a weed scientist and research ecologist with USDA-ARS in Beltsville, MD, discusses the research involved in developing a weed image database for use in artificial intelligence and robotic precision sensor equipment. Todd Baughman (2nd from right) and Greg Dahl (4th from right) attended this NCFAR event on May 6. We also got to spend the day with USDA NIFA Director Dr. Manjit Misra (5th from right) touring various USDA ARS and University of Maryland agricultural research projects.

I want to personally thank each of the Weed Science Society presidents for their professionalism and leadership. Not to mention taking the time from their busy schedules to travel to Washington DC. I can assure you that each of their societies is well represented!

Weed Science Societies Support the Use of DRAs for ESA Mitigations

The six National and Regional Weed Science Societies sent a letter to EPA supporting the addition of Drift Reduction Adjuvants (DRAs) to the list of mitigation options available to pesticide users for Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance. EPA's Draft Herbicide Strategy does not currently list DRAs as a tool to reduce spray drift and run off, even though DRAs are used on over 100 millions acres every year.

The letter from the six Weed Science Societies supports a letter sent earlier this year on the same topic from many other stakeholder groups, including the Council of Producers & Distributors of Agrotechnology (CPDA), CropLife America (CLA), and the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC). EPA has responded favorably to our request and we hope they include DRAs as a mitigation option in their Final Herbicide Strategy for ESA that is expected by August 30, 2024. The Weed Science Societies letter is at:

<https://wsa.net/2024/07/national-and-regional-weed-science-societies-support-drift-reduction-adjuvants-dras-as-mitigation-options-for-endangered-species-act-esa-compliance/>

Farm Bill Advances in the House, But Still Waiting on the Senate

The House Committee on Agriculture passed their version of the next Farm Bill on May 24, 2024. However, the Senate Agriculture Committee has yet to release their full draft of a Farm Bill. It appears that another one-year extension of the 2018 Farm Bill may be necessary if the House and Senate cannot get their bills passed before the August recess for Congress.

Some notable provisions included in the House Farm Bill:

- Reauthorizes the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) to continue as a competitively awarded research grant program through FY 2029 and adds additional topics to the scope of eligible research.
- Provides \$2.5 billion in mandatory funding for a competitively awarded agriculture research facilities grant program.
- Mandates \$100 million in funding for student scholarships at land-grant colleges and universities.
- Directs USDA to establish at least 15 Centers of Excellence, which were previously authorized to receive priority for funding. Changed the eligible areas of focus to include aquaculture, biosecurity, biotechnology, invasive species, water quality, and other topics.
- Expands the scope of the High-Priority Research and Extension Initiative grant program by adding research on rangeland, tropical plant health, invasive species, biochar, soil health, microplastics and PFAS impacts on farmland, and wildfire smoke exposure on crops.

EPA Increases Atrazine CE-LOC From 3.4 to 9.7 µg/L

On July 7, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced an update to the level at which atrazine is expected to adversely affect aquatic plants. The new revised atrazine concentration of 9.7 micrograms per liter (µg/L), which was derived following an August 2023 FIFRA Science Advisory Panel (SAP) peer review, will be used to develop a revised regulatory decision to help protect aquatic plants as well as fish, invertebrates, and amphibians. Many thanks go to Aaron Gager, Jay Ferrell, John Madsen and Kurt Getsinger for their service on the 2023 FIFRA SAP.

The level at which atrazine is expected to adversely affect aquatic plants is also known as the concentration-equivalent level of concern or CE-LOC. Included in this announcement is an EPA [memorandum](#) that provides details on updates to EPA's database of aquatic plant community studies and revised exposure modeling. Also included is an updated map that shows where the level of concern is expected to be exceeded. Collectively, these updates resulted in the removal of millions of acres of land from the 2022 map of watersheds that were expected to exceed the level of concern and added a much smaller number of acres in other areas of the country. Later this year, EPA plans to update its [2022 atrazine mitigation proposal](#) to reflect the revised level of concern and the corrections to the exposure modeling, as well as to incorporate feedback received during the 2022 public comment period. EPA will take public comment on the revised mitigation proposal and also release a response to comments on the 2022 proposed revisions to the interim decision at that time.

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Meetings of the National and Regional Weed Science Societies

Jul. 14 - 18, 2024 Aquatic Plant Management Society (APMS), St. Petersburg, FL www.apms.org
Dec. 1 – 4, 2024 International Weed Science Society (IWSS), Jerusalem, Israel www.iwss.info
Dec. 9 - 12, 2024 North Central Weed Science Society (NCWSS), Kansas City, MO www.ncwss.org
Jan. 6 - 10, 2025 Northeastern Weed Science Society (NEWSS), Annapolis, MD www.newss.org
Jan. 20 - 23, 2025 Southern Weed Science Society (SWSS), Charleston, SC www.swss.ws
Feb. 24 - 27, 2025 Weed Science Society of America (WSSA), Vancouver, BC www.wssa.net
Mar 10-13, 2025 Western Society of Weed Science (WSWS), Seattle, WA www.wsweedscience.org