Science Policy Report, WSWS Annual Meeting
Lee Van Wychen, March 8, 2018

Congress Avoids Sequestration with 2-Year Budget Agreement: Congress approved a two-year budget plan on February 9 (Senate 71-28; House 240-186) that was signed into law by the President that raises the sequestration caps on defense and nondefense discretionary spending by nearly $300 billion over two years. Nondefense discretionary spending (the biggest source of research funding) will get a $63 billion boost in FY 2018 and an additional $68 billion in FY 2019. While Congress now has a budget blueprint, they still have to modify and pass an FY 2018 omnibus appropriations bill. Federal agencies will continue to operate on a Continuing Resolution (CR) at FY 2017 levels through **March 23, 2018**. If an appropriations package has not been passed by March 23, we'll have some more March Madness (i.e. gov't shutdown).

FY 2019 Budget Needs Work: The President released his FY 2019 budget a few weeks ago and while some parts of it are ok for weed science issues (Hatch Act, Smith Lever, IR-4, AFRI), we will need to work with Congress to restore cuts to USDA-ARS and the Crop Protection and Pest Management programs, as well as several programs important for aquatic weed research and management (GLRI, Sea Grant, APCRP). I will be circulating a letter to the National and Regional Weed Science Society presidents within the next week for their signature, which asks key House and Senate ag appropriators to restore USDA-ARS funding cuts and oppose the 20 ARS lab closures that would be devastating for ARS weed scientists.

WSSA-EPA Liaison: Mike Barrett has served as WSSA-EPA Liaison for the past 4 years and made his last visit to EPA in December. I cannot express enough my sincere thanks and appreciation for his incredible service to WSSA in this role! The new liaison, Greg Kruger from the University of Nebraska, has hit the ground running and has already made several visits to EPA, which overlapped with Mike. There is no shortage of weed science issues to deal with and I have complete confidence that Greg will pick things up where Mike left off.

WSSA-NIFA Fellow: Donn Shilling has served as WSSA's first USDA-NIFA Fellow for nearly 3 years now working to increase NIFA's understanding of weed science issues and vice-versa. Donn feels the time is right to step down in this role and allow the next NIFA Fellow to build on his efforts. WSSA is currently soliciting applicants for the next NIFA Fellow. **Application deadline: May 1, 2018**. Please contact me if interested.

Many Agency Leadership Positions Still Vacant: Typically, more than a year after the Presidential election, the senior appointees of most agencies are in place. However, this Administration, for whatever reasons, has been exceedingly slow in selecting, moving, and confirming subcabinet positions while excessive media scrutiny and a slim Senate majority has derailed a number of nominees. EPA still doesn't have a Deputy Administrator (Andrew Wheeler has been nominated), nor an Assistant Administrator for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention (OCSPP) which oversees the Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP). About half of the Senate confirmed leadership positions at both USDA and Dept. of Interior still remain unfilled. There is an effort to get **Rich Bonanno**, Associate Dean and head of NC State Extension, nominated for the **USDA Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics**, which is USDA's "Chief Scientist" that oversees USDA-ARS, NIFA, ERS, and NASS.

USDA Leadership Positions Confirmed: USDA Secretary- Sonny Perdue (GA); Deputy Secretary- Steve Censky (MN); Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agriculture- Ted McKinney (IN); Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs- Greg Ibach (NE); Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation – Bill Northey (IA).

2018 Farm Bill Recommendations: Congress will begin work on a new Farm Bill shortly. Some of the Science Policy Committee recommendations I have been working on include: 1) promote Areawide IPM programs and funding within USDA-NIFA (WSSA & ESA will hold a Congressional briefing on May 10); 2) incentivize cover crop use and crop insurance programs for weed resistance management; 3) require a National Program Leader for Weed Science in both USDA-ARS and USDA-NIFA (I submitted "guidance language" to this effect in the FY 2019 appropriations bill through Rep. Tulsi Gabbard's office); 4) continue support for the Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research (FFAR) and add "invasive species" to its list of priorities; and 5) increasing research funding for weed genomics and genetic biocontrol and "intelligent" weed removal technologies (i.e. precision spraying, self-learning weed removal robots, CO_2 lasers, etc..).

IR-4 Project Contributes $9.4 Billion to GDP

A recently updated study out of Michigan State University shows that the IR-4 Project supports over 95,000 U.S. jobs and contributes about $9.4 billion to annual gross domestic product (GDP). This is an incredible return on taxpayer investment considering that the IR-4 Project's core budget in 2016 was only $15.5 million. Dr. Jerry Baron, Executive Director of the IR-4 Project will be presenting a seminar on Capitol Hill on March 12 titled "Keeping the Good Food, Good" where he will discuss the role of the IR-4 Project in preventing pest damage and food waste in specialty crops

Divisive Dicamba: Without a question, the most divisive issue I have faced in my 12+ years as Director of Science Policy. EPA announced label changes for Extendimax, Engenia, and Fexapan on Oct. 13, 2017. EPA's objective is to minimize the number of off-target incidents in 2018, while also recognizing the utility of the technology in weed resistance management. EPA has made it clear that a repeat of 2017 (i.e. 2700+ complaints) is unacceptable. A common theme in all the dicamba related meetings I've participated in is EPA's need for more research and information. I am currently working with Greg Kruger and others to convene a research workshop in Washington DC in mid-April to identify data gaps and develop research protocols that will help all stakeholders better understand and manage factors contributing to dicamba off-target movement.

Glyphosate Not Carcinogenic: EPA released its human health draft risk assessment and supporting documents that concludes that glyphosate is not likely to be carcinogenic to humans and found no other meaningful risks to human health when the product is used according to the label. On Feb. 27, EPA officially opened a 60 day comment period on these draft risk assessments. Comments are due **April 30, 2018**. Details are at: https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=EPA-HQ-OPP-2009-0361

EPA Finalizes Herbicide Resistance Management Guidance: Referred to as PRN 2017-2, this applies to all herbicide uses, except for those applied in residential settings (i.e. lawns). Weed resistance management guidance will be required on labels for any new herbicide products as well as existing herbicides that go through registration review and will include the following:

- Listing the herbicide mechanism-of-action (MOA), according to the WSSA MOA classification scheme.
- Clearly expressing application parameters and full-labeled use rates
- Recommendations to scout the treatment area both before and after application
- How to identify suspected resistance
- How to report lack of performance and proactively take action before escaped weeds become widespread
- A list of herbicide resistance BMP's using WSSA and HRAC guidance
- Information to help make growers and applicators aware of herbicide resistant weeds found in their local area

The registrants will be responsible for reporting new cases of suspected and confirmed resistance to EPA and users, and in certain circumstances, may be required to follow additional guidance such as "apply only with another MOA". In addition, the weed management stakeholder community is expected to provide educational and training materials for applicators and users **at the local level**. Guidance for developing these resistance management and remedial action plans are provided in Appendix 1 of PRN 2017-2.

USDA Will Re-engage Stakeholders on Revisions to Biotechnology Regulations: APHIS withdrew its proposed rule on biotechnology regulations revisions in November and will re-engage with stakeholders to determine the most effective, science-based approach for regulating the products of modern biotechnology while protecting plant health. The National and Regional Weed Science Societies submitted comments on the proposal in June. While we complimented APHIS on the many positive aspects of the proposal, we encouraged APHIS to re-propose a rule that minimizes regulatory uncertainty related to their weed risk assessment model.

Weed-Free Certification Programs: What is the role of the weed science societies in promoting weed-free certification programs such as the North American Weed Free Forage Program that was developed by the North American Invasive Weed Management Association (NAISMA)? **DISCUSS**.

Monarch Overwinter Numbers Down Again: On March 5, the overwintering area for monarch butterflies in Mexico was reported as 2.48 ha, which is down for the second year in a row from the 4.01 ha occupied in 2015-16. By all accounts, there were some excellent monarch numbers reported in the upper Midwest last summer, but the occurrence of two tropical storms and three hurricanes during the monarch fall migration was attributed to the decline. The USFWS is working to assess the effectiveness of monarch conservation efforts and is expected to make a determination of threatened or endangered status in June 2019.

Federal Rule Delays 2015 WOTUS "Applicability Date" to Feb. 6, 2020: The EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers (The Agencies) finalized a rule on January 31 that delays the "Applicability Date" of the 2015 Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule. The "Applicability Date" Rule was intended to avoid confusion with a recent Supreme Court ruling regarding federal court jurisdiction and to give the Agencies additional time to carry out the President's Executive Order on WOTUS issued last year. The second step of that Executive Order, where the Agencies will propose a revision to the definition of "waters of the United States" is expected out later this year.

NPDES Fix Legislation: There is a renewed effort in the Senate to pass a NPDES fix bill, S. 340, which is the companion bill to H.R. 953 on the House side that was passed on May 24, 2017. The bill amends FIFRA and the Clean Water Act to prohibit the EPA from requiring duplicative permitting under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) for a pesticide application into navigable waters if the pesticide is already approved for aquatic use under FIFRA. The six national and regional weed science societies endorsed letters of support to both the House on H.R. 953 and the Senate on S. 340 and recently endorsed a letter urging the House Ag Committee to include the NPDES-fix language in the 2018 Farm Bill.

National Invasive Species Awareness Week (NISAW) was Feb. 26 – Mar. 2, 2018
We had another successful NISAW that was held in conjunction with a 3 day meeting of the federal Invasive Species Advisory Council (ISAC). Please visit www.nisaw.org to check out the activities that occurred during the week. One Capitol Hill seminar that I was particularly excited about was "Gene Drives 101: Perspectives on Potential Invasive Species Management" - led by Heath Packard, Director of Government and Public Relations for Island Conservation.

The ISAC meeting was also productive and there was good discussion on the priorities the National Invasive Species Council (NISC) should consider in their 2019-2021 management plan. The Science Policy Committee also nominated Rob Richardson and Jacob Barney to serve on ISAC.

Next year will be the 20th NISAW! If you are interested in getting involved with NISAW or would like to sponsor events during the week, please contact me at Lee.VanWychen@wssa.net or Rick Otis with the Reduce Risks from Invasive Species Coalition (RRISC) at rick.otis@rrisc.org.

Weed Bingo: The WSSA Public Awareness Committee is investigating the possibility of creating a new board game called "Weed Bingo", which would be similar to "Bug Bingo". We've been investigating initial costs to set up, produce and manufacture such a game, which is supposedly around $25K. I am reaching out to each of the regional weed science societies to gauge their interest in sharing costs/profits and identifying some of weeds important and unique to their region. **DISCUSS.**

2018 Weed Survey Now Available: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2018weedsurvey
The 2018 survey focuses on the most common and troublesome weeds in the following areas:

1) Aquatic: irrigation & flood control
2) Aquatic: lakes, rivers, reservoirs
3) Aquatic: ponds
4) Forestry
5) Natural Areas: parks, wildlife refuges
6) Ornamentals: field nursery crops, outdoor containers, Christmas trees
7) Right-of-Ways: railways, roads, public utilities.