

EPA Liaison: Mark VanGessel

ACTIVITIES OVER THE PAST YEAR

Member of the Endangered Species Committee, Science Policy Committee, Special Committee on Resistance Terminology, and participant in the monthly Washington DC Updates

Over the past year, the Agency has focused on incorporating the Endangered Species Act into pesticide labeling. The Herbicide Strategy was released in August of 2024. EPA has been very receptive to comments from WSSA, both formally and informally. Drs. Culpepper and Chism have been extremely active (and productive) on this issue. This topic has received the most attention amongst my contacts at EPA.

Updated atrazine mitigation measures were open for public comment in December. Other products moving through re-registration include oxyfluorfen, paraquat, and metribuzin. There has been little discussion about these topics with my EPA contacts.

Field Days

Attended the NAICC/WSSA Summer Field Trip to Wisconsin, sponsored jointly between WSSA and NAICC. Tour was all day Tuesday and Wednesday (Sept 3 and 4). Visited six locations throughout WI that ranged from grain crops with Massasauga rattlesnake habitat to cranberry bogs and the unique habitat associated with this production system. The tour wrapped up with a visit to the Winfield United's Innovation Center in River Falls, WI, to discuss Winfield's work on drift reduction adjuvants (DRAs) and the potential role of DRAs as an ESA mitigation. The bus-trip concept allowed for extensive discussions on a range of topics, with identifying, improving, and protecting habitats as a common theme.

An additional field day was not held with EPA personnel

Webinars

Since only a limited number of individuals were able to partake in the WI tour, I assisted Bill Chism with an online seminar that summarized the tour and shared the discussion topics and what was learned. The video is available on WSSA's Endangered Species Webpage, availability of the video was also announced through GROWiwm.org.

Control of Invasive Plants. Drs. Stephen Enloe and Jason Ferrell presented on the problem of invasive plants with a focus on habitats in Florida. However, examples of invasive plants throughout the United States were included.

Farm Management. Nate Bruce, Farm Management Specialist with University of Delaware presented on A Timeline of Business Decision. The emphasis was on how far ahead of planting decisions are made and some of the economic incentives that influence purchase dates

Synthetic Auxin Herbicides and Amaranths: We Have a Problem. Presenter was Dr. Larry Steckel from University of Tennessee.

Getting into the Weeds of Herbicide Target-Site and Nontarget-Site Resistance. Presenter was Dr. Patrick Tranel. Using waterhemp as an example, Dr. Tranel discussed the various mechanisms for resistance and what that means for management.

The above four videos are not recorded, although slides are made available to EPA personnel.

UPCOMING/FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Discussion with EPA personnel has

Field Tour

Given the change in administration, have not progressed with plans for WSSA-sponsored Field Day

WSSA and NAICC field trip has been discussed for 2025 to North Carolina, although I have very few details

Webinars

Future webinars are currently on hold.

Other

Working with Bill Chism, Naranjan Krishnan, and Kurt Vollmer on an extension meeting focused on ESA and pesticide use. During the initial discussions EPA, USDA, and other federal agencies were notified about the meeting and the program is being developed to help inform them of how drift and runoff/erosion mitigations might be implemented “on the ground”. I am not sure if EPA will be able to join us in person. The session will be recorded, and we will share the recording or notes with EPA. State regulators, NRCS, and the services are also invited. In addition, farmers, crop consultants and ag chemical dealers are invited for a broad range of perspectives and experiences.

I have only been to the EPA headquarters once or twice during my time as so many of the EPA staff have been working remotely. In December, started conversation to arrange a time that WSSA, Entomological Society Liaison and Plant Pathology Liaison can all visit at the same time this coming fall. We hope with all three societies represented we can have a more robust conversation around the topic of ESA mitigations, resistance, labeling, and other topics that cross our disciplines. As of two weeks ago, those discussions were progressing.

Items for WSSA Board

My term as EPA-liaison is ending, but I am willing to continue in this role.

If there is interest within the EPA and we can develop a local program for a summer/fall field tour, there will be WSSA-funds needed. I anticipate a one-day bus tour. Based on previous tours, this will be \$2,500 to 4,000.