

Careers in Weed Science

Lee Van Wychen: Executive Director of Science Policy, Weed Science Society of America

Primary duties

The primary purpose of my position is to provide leadership and direction for national and regional weed science research, education, and extension activities, as well as policies and regulations in Washington, DC which are relevant to the societies. My position represents the needs of the six cooperating weed science societies (WSSA, APMS, NCWSS, NEWSS, SWSS, and WSWS) to perform activities that are important to the mission of the societies.

How did you begin working in Weed Science?

The late Dr. Gordon Harvey at the University of Wisconsin - Madison offered me a free Master's Degree in Agronomy/Weed Science. I was about to start a job with Dow in agronomy sales and service.

What do you love about your job?

It combines the two things I love most - weed science and public policy.

What is exciting about the future of weed science?

Weed scientists have job security because weeds are survivors that are always adapting to whatever control tactics we throw at them. Whenever we start to get control of one species, another species is waiting in the background to take its place. A very exciting part of the future of weed science is using genetics to help understand the origin, evolution, and success of weeds.

Imparting wisdom

The weed science is the coolest, and most challenging, pest management discipline!

Weed scientists are in short supply and highly sought after in the job market, whether private or public. My path to employment was unique because I wanted to combine weed science with public policy, thus I needed to merge two completely different fields of study.



Education

B.S. 1996 University of Wisconsin-Madison
Agronomy & Horticulture (separate degrees)

M.S. 1998 University of Wisconsin-Madison
Agronomy (Weed Science)

Ph.D. 2002 Montana State University
Land Resources and Environmental Sciences (Weed Science)

Involvement in Professional Societies

Weed Science Society of America
North Central Weed Science Society
Aquatic Pest Management Society
Southern Weed Science Society
Northeastern Weed Science Society
Western Society of Weed Science
Tri-Societies- Congressional Science Fellow

Other interests?

Gardening/farming. Yes, I love plants, both the good and the bad ones. A weed can be as simple as a plant out of place, or it can be a plant whose virtues have yet to be discovered!

If you are interested to hear more about Lee's story or ask any questions, you can email him at Lee.VanWychen@wssa.net