

# WASHINGTON REPORT

## March 2006

Since my last report in December, I have logged in over 8000 miles and spent over 10 solid days in board meetings at the regional and national weed science meetings. It has been an immense pleasure getting to rekindle old relationships and establish new ones in each of the weed science societies. The weed science societies have much to be proud of both individually and collectively. There are also opportunities and challenges for each of the societies.

### **Weed Science Research Funding**

The President released his FY2007 federal budget on February 6, 2006. The proposed budget for USDA has several significant changes that could impact weed science and will depend on the actions Congress takes during this year's appropriation cycle. The FY2007 USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) budget for the National Research Initiative (NRI) competitive grants program is \$247 million, a \$66 million increase over FY2006. Of this \$66 million increase, \$42.3 million is from Section 406 activities that will be transferred dollar for dollar and Program Leader for Program Leader to the NRI. Section 406 Programs include the Regional Pest Management Centers, Crops at Risk from the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) Implementation; FQPA Risk Mitigation Program for Major Food Crop Systems; and the Methyl Bromide Transition Program.

The USDA CSREES budget for NRI includes: 1) increasing the amount of the grant that may be used for competitive integrated activities from 22 to 30 percent; 2) eliminating the cap on indirect costs for competitively awarded grants; and 3) an increase of \$3 million for the Biology of Weedy and Invasive Species grant program.

A new USDA program for invasive species is proposed that includes \$10 million for competitive grants to private groups for eradication and control of invasive species through the use of new and innovative methodologies. Unfortunately though, no FY2007 funds were allocated for the 2004 Noxious Weed Control and Eradication Act.

### **Hatch Act and McIntire-Stennis Act Proposed Changes**

USDA CSREES FY2007 budget proposes an alternative approach to the ag formula funds that would redirect a portion of the Hatch Act and the McIntire-Stennis programs to nationally, competitively awarded multi-state/-institution projects. This is a critical distinction from the FY2006 budget proposal, which proposed a 50% cut in formula funds. The FY2007 budget maintains nearly level funding for the Hatch and McIntire Stennis Acts sustaining a substantial state formula base for the programs while emphasizing multi-institutional efforts to address issues of mutual importance to states and the nation.

The **Hatch Act** formula provides for each state to receive what it received in 1955 as a base amount. Sums appropriated in excess of the 1955 level are distributed as follows: 20% is allotted equally to each state; 52% is allocated on the basis of a state's share of U.S. rural and farm population; a maximum of 25% is allocated to multi-state/-institution research projects; and 3% is reserved for administration. The FY2007 USDA CSREES proposal would increase the Hatch Act multi-state/-institution share to about 55%, phased in over a four-year period as current multi-state projects are completed. The remaining funds would be allocated on the state formula base, phasing down over time to about 45% of the appropriation.

**The McIntire-Stennis Act of 1962** makes funding available to the state agricultural experiment stations and to forestry schools and programs at the land grant colleges of agriculture for forestry research. McIntire-Stennis funds are distributed by a formula that allocates \$10,000 to each state, with 40% of the remainder being distributed according to a state's share of the nation's total commercial forest land, 40% according to the value of its timber cut annually, and 20% according to its state appropriation for forestry research. In the case of the McIntire-Stennis program for FY2007, in which there is no current multi-state/-institution program, there would be no phase-in period. However, slightly more than 40% of the appropriation would continue to be allocated on the basis of the state formula base.

The WSSA is not in favor of the reallocation of formula funds within Hatch and McIntire-Stennis Acts. The WSSA has always been a strong supporter of USDA formula funds given the amount of applied extension work that is done by our members. On the other hand, there has been a slow but constant push towards more competitive funding, the argument being that it results in more accountability and better research. In the academic food chain, the higher up someone is in administration, the more likely there is the push for competitive funding. If a university gets \$4 million in formula funds, they have to match it at the state level. If they get \$4 million in competitive funds, they get to keep half or more. However, the WSSA believes that the more applied a scientist (including those in Extension) the more the need for formula funding. The WSSA will remain determined and vigilant as the President's FY2007 budget moves through Congress.

### **New USDA Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics**

Gale A. Buchanan has been nominated by President Bush to Serve as USDA Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics. His Senate confirmation hearing is expected sometime before May 2006. Dr. Buchanan is dean and director emeritus at the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at the University of Georgia. Earlier in his career, he served as associate director for the Georgia Agricultural Experiment Station, resident director of the Coastal Plain Experiment Station, and president of the Southern Weed Science Society. Dr. Buchanan served as a colonel in the Alabama Army National Guard for over 25 years. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Florida and his PhD from Iowa State University. The WSSA applauds Dr. Buchanan's nomination and looks forward to working with him upon his Senate confirmation.

### **The WSSA and EPA**

The WSSA and the EPA have been working to increase their interaction on a number of weed science issues. This can be a very symbiotic relationship for both the WSSA and EPA. Many thanks go out to WSSA members John Jachetta and Don Stubbs for their work in initiating this endeavor. Four main themes that have emerged from our meetings together are: 1) Capitalize on EPA's need for rangeland and rights-of-way management information by inviting WSSA members with expertise in these areas to come to DC to present seminars on these topics; 2) Develop a program for EPA field visits to a host member's institutions; 3) Develop WSSA expert panels on herbicide families for re-registration; and 4) Develop an EPA Fellowship where WSSA members could work on EPA's Staff for at least 6-months at a time.

The WSSA would like to thank Dr. George Beck, Colorado State for taking time during the 7<sup>th</sup> National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week to organize and present a seminar at EPA on March 2, 2006 titled "Invasive Weeds: Thieves that Require an Ecologically-based Battle Plan." Nearly 30 EPA staff attended this hour long seminar that addressed a variety of rangeland weed management issues such as spray-drift buffers and endangered species.

### **The 2007 Farm Bill**

The Coalition for Funding Agricultural Research Missions (CoFARM) submitted comments to USDA Secretary Johanns in December which included: 1) Reauthorizing the National Research Initiative (NRI) at \$500 million a year; 2) Eliminating USDA's NRI indirect cost ceiling; 3) maintaining a maximum 5-year duration for competitive grants; 4) Reauthorizing the Initiative for Future Agriculture & Food Systems (IFAFS) at \$200 million; and 5) Provide the Secretary of Agriculture with the ability to apply up to 30 percent of funding to conduct integrated research, education and extension within the NRI. The term "integrated" within USDA means that a project has to contain a "research, education, and extension" component.

World Trade Organization (WTO) issues will continue to impact the Farm Bill commodity support programs. A question that is being asked in Washington DC is: If Farm Bill commodity support programs are reduced, can non-trade distorting (Green Box) programs such as agricultural research step up to help provide America's farmers and ranchers with the tools necessary to ensure their success and profitability. Weed science research, education, and extension needs a unified voice and effort to promote our benefits.

### **Federal Government Job Series for Weed Science**

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the federal government's human resources agency, has been slow to respond to the WSSA's request for implementing a Federal Job series for weed science. The WSSA would like to thank the considerable effort from Rob Hedberg, Hilda Diaz-Soltero, Ernest Delfosse, and Doug Holy who helped draft a complete weed science job series outline. OPM staff familiar with the proposal have moved on to other jobs, thus, it will take a new effort by the WSSA and OPM to successfully implement this job series.

## **NIWAW 7 a Huge Success**

We have just completed another successful National Invasive Weed Awareness Week. Over 175 people from nearly 40 states and one Canadian province traveled to Washington DC to increase the national awareness of invasive weeds and weed science in general. The National and Regional Weed Science Societies need to continue to support and build upon this important effort for our discipline. NIWAW 7 participants visited about 100 Congressional offices during the week where they educated Congressional members and staff on two official NIWAW positions: 1) Working to secure \$15 million in funding for the 2004 Noxious Weed Control and Eradication Act; and 2) Working to secure passage of the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act.

The WSSA wishes to thank Dr. Nelroy Jackson for his tireless work as chairman of the Invasive Weed Awareness Coalition, which organized and conducted NIWAW 7. Other main events during NIWAW 7 included Kid's Fun Day at the U.S. Botanic Gardens which was attended by over 800 people, briefings by the USDA, Dept. of Interior, EPA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and National Invasive Species Council (NISC), and numerous other board meetings for non-governmental organizations concerned with the management of noxious and invasive weeds. (PICTURES and CAPTIONS ATTACHED AT END OF NEWSLETTER).

## **WSSA Submits Comments to BLM EIS**

In January and February, many weed scientists and weed science societies, along with the WSSA, submitted comments to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) regarding their Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that addresses vegetation treatment on BLM lands. There was an organized effort by certain groups to submit a disproportionate share of comments on the EIS that would prevent the use of herbicides on BLM lands in the future. The WSSA supports the use of all weed management tools, whether chemical, cultural, or biological.

## **WSSA Endorses Biological Science Funding for NSF**

On February 28, 2006, 42 scientific organizations endorsed a letter to Congressman Bart Gordon, Ranking Minority Member on the House Science Committee that stressed the importance of funding for the biological and social sciences within the National Science Foundation (NSF). The following letter was submitted:

*The basic science community is extremely appreciative and supportive of your recent legislative initiatives to put the United States back on track with its dual competitiveness and innovativeness engines, basic research and technology. Your commitment to basic science is critically important to all Americans, and the 42 organizations that have signed onto this letter are already working to support your efforts.*

*We write now to express two things. First, we commend the goals of H.R. 4434, 4435, and 4596 and assure you that we will be working among our respective constituencies to promote initiatives that bolster the federal science and technology research enterprise. Second, we want to formally convey the extremely important sentiment that efforts to boost the national investment in our future competitiveness and innovation capabilities rely inclusively on all basic sciences and technologies. Just as it proves impossible to predict the potential of today's basic research findings, it is equally difficult to predict the synergies between seemingly disparate sciences and methodologies. It is key, therefore, that your efforts not be misconstrued as primarily a push for the "physical sciences," to the exclusion of other sciences providing critical scientific advances through NSF support. The division of sciences into disciplines is an arbitrary human invention that nature routinely ignores. In fact, as NSF Director Arden Bement publicly stated upon the release of the proposed FY 2007 NSF budget, there is a growing synergy among the biological, physical, and social sciences. The U.S. investment in science should likewise increasingly reflect such an inclusive organization.*

*The term "physical sciences" is not currently defined in H.R. 4596, and it is not used consistently in that the more inclusive "sciences" is sometimes used in its stead. We urge you to strongly consider the sentiment expressed in the Gathering Storm report, the impetus for your legislation: ". . . This special attention does not mean that there should be a disinvestment in such important fields as the life sciences or the social sciences. A balanced research portfolio in all fields of science and engineering research is critical to U.S. prosperity. Increasingly, the most significant new scientific and engineering advances are formed to cut across several disciplines."*

*Sincerely,*

*American Educational Research Association, American Institute of Biological Sciences, American Phytopathological Society, American Psychological Association, American Society for Microbiology, American Society of Agronomy, American Society of Plant Biologists, American Sociological Association, Association for Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback Association for Behavior Analysis, Association for Psychological Science, Association of American Geographers, Association of Population Centers, Behavior Genetics Association, Biophysical Society, Coalition for Funding Agricultural Research Missions, Cognitive Science Society Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education, Consortium of Social Science Associations, Crop Science Society of America, Ecological Society of America, Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, Human Factors and Ergonomics Society Institute of Food Technologists, International Behavioral Neuroscience Society International Society for Developmental Psychobiology, National Academy of Neuropsychology, National Council for Science and the Environment Population Association of America, Psychonomic Society Society for Behavioral Neuroendocrinology, Society for Computers in Psychology, Society for Experimental Social Psychology, Society for Judgment and Decision Making, Society for Mathematical Psychology, Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Society for Psychophysiological Research, Society for Research in Child Development, Society for Research in Psychopathology, Society of Multivariate Experimental Psychology, Soil Science Society of America, Weed Science Society of America*

## **EPA to Provide Financial Support for Conferences, Workshops and/or Meetings**

In January, EPA announced it will provide financial support for Conferences, Workshops and/or Meetings on EPA mission related issues which include: 1) protecting human health and safeguarding the natural environment; 2) advancing the scientific and technical research that promotes environmental protection; 3) exploring current and emerging issues of importance to environmental protection; and/or 4) encouraging collaboration among the nation's best scientists and engineers in academia, business and nonprofit research institutes.

EPA expects \$750,000 will be available in grant funds through 25 awards. Applications for grant funding will be due and approved on a quarterly basis through January 18, 2007. Eligible Applicants include city, county and state governments, public and private institutions of higher education and certain nonprofit organizations. Details are posted at [http://www.epa.gov/ord/grants\\_funding/pdfs/BAA\\_conferences\\_011806.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/ord/grants_funding/pdfs/BAA_conferences_011806.pdf) - EPA Contact: Michael Bender at 202 564 6829; e-mail: [Bender.Michael@EPA.gov](mailto:Bender.Michael@EPA.gov)

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## PHOTOS



Caption: USDA briefing on February 28, 2006 during the 7<sup>th</sup> National Invasive Weed Awareness Week. The event was organized and moderated by Hilda Diaz-Soltero (seated, far left), USDA Senior Invasive Species Coordinator. Presentations were given by (seated from left to right) Dr. Mary Bohman, Director of the Resource Economics Division on behalf of Dr. Susan Offutt, Administrator, Economic Research Service, Dr. Ann Bartuska, Deputy Chief of Research on behalf of Dale Bosworth, Chief, U.S. Forest Service, Dr. Edward Knipling, Administrator, Agricultural Research Service, and Dr. Colien Hefferan, Administrator, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.



Caption: Question and answer session for NIWAW 7 participants during the USDA briefing on February 28, 2006.