

WASHINGTON SCIENCE POLICY REPORT

September 2007

Weed Scientists: Apply for 1 of over 100 AAAS Fellowships

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) solicits candidates from a broad array of disciplinary backgrounds to apply for a year-long Science and Technology Policy Fellowship in Washington DC. Fellows come from a range of sectors, including academia, industry, and non-profits, and represent a spectrum of career stages from recent PhD graduates to faculty on sabbatical, to retired scientists and engineers. The age range of the 2006 Fellows class was 26 to 66. The AAAS also serves as the “umbrella” organization for other scientific societies that sponsor a Fellow, such as the American Society of Agronomy.

The AAAS Fellowship program is a great opportunity to work closely with federal decision-makers in agencies such as the USDA, EPA and the National Science Foundation among others. Fellows receive a stipend of up to \$87,000 for the year. Relocation expenses of up to \$3500 are also provided. The deadline for applications for the 2008-2009 Fellowship class is December 20, 2007. For more information, please visit: <http://fellowships.aaas.org>

2007 Farm Bill Passed by House of Representatives

The House of Representatives passed the 2007 Farm Bill (H.R. 2419) by a vote of 231-191. The Senate will mark up their version of the 2007 Farm Bill when they return to Washington DC after Labor Day. The 2002 Farm Bill expires on September 30, 2007.

The House Farm Bill vote was unusually partisan (instead of geographically divided) due to a last minute move by Democrats to find money to pay for the bill’s nutrition programs. Democrats said the funds would come from closing tax loopholes that allowed foreign companies in the United States to shelter their earnings in tax havens. Republicans called the move a tax increase that would cost American jobs. The White House has threatened a possible veto of the bill because of the tax provision and because of the level of farm subsidy payments. The final House vote of 231-191 fell far short of the margin that would be needed to override a veto, but many things could change with the Senate version of the Farm Bill and the final conference agreement between both chambers.

Despite the partisan wrangling, there are some good proposed changes in the House version of the Farm Bill that will benefit our discipline:

- \$1.6 billion in priorities to strengthen and support the fruit and vegetable industry in the United States. A new section for Horticulture and Organic Agriculture includes nutrition, research, pest management and trade promotion programs.
- Making important new investments in renewable energy research, development and production in rural America. While the Energy Title (Section 9) does not exclusively prohibit the planting of known invasive plants for biomass production, Section 9008

(g)5(C) states that the Secretaries of Agriculture and Energy shall only support biofuels research that is “consistent with the integrity of soil and water resources and with other environmental considerations”.

- Amends certain conservation programs to improve awareness and financial assistance to land managers who focus on pest management practices. Some of these changes include:
 - Allowing producers to conduct prescribed grazing for the control of invasive species on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands.
 - Providing flexible assistance to producers enrolled in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to install and maintain conservation practices that: A) enhance soil, water, and related natural resources, including grazing land, forestland, wetland, and wildlife; and B) conserve energy.
 - Assisting producers in EQIP to make beneficial, cost effective changes to cropping systems, grazing management, energy use, forest management, pest or irrigation management, or other practices on agricultural and forested land including control of invasive species.

- Establishes a new National Agriculture Research Program Office (NARPO) composed of 6 Program Offices, each led by a Director appointed by the Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics, currently Dr. Gale Buchanan. The purpose of NARPO is to coordinate the programs and activities of USDA’s research agencies “in an integrated, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, interagency, and interinstitutional manner” to minimize duplication and maximize coordination at all levels
 - The 6 Program Office are: (1) Renewable energy, natural resources, and environment ; (2) Food safety, nutrition, and health; (3) Plant health and production; (4) Animal health and production and animal products; (5) Agriculture systems and technology; and (6) Agriculture economics and rural communities.
 - The Under Secretary shall fund each Program Office through the appropriations available to the various agencies within the research, education and economics mission area. The aggregate staff for all Program Offices shall not exceed 30 full-time equivalent positions and shall be filled by current full-time equivalent positions.
 - The Under Secretary shall integrate leadership functions of the national program staff of the research agencies (i.e. CSREES, ARS, ERS) into NARPO to ensure that the Directors of the Program Offices are the primary program leaders for the mission areas of the integrated agencies and that administrative duplication does not occur.

House FY2008 Ag Appropriations Bill Leaves Much to be Desired

Rep. Rosa L. DeLauro (D-CT) is the new chairwoman of the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee. While there is still hope that she will comprehend the value of agricultural research and extension, her subcommittee’s FY2008 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration Appropriations Bill left much to be desired. While her funding priorities

such as food stamps and nutrition programs were not unexpected, it seems clear that we need to convince her and her staff about the importance of agricultural research. Independent studies have shown that the average social **rate of return** to public investment in **agricultural research ranges from 35 to 53 percent**. Agricultural research investments will influence agricultural productivity in as few as 2 years and the impact will be felt for as long as 30 years. These returns are shared by all levels of the industry, from producers to consumers.

In the House-passed Agriculture Appropriations Bill on August 3, USDA-ARS would receive \$1.1 billion, a **decrease of \$52 million** below FY2007. USDA-CSREES would receive \$671 million, the same as FY2007. Within USDA-CSREES, the National Research Initiative (NRI) would get \$190 million, the same as FY2007. The NRI, authorized at \$500 million annually, has been slowly increasing over the past 6 years, at least keeping pace with inflation. We will definitely lose ground if the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee flat lines the NRI.

Meanwhile, the Food Stamp Program is provided at \$39.8 billion, an **increase of \$1.7 billion** over 2007. The House ag appropriations bill rejects the Administration's proposal to restrict eligibility for food stamps to families who are receiving other public nutrition services. The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program gets \$5.6 billion, which is **\$415.6 million above** FY2007. I don't want to sound like a heartless Science Policy Director, but it begs the question of whether a \$2 billion increase in food stamp and nutrition programs will provide the same social benefits and returns to the American people compared to reducing or flat lining agriculture research programs.

Executive Branch Releases FY2009 R&D Priorities

On 16 August, the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released the annual memorandum identifying research and development (R&D) priorities for the federal government. The memo, which is sent to the heads of executive branch agencies and departments, details what programs the Administration intends to prioritize during fiscal year (FY) 2009. To read the full report, please visit: <http://www.ostp.gov/html/FY2009FINALOMB-OSTPRDPriorityMemo.pdf>

The American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI) remains a focal point for the administration, as the President has begun work to double research budgets for the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy's Office of Science, and the Department of Commerce's National Institute of Standards and Technology.

The Administration favors R&D investments that: 1) Advance fundamental scientific discovery to improve future quality of life; 2) Support high-leverage basic research to spur technological innovation, economic competitiveness and new job growth; 3) Strengthen science, mathematics and engineering education based on the recommendations of the Academic Competitiveness Council and the National Math Panel to ensure a scientifically literate population and a supply of qualified technical personnel commensurate with national need; 4) Enable potentially high-payoff activities that require a Federal presence to attain long-term national goals, especially national security, energy independence, and a next-generation air transportation system; 5) Sustain specifically authorized agency missions and user facilities that support the authorized missions of other agencies; 6) Enhance the health of our Nation's people

to reduce the burden of illness and increase productivity while respecting the inherent dignity and value of every human life; 7) Improve our ability to understand and respond to climate change and other global environmental issues and natural disasters through better observation, data, analysis, models, and basic and social science research; 8) Maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the science and technology enterprise through expansion of competitive, merit-based peer-review processes; 9) Phase out programs that are only marginally productive or are not important to an agency's mission; and, 10) Encourage interdisciplinary research efforts on complex scientific frontiers and strengthen international partnerships to accelerate the progress of science across borders.

Understanding Complex Biological Systems: The memorandum directs agencies to target research on a deeper understanding of complex biological systems through multi-disciplinary collaborations aimed at developing new and improved measurement and management tools to provide valid data that can be compared across laboratories and platforms. Agencies should concentrate research at 1) the cellular and sub-cellular, and the organism, population, and community levels; and 2) the interface of the life, physical and computational sciences.

The Administration highlighted the importance of **global earth observations** and their supporting role in various areas of research. Agencies need to place a greater emphasis on coordinating their Earth observation activities. To ensure coordinated, long-term collection of critical land imaging data, agencies should respond to the recommendations of the Future of Land Imaging report in their budget requests. The full 120 page report can be found at: <http://www.ostp.gov/html/FLI-IWG%20report%20Print-ready%20low-res.pdf>

Executive Order 13443: Facilitation of Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Conservation

On August 16, President Bush issued Executive Order 13443. The purpose of this order is to direct Federal agencies that have programs and activities that have a measurable effect on public land management, outdoor recreation, and wildlife management, including the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture, to facilitate the expansion and enhancement of hunting opportunities and the management of game species and their habitat. To view the full Executive Order as printed in the Federal Registrar, please visit: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2007/07-4115.htm>

To advance the goals of the Executive Order, President Bush is calling for a White House Conference to convene within the year to focus specifically on North American wildlife policy. Of relevance to weed and invasive plant management, federal agencies are directed to: 1) Manage wildlife habitats on public lands in a manner that expands and enhances hunting opportunities; and 2) Work collaboratively with State governments to manage and conserve game species and their habitats in a manner that respects private property rights and State management authority over wildlife resources.

Nearly **700 million acres of public lands** are managed by the departments of the Interior and Agriculture, which is approximately 1/3 of the total land area in the United States (2.1 billion acres). And according to the latest figures released by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, more than 12 million hunters spend a total of 225 million days pursuing their game, spending an estimated \$23 billion annually on hunting activities.

New Invasive Species Management Bill Introduced in Senate: 100th Meridian Invasive Species State Revolving Loan Fund (S. 1949)

On August 2, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) along with co-sponsors Wyden (D-OR), Domenici (R-NM) and Craig (R-ID) introduced the 100th Meridian Invasive Species State Revolving Loan Fund bill. S. 1949 was referred to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, led by Senator's Bingaman and Domenici, both from New Mexico. S. 1949 defines an invasive species as a nonnative species introduced into a specified ecosystem, whether intentional or unintentional, which causes, or may cause, harm to the economy, the environment, or human, animal, or plant health.

S. 1949 directs the Secretary of the Interior to provide loans to any combination of public or private stakeholders; Federal agencies; Indian tribes; state land, forest, or fish and wildlife management agencies; and academic institutions in the 13 most western states (NM, CO, WY, MT, ID, UT, AZ, NV, CA, OR, WA, AK, and HI) that demonstrate an effort to address or prevent invasive species. In general, 1) at least 25% of the loan must be repaid directly to the US Treasury Department or through in-kind contributions by each qualified organization; and 2) at least 25% of the loan must be repaid by the state in which the project is carried out. S. 1949 authorizes a federal appropriation of \$410 million, in total, over 5 years (2008 to 2012).

Lee Van Wychen, Ph.D.
Director of Science Policy
The National and Regional Weed Science Societies
900 2nd St. NE, Suite 205
Washington, DC 20002
Lee.VanWychen@wssa.net
cell: 202-746-4686
work: 202-408-5388
fax: 202-408-5385