

Executive Director of Science Policy Report
Lee Van Wychen
WSSA Annual Meeting, San Antonio, TX
Jan. 22, 2024 at 12:30 pm in Live Oak

2023 – 2024 Science Policy Committee Members

1. Janis McFarland	Chair	WSSA
2. Lee Van Wychen	Executive Director Science Policy	WSSA
3. Stanley Culpepper	Past President	WSSA
4. Carroll Moseley	President	WSSA
5. Greg Dahl	President-elect	WSSA
6. Hilary Sandler	Vice President	WSSA
7. Mark VanGessel	EPA Liaison	WSSA
8. Jim Kells	NIFA Fellow	WSSA
9. Jill Schroeder	CAST rep	WSSA
10. Caren Schmidt	Public Awareness	WSSA
11. David Shaw	At-Large	WSSA
12. Mike Barrett	At-Large	WSSA
13. Craig Alford	At-Large	WSSA
14. Ray McAllister	At-Large	WSSA
15. Jay Ferrell	President	APMS
16. Rob Richardson	APMS Rep	APMS
17. Reid Simpson	President	NCWSS
18. Brett Miller	NCWSS Rep	NCWSS
19. Wes Everman	President	NEWSS
20. Steve Pyle	NEWSS Rep	NEWSS
21. Eric Castner	President	SWSS
22. Todd Baughman	SWSS Rep	SWSS
23. Curtis Rainbolt	President	WSWS
24. John Vickery	WSWS Rep	WSWS

<u>Member Rotating Off:</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Replacement:</u>
Brett Hartis	APMS President	Jay Ferrell
Reid Simpson	NCWSS President	Dawn Refsell
Wes Everman	NEWSS President	Erin Hitchner
Eric Castner	SWSS President	Todd Baughman
Curtis Rainbolt	WSWS President	Tim Prather
Stanley Culpepper	WSSA	Ian Burke
Caren Schmidt	WSSA Public Awareness	Bart Clewis

Science Policy Fellows

Carroll Moseley, Janis McFarland and I reviewed and selected two Science Policy Fellows for 2023-2024. **Cynthia Sias** was a third year Ph.D. student at Viginia Tech University studying under the direction of Dr. Michael Flessner and completed her degree in December 2023. **Annu Kumari**, is a third-year Ph.D. student at Auburn University, pursuing her doctorate degree with Dr. Andrew Price and co-advised by Dr. Steve Li.

- I will advertise for the 2024-2025 Science Policy Fellows after the WSSA annual meeting with an **application deadline of Monday, April 1, 2024.**

Newsletter Reports and Washington Updates Submitted:

WSSA- 4; APMS- 2; NCWSS- 3; NEWSS- 3; SWSS- 3; and WSWS- 3

Weed Science Related Conferences and Meetings Attended (virtually or in-person):

- | | |
|--|--|
| • WSSA- Washington, DC | • Friends of ARS - 2 virtual |
| • APMS- Indianapolis, IN | • IR-4 Commodity Liaison Committee - 3 virtual |
| • NCWSS- Minneapolis, MN | • AAPCO/SFIREG – 1 in-person in DC |
| • SWSS- Baton Rouge, LA | • PPDC – 1 in-person, 1 virtual |
| • WSWS- Boise, ID | • NCFAR- 4 virtual; 1 in-person in DC |
| • NEWSS- Boston, MA | • FICMNEW – 2 virtual |
| • EPA Aquatic Weed Tour- Baton Rouge, LA | • NAISMA Legislative Com. – 5 virtual |
| • Pesticide Policy Coalition- 9 virtual | • ISAC/NISC – 2 virtual |
| • AFRI coalition - 3 virtual | • NRVMA - in-person, Knoxville, TN |

WSSA Committee Work

I continue to work with numerous WSSA committees on various weed science policy issues. This includes:

- **Public Awareness Committee:** advising, reviewing and editing weed science related press releases (approx. 20 meetings per year and 12-15 press releases). **Question-** for a press release on a featured journal article (*Weed Science*, etc), should the lead author be a member of WSSA (or at least one of the authors)?
- **Standardized Plant Names Committee:** Continue to update WSSA’s [composite list of weeds](#) as well as syncing with the [USDA Plants Database](#). Still concern about some of USDA Plant Database common names for weeds, ie. *Amaranthus palmeri* = carelessweed.
- **Research Priorities Committee:** Continue to disseminate and highlight the 2023 weed research priorities survey.
- **Website Committee-** Continue work to update and refresh the new WSSA website with all things science policy. Many thanks to Sarah Lancaster for her great work in this area.
- **Invasive Plants Committee:** Advocating and planning for NISAW issues. Maintaining a strong presence in the invasive plant community and promoting the Invasive Plant Science and Management journal.
- **Endangered Species Act Committee:** Helping assimilate and circulate information on how the Endangered Species Act (ESA) will impact weed management in agriculture and the environment. Worked with Bill Chism, Stanley Culpepper and the entire committee to write, review and submit almost 100 pages of federal docket comments on EPA draft proposals for ESA mitigations.
- **Herbicide Resistance Education-** oversight on how we can advocate for Federal public policy that will reduce herbicide resistance, but keep a level economic playing field.

Weed Science Society Presidents Congressional Visits in April



In April I organized **14 Congressional visits** on weed science issues with the **Weed Science Society presidents**. This included Carroll Moseley (WSSA), Reid Smeda (NCWSS), Wes Everman (NEWSS), Eric Castner (SWSS) and Curtis Rainbolt (WSWS). I also organized and conducted **eight Congressional visits** for my **two Science Policy Fellows** in October that focused on similar issues. These issues included:

- Support USDA NIFA IR-4 Project funding at \$25 million in FY 2024. It was funded at \$15 million in FY 2023 and only \$11.9 million in FY 2021 and the decade preceding that. The IR-4 Project provides an incredible return on investment as it contributes \$9.9 billion to the annual U.S. GDP and supports more than 123,260 jobs.
- Support the USDA NIFA Crop Protection and Pest Management (CPPM) program at \$25 million in FY 2024. It was funded at \$21 million in FY 2023 and at \$20 million the five years before that. This highly effective applied grant program tackles real world weed, insect, and disease problems with applied solutions through the concepts of integrated pest management (IPM).

- Amend the definition of a “**plant pest**” in the Plant Protection Act so that it includes noxious weeds and invasive plants. Currently, only “parasitic plants” are listed in the definition of “plant pest” ([7 USC 104, S.7702 – Definitions, \(14\) Plant Pest, \(C\)](#)).
 - USDA-APHIS receives almost \$400 million per year in their Plant Health account to prevent the introduction and spread of “plant pests” in the U.S., but only a fraction goes toward weed prevention and surveillance. One example is APHIS’s [Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention \(PPDMDP\) program](#), which directs \$75 million a year to state governments, universities, non-profit institutions, industry, and tribal nations – to support projects that protect specialty crops, nursery systems, forestry, and other agricultural production systems and natural resources from harmful and exotic “plant pests.” Very few of the 300+ “plant pest” projects supported by the PPDMDP involve noxious weeds or invasive plants.

Other issues discussed included:

- Support \$8 billion in **mandatory** agricultural research funding in the next Farm Bill. U.S ag research funding peaked in 2002 and has declined by 1/3 since then, hitting the lowest levels since 1970. While U.S. investments decline, China’s funding for ag research has grown to more than \$10 billion – **double of what the U.S. currently spends**. Current U.S. ag research funding is just under \$5 billion and most of that is discretionary funding that relies on year-to-year appropriations from Congress.
- Support for the Senate appropriations report language on **cogongrass** that directs \$3 million to APHIS to partner with State departments of agriculture and forestry commissions in MS, AL, GA, and SC to assist with cogongrass control in the southeastern U.S. Note: cogongrass has now been identified in the western U.S. in boxstore parking lots in CO, ID, and WA in the past year.
- Supporting appropriations for the \$50 million per year “**Invasive Plant Elimination Program**” for managing weeds along **right-of-ways** that’s authorized in the 2021 Infrastructure Law. This program is authorized at \$50 million/yr for FY 2022 to FY 2026, but has not been appropriated any funding so far. This funding would go to the Department of Transportation (DOT) and be **administered through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)** to carry out a program to provide grants to States to eliminate or control existing invasive plants or prevent introduction of or encroachment by new invasive plants along and in areas adjacent to transportation corridor right-of-ways.

In July, I drafted and distributed [a letter to 500+ Congressional staffers with 49 signatories](#) requesting \$10 million to start a pilot program for the **Invasive Plant Elimination Program**. The letter is addressed to the chairs and ranking members of the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees for Transportation. We will repeat this effort again 2024. If you are aware of organizations or groups that might support this effort, please contact me.

FY 2024 Appropriations and Farm Bill Status

A third Continuing Resolution (CR) is expected to pass by January 19, that would continue to fund the federal government into March. All 12 appropriations bills must still be passed by both Houses and signed by the President. The third CR would have two deadlines: March 1, 2024, for the following four appropriations bills: **USDA, Energy & Water**, Military Construction-VA and **Transportation-HUD**. The other CR deadline would be March 8 for the other eight appropriation bills.

As I write this, the House and Senate have agreed to an overall spending cap of \$773 billion for non-defense discretionary programs. This is a critical first step deciding on the spending cap, but after that, discussions broke down among allocations for the 12 appropriation committee chairs in both the House and Senate.

The second CR did extend the Farm Bill to September 30, 2024, providing added time to work on this. House and Senate Ag Committee leaders expressed hope that it can be completed by the end of the first quarter or shortly after. However, no draft Farm Bill language has been released, and it does not appear the Speaker of the House has entered into negotiations with the Senate. This means it is likely to be an extended process and with 2024 being an election year, there is a 50-50 chance that a new Farm Bill might not be passed until 2025.

House and Senate Appropriations Committee Leadership: 118th Congress

Below are the chair and ranking member in the House and Senate for key appropriations committees that affect weed science.

House Ag Approps

Andy Harris (R-MD), Chair
Sanford Bishop (D-GA), Ranking member

Senate Ag Approps

Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Chair
John Hoeven (R-ND), Ranking member

House Energy & Water Approps

Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN) Chair
Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) Ranking Member

Senate Energy & Water Approps

Patty Murray (D-WA), Interim Chair
John Kennedy (R-LA), Ranking Member

House Interior & Enviro Approps

Mike Simpson (R-ID), Chair
Chellie Pingree (D-ME), Ranking member

Senate Interior & Enviro Approps

Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Chair
Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Ranking member

House Transportation & HUD Approps

Tom Cole (R-OK), Chair
Mike Quigley (D-IL), Ranking member

Senate Transportation & HUD Approps

Brian Schatz (D-HI), Chair
Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Ranking member

APMS Congressional Visits in November



In November, I organized and conducted 14 Congressional meetings on aquatic plant management issues. These meetings included House and Senate staff from FL, TN, AL and NC as well as the majority and minority committee staff for Energy and Water Appropriations in both the House and Senate. Many thanks to **Jay Ferrell**, APMS President, **Troy Goldsby** APMS Director and **Rob Richardson**, APMS Science Policy Committee rep. My Science Policy Fellows,

Cynthia Sias and **Annu Kumari** also attended meetings during the week. In addition to the Congressional visits, we also attended an EPA Pesticide Program Dialogue Committee (PPDC) meeting at EPA headquarters and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Charles Valentine Riley Memorial Lecture that featured Dr. Joe Cornelius, Chief Executive Officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Agricultural Innovations (Gates Ag One).

Main issues we discussed on Capitol Hill included seeking appropriations for the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) Aquatic Plant Control line item in the ACOE Construction account that funds both the aquatic plant control research program and the watercraft inspection and decontamination program. We also discussed the importance of continuing funding for the hydrilla research and demonstration work in the Connecticut River basin and supporting funding of invasive species provisions in the 2020 and 2022 Water Resources Development Acts (WRDA). Most Congressional staff don't realize that aquatic plant managers have a limited set of aquatic plant management tools including only 17 aquatic herbicides!

The House proposed \$16.5 million for the APC program in FY 2024, which is less than half of the \$33.5 million received in FY 2023. In addition, the **House has proposed zeroing out funding for the Connecticut river basin hydrilla research and control in FY 2024**. On the other side of the Hill, the Senate has proposed \$27 million for the APC in FY 2024, which includes \$6.3 million for CT river hydrilla. We obviously supported the Senate budget vs. the House budget and made good progress on these funding issues during our Congressional visits. We hope to see FY 2024 funding levels for the APC in line with FY 2023.

Endangered Species, Endangered Species, Endangered Species

On February 14, 2023, the WSSA, along with APMS, NCWSS, NEWSS, SWSS and WSWSS [submitted comments](#) in response to EPA's request for information on its [draft Endangered Species Act \(ESA\) Workplan Update](#). This is a major step for EPA to harmonize its obligations under the ESA and FIFRA. EPA has stated previously as part of its earlier Workplan document, issued in April 2022, that using the present approaches, EPA would complete only 5 percent of the ESA required reviews in about 18 years -- implying that the current approach to get through re-registration of all herbicides would take about 360 years to complete.

The **draft ESA Workplan Update** provides more details about how EPA plans to impose various mitigation measures that will be required on pesticide labels to meet its ESA obligations when registering a pesticide. The two main mitigation strategies involve pesticide off-target movement from 1) spray drift and 2) runoff/erosion. There are concerns about some of the mitigation options such as "buffers to reduce pesticide drift and water runoff" or "do not use when rain is expected in the next 48 hours" — which raises other issues such as what or how compliance might be proven or enforced.

The **draft ESA Workplan Update** also describes initiatives that, according to EPA, will help it and other federal agencies improve approaches to mitigation under the ESA and improve the interagency consultation process outlined in the ESA Workplan. These initiatives include EPA's work to identify ESA mitigation measures for pilot species (e.g. American burying beetle, Mead's milkweed), incorporate early ESA mitigation measures for groups of pesticides (e.g., herbicides, insecticides, fungicides), and develop region-specific ESA mitigations (e.g. Hawaii, Puerto Rico).

The WSSA issued a press release on April 4 titled "[WSSA Encourages Growers to Act Now to Understand the Impact of EPA's Endangered Species Act Compliance Initiatives](#)" trying to raise awareness of the coming changes. **The bottom line - farmers and land owners need to become familiar with the EPA's updated workplan and how to access site specific application instructions online through EPA's [Bulletins Live! Two](#).** As we found out in January 2022 on the revised ESA-compliant Enlist labels, applications might be prohibited in entire counties.

On June 6, 2023, **EPA's Vulnerable Species Pilot (VSP)** identified 27 species that are classified as either endangered or threatened based on documentation from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). EPA considers these species have a medium or high overall vulnerability to pesticides. **EPA's 27 VSP species includes:**

- Group of plant species in Lake Wales Ridge area of Florida (including [Avon park harebells](#) (*Crotalaria avonensis*), [Garrett's mint](#) (*Dicerandra christmanii*), [wireweed](#) (*Polygonella basiramea*), [scrub blazingstar](#) (*Liatris ohlingerae*), [short-leaved rosemary](#) (*Conradina brevifolia*), [scrub mint](#) (*Dicerandra frutescens*), [Florida ziziphus](#) (*Ziziphus celata*), and several other species that occur in this area)
- [Leedy's roseroot](#) (*Rhodiola integrifolia* ssp. *leedyi*)
- [Mead's milkweed](#) (*Asclepias meadii*)

- [Okeechobee gourd](#) (*Cucurbita okeechobeensis* ssp. *okeechobeensis*)
- [Palmate-bracted bird's beak](#) (*Cordylanthus palmatus*)
- [White bluffs bladderpod](#) (*Physaria douglasii* ssp. *tuplashensis*)
- [Madison cave isopod](#) (*Antrolana lira*)
- [Ouachita rock pocketbook](#) (*Arkansia wheeleri*)
- [Rayed bean](#) (*Villosa fabalis*; freshwater mussel)
- [Scaleshell mussel](#) (*Leptodea leptodon*)
- [Winged mapleleaf](#) (*Quadrula fragosa*)
- [Riverside fairy shrimp](#) (*Streptocephalus woottoni*) and [San diego fairy shrimp](#) (*Branchinecta sandiegonensis*)
- [American burying beetle](#) (*Nicrophorus americanus*)
- [Poweshiek skipperling](#) (*Oarisma poweshiek*)
- [Rusty patched bumble bee](#) (*Bombus affinis*)
- [Taylor's checkerspot](#) (*Euphydryas editha taylori*)
- [Ozark cavefish](#) (*Amblyopsis rosae*)
- [Attwater's prairie chicken](#) (*Tympanuchus cupido attwateri*)
- [Buena vista lake ornate shrew](#) (*Sorex ornatus relictus*)
- [Wyoming toad](#) (*Bufo hemiophrys baxteri*)

“Pesticide Use Limitation Areas” or PULA’s. In 2022, Enlist was banned in 11 Arkansas counties because of the American Burying Beetle. A similar “prevention” tactic will be tested in 2024 in Washington and Oregon, but **with a major difference.** In Arkansas, no critical habitat had been designated, but it will be in Oregon and Washington for **Taylor’s Checkerspot butterfly.** EPA has determined that the appropriate mitigation measure for Taylor’s Checkerspot butterfly is to **prohibit all broadcast and aerial spraying of pesticides** in the areas where the butterfly is found. These will be referred to as **“Pesticide Use Limitation Areas” or PULA’s.** This will essentially create large areas of Oregon and Washington where pesticides cannot be sprayed. The plan is slated to go into effect next year. Without any changes, it will have a massive impact on pest management in places like Oregon’s Willamette Valley.

On August 6, 2023, the [WSSA submitted comments](#) on the **EPA’s VSP project**, requesting the agency consider the many benefits of developing WSSA-EPA working groups to cooperatively and more effectively address issues facing herbicides, including the ESA. The WSSA is also committed to working with the agency to 1) generate dependable, accurate, and usable science-based data, and 2) provide a direct connection to research and extension experts working with herbicides across environments in real-world situations.

On November 21, 2023, EPA published an update on its **VSP project** based on the 10,000 plus comments (200 unique comments) they received during the 45-day comment period. The following summarizes EPA’s current thinking on **revisions to the VSP framework:**

- Narrow the areas within the endangered species range map to only include locations that are important to conserving a species.
- Clarify the scope of the VSP for non-agricultural uses;

- Clarify potential exemptions to the proposed mitigation and whether additional exemptions are needed;
- Revise some of the proposed mitigations and include additional mitigation options specific to non-agricultural uses and specialty crops;
- Revisit how EPA selected the pilot vulnerable species; and
- Develop a consistent approach to reduce pesticide exposure to listed species from spray drift and run-off.

EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs said in an update to state regulators (SFIREG) on Dec. 4, 2023 that its **“current thinking for agricultural uses is that the proposed VSP mitigation would not need to include avoidance, but rather would focus on minimization.”** The full update, along with additional details regarding the **VSP project** and mitigation proposals, are available in the public docket [EPA-HQ-OPP-2023-0327](https://www.regulations.gov/document/EPA-HQ-OPP-2023-0327). By fall 2024, EPA intends to provide additional updates on its **VSP project**.

On October 22, 2023, the Weed Science Societies provided comments to improve **EPA's “Herbicide Strategy”** for its ESA mitigations in its draft workplan. We suggested nine additional ways to mitigate the impact of herbicides on listed species due to spray drift, which includes decreased buffers for ultra-coarse droplets, additional types of vegetation to intercept spray droplets and grower education.

We also suggest six additional ways to mitigate herbicide runoff and erosion, which also includes grower education, more specific terminology for agricultural vs specialty crops as well as assigning more compensatory mitigation points for fields with subsurface drainage or cover crop practices.

Most importantly, the Weed Science Societies stressed that grower education will be the most effective way to implement **EPA's Herbicide Strategy**. We recommend a minimum of a 3-5 year phase-in period for the herbicide strategy ESA mitigation practices, which corresponds to the 3-5 year interval that pesticide applicators must be recertified.

The Weed Science Societies also present the results of a survey of weed scientists from across the country that looked at the 13 crop scenarios for pesticide runoff and erosion mitigation points that the EPA provided, plus 2 additional crop scenarios. Alarmingly, only 2 of the 15 crop production scenarios, or 13%, could obtain the nine runoff/erosion mitigation points considered necessary to maintain existing weed control practices.

We provided additional information on conservation specialists and programs in different states as well as a rationale for why EPA should create a database of the mitigation points needed by crop, PULA, and herbicide. We also provide suggestions to enhance “Bulletins Live Two!” as well as a list of topics in dire need of research funding so we can best help protect threatened and endangered species and their critical habitat.

Finally, we provided a list of suggested education and training activities to successfully launch the ESA mitigation practices for pesticides.

The Weed Science Societies comments and suggestions to improve **EPA’s draft herbicide strategy** are at: https://wssa.net/wp-content/uploads/Weed-Science-Society-comments-on-EPA-Herbicide-Strategy_Final.pdf

In addition to submitting comments on the various EPA mitigation proposals for their ESA Workplan, we worked to educate stakeholders and decision makers on the upcoming proposed changes through press releases and presentations at various conferences and events. This included a Capitol Hill briefing I organized on July 11, 2023 where Stanley Culpepper and Bill Chism presented a seminar titled “**Protecting Endangered Species While Feeding the World**”. The seminar was attended by approximately 70 Congressional staffers and interested stakeholders in the House Agriculture Committee hearing room. The event sponsors were: WSSA, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP), CropLife America (CLA), and Syngenta. Additional collaborators were the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) and the American Soybean Association (ASA).



Working to improve EPA’s ESA Workplan has truly been a coordinated and sustained effort by the National and Regional Weed Science Societies! I’d like to especially acknowledge the members of **WSSA’s Endangered Species Act Committee** for their tireless work on these issues:

Bill Chism, Chair, WSSA ESA Committee

Stanley Culpepper, University of Georgia, WSSA Past President

Lee Van Wychen, Executive Director of Science Policy, WSSA

Taylor Randell-Singleton, University of Georgia, 2022 WSSA Science Policy Fellow

Mark VanGessel, University of Delaware, WSSA-EPA Liaison

Sarah Lancaster, Kansas State University

Aaron Hager, University of Illinois

Brad Hanson, University of California - Davis

Cameron Douglass, USDA Office of Pest Management Policy

Leah Duzy, Compliance Services International

Emily Unglesbee, Getting Rid of Weeds (GROW)

Sarah Chu, Graduate Student Representative, Texas A&M

Daewon Koo, Graduate Student Representative, Virginia Tech

EPA Pesticide Label Reform is Finally Happening

On November 15, EPA released a white paper titled “[Benefits of the Adoption of Structured Content and Digital Pesticide Labels](#)” and is requesting feedback on its plan to adopt digital pesticide labels that will make labeling information clearer, more consistent, and more accessible to users.

EPA’s plan for digital labels covers the creation of both a structured label—which would provide a framework for consistently placing and ordering label information—and a digital label, which would organize the label information as electronic data.

Currently, the pesticide product label registration process is mostly manual, with EPA staff reading through long, detailed label submissions to pull out specific information, like application rate, to enter into the EPA’s [Pesticide Product and Label System](#).

This has led to time-consuming reviews and high cost to registrants and regulators. Further, the increasing complexity of pesticide labels and lack of standardized label format and language can create challenges for pesticide users and the public seeking information about which products to use and how to use them.

Moving from traditional labels to digital labels and providing a database of accepted label language would make submitting label content simpler and more consistent for all pesticide registrants and would improve the Agency’s ability to review and access submissions efficiently.

EPA is requesting public comment on **all aspects of structured digital labels**, including: anticipated benefits

- risks and challenges
- key information fields (such as pesticide use site, formulation, and maximum application rate), and
- potential phases of adoption.

The [whitepaper](#) will be open for comment until **March 14, 2024** on docket [EPA-HQ-OPP-2023-0562](#).

EPA Releases Final Report from FIFRA SAP Regarding the Use of 11 Controversial Atrazine Cosm Studies

The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) provides independent scientific advice to the EPA on health and safety issues related to pesticides. The FIFRA SAP conducted on August 22-24, 2023 was titled: “Examination of Microcosm/Mesocosm Studies for Evaluating the Effects of Atrazine on Aquatic Plant Communities”. Many thanks to **Aaron Hager, Jay Ferrell, John Madsen and Kurt Getsinger** for their service and data review for this SAP.

To protect aquatic plant communities from the effects of atrazine, EPA developed an **aquatic plant community-based concentration-equivalent level of concern (CE-LOC)**. The CE-LOC is

determined using a combination of single-species aquatic plant toxicity studies and microcosm/mesocosm (cosm) studies. The cosm studies included in the CE-LOC calculation can be defined as complex experiments used to examine aquatic plant communities under semi-controlled conditions that simulate natural environments. Endpoints for these cosm studies were defined as single determinations of the response of one or more components of the aquatic plant community (e.g., phytoplankton, periphyton, macrophytes) for a defined individual atrazine test concentration as it relates to the controls in the study.

From 2002 to 2016, EPA considered over 70 cosm studies. However, a FIFRA SAP conducted in 2012 identified 11 of those studies as warranting further review because of concerns about study design or performance flaws, as well as EPA’s interpretation of the results.

EPA received additional public comments about the 11 controversial atrazine cosm studies in its 2022 Proposed Revisions to the Atrazine Interim Registration Review Decision where they used a **CE-LOC of 3.4 ppb**. The CE-LOC for atrazine was previously 15 ppb. **When the atrazine CE-LOC is exceeded, it triggers additional monitoring and/or mitigation to protect aquatic plant communities.**

After EPA issued the 3.4 ppb CE-LOC last year, many stakeholder groups, including WSSA, asked the EPA to conduct this independent FIFRA SAP on the use of the 11 controversial atrazine cosm studies in calculating the CE-LOC.

To EPA’s credit, they published an excellent [white paper](#) earlier this year that presents EPA’s reevaluation of the 11 controversial atrazine cosm studies. The [white paper](#) also provides an overview of atrazine, its history as it relates to the cosm studies, and the “Charge Questions” (pg 16) for the 2023 FIFRA SAP that met in August.

On November 16, 2023 the [FIFRA SAP final report on the use of the 11 atrazine cosm studies](#) was released. Based on the SAP’s discussions, most of the 11 atrazine cosm studies in question **did suffer from various flaws and should not be used to calculate a CE-LOC for atrazine**. There are nearly 50 other cosm studies that meet EPA’s criteria for inclusion in its cosm database. If EPA follows the 2023 FIFRA SAP’s recommendations, they would be using the best available science to calculate the CE-LOC for atrazine, which would likely mean a higher atrazine CE-LOC.

BLM Receives Approval for Use of Seven Herbicides in 2024

The National and Regional Weed Science Societies have been working with the Department of the Interior (DOI) Bureau of Land Management (BLM) over the past several years to get approval on final programmatic environmental impact statements (PEIS) for the use of the following seven herbicides on BLM land:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------|
| 1) aminocyclopyrachlor | 5) imazamox |
| 2) clethodim | 6) indaziflam |
| 3) fluazifop-p-butyl | 7) oryzalin |
| 4) flumioxazin | |

These herbicides have already been approved by EPA (some for a long time!), in adjoining nonfederal land. In order to for them to be considered as a management option on BLM lands, they had to be in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976.

These additional herbicide active ingredients will diversify BLM's weed management plan and help meet the purposes that were first identified in BLM's 2007 and 2016 PEISs related to vegetation treatments. A [final record of decision](#) is expected in February 2024.

NISAW is February 26 – March 3, 2024.

The 25th anniversary of [National Invasive Species Awareness Week](#) (NISAW) will occur from Feb. 26 – Mar. 3, 2024. The 2024 NISAW webinar series is listed below. NISAW will be virtual this year because the House decided to take recess that week. The Senate will be in session.

- February 26, 2024 – [Annual USGS Invasive Species Research Forum](#)
- February 27, 2024 – [The Invasive Species Language Workshop in partnership with the National Sea Grant Law Center](#)
- **February 28, 2024** – [The Federal Interagency Committee on the Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds \(FICMNEW\)](#)
- **February 29, 2024** – [Opportunities and Challenges for Preventing the Next Plant Invasion](#) (NOTE: this is a Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) white paper that was developed by the following representatives from WSSA and NIASMA: **Jacob Barney, David Coyle, Erik Lehnhoff, Daniel Tekiela, and Paul Tseng.**)
- March 1, 2024 – [Protecting North American Biodiversity from Invasive Species](#)

2024-2025 Proposed Committee Activities

1. Promote and advocate funding for weeds & invasive plant programs in FY 2024 and FY 2025 budget
 - a. Increase IR-4 funding to \$25 million and CPPM funding to \$25 million
 - b. Increase funding for DOI programs that support invasive weed research, prevention and management within BLM, USGS, NPS, FWS and USFS.
 - c. Support cost share language in 2024 WRDA.
 - d. Support \$10 million appropriation for the DOT Invasive Plant Elimination Program.
2. Work to expand the definition of a “Plant Pest” under the Plant Protection Act (PPA) to include “noxious weeds”. Funding for noxious weeds at APHIS-PPQ is severely hampered because noxious weeds are not considered a “plant pest”. Only “parasitic plants” are considered a plant pest in the PPA ([7 U.S.C. 7702](#)).
3. Monitor and provide input to improve EPA’s Endangered Species Act Protection Program.

4. Conduct and report the 2024 National Weed Survey for Most Common and Troublesome weeds. Write a manuscript to summarize weed survey data from 2015 to 2023.
5. Hire and conduct a training program for two Science Policy Fellows
6. Work to support the USDA-ARS National Program Leader for Weed Science.
7. Work with WSSA-EPA Liaison on herbicide stewardship and other FIFRA regulatory issues.
8. Work with WSSA-NIFA Fellow to promote weed science research and funding.
9. Support funding for the Aquatic Plant Control Research Program and other APMS priorities (\$6 million for CT River hydrilla research and management).
10. Monitor and provide input to the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR).
11. Support 2024 National Invasive Species Awareness Week (NISAW) and strategize for 2025. Investigate the possibility for a national invasive species prevention and management fund.
12. Continue work with the WSSA Standardized Plants Name Committee to sync USDA Plants Database with WSSA Composite List of Weeds.
13. Sell Weed Bingo. (Handed out 22 games to Congressional offices in 2023). Eric has ? games remaining out of 1,000.

Funds Requested for 2024

- The Science Policy Committee's (SPC) annual budget allocation is **\$6,000**.
- Investigating additional resources needed for part time Science Policy work to help WSSA uphold its mission and achieve the goals of its strategic plan.
- WSSA is supporting NISAW at **\$2500** as a "Partner" sponsor for 2024. <https://www.nisaw.org/sponsorship-information/> This is the same amount WSSA approved last year for NISAW.

2024-2025 Weed Science Society Meetings

Jan. 22 - 25, 2024. Southern Weed Science Society (SWSS), San Antonio, TX www.swss.ws
 Jan. 22 - 25, 2024. Weed Science Society of America (WSSA), San Antonio, TX www.wssa.net
 Feb. 26–Mar. 3, 2024. 25th National Invasive Species Awareness Week, Washington DC www.nisaw.org
 Mar 4 - 7, 2024. Western Society of Weed Science (WSWS), Denver, CO www.wweedscience.org
 Jul. 14 - 18, 2024. Aquatic Plant Management Society (APMS), St. Petersburg, FL www.apms.org
 Dec. 9 - 12, 2024. North Central Weed Science Society (NCWSS), Kansas City, MO www.ncwss.org
 Jan. 6 - 10, 2025. Northeastern Weed Science Society (NEWSS), Annapolis, MD www.newss.org