

WSSA 2021 Yearend Public Awareness Committee Report

Committee Code and Name: E13, Public Awareness (PA)

Committee Chair: Caren A. Schmidt, NE

Committee Members for this year:

- Neha Rana NC
- David Simpson NC
- Dilpreet Riar NC
- Reid Smeda NC
- Nick Steppig NC
- Jacob Barney NE
- Theresa Piskáčková NE
- Wykle Green NE
- Wes Everman NE
- Reginald Fletcher S
- Bart Clewis S
- Camp Hand S
- Rebecca Fletcher USDA
- Joe Armstrong W
- Andy Hulting W
- Jessica Enns CWSS
- Erica Haug APMS
- Meghan Dilliott Graduate Student Representative
- Delaney Foster Graduate Student Representative
- Lee Van Wychen Ex Officio
- Eric Gustafson Ex Officio
- Linda Edgerton Ex Officio

Board Liaison:

- WSSA President, Anita Dille

Committee Members Rotating Off:

- Jacob Barney, NE
- Art Gover, NE
- David Simpson, NC
- Delaney Foster, Grad Student Representative
- Andy Hulting, W
- Joe Armstrong, W

Appropriate Replacements:

- Erin Hitchner, NE
- Dawn Refsell, NC

- Sarah Kezar, Graduate Student Representative
- Dilshan De Silva Benaragama, CWSS

Summary of Activities

1. What were the committee’s goals for this year?

- Increase public awareness of weeds, their impact and effective management techniques
- Bring attention to important weed control-related programs and challenges
- Raise the visibility of WSSA and the weed science profession

2. List the committee’s accomplishments (through December 2021):

- We created and distributed 13 press releases that span a wide range of topics of interest to our members, the broader industry and the public – from the impact of invasive species to technological advances in weed control. Each was:
 - Distributed online through the [Cision PRWeb](#) distribution service
 - Sent to our custom list of industry journalists
 - Sent to WSSA members
 - Promoted by our committee members via social media.
 - ***See “Press Releases by the Numbers” below for topics and performance details.***
- We created and posted a [fact sheet](#) and [web promo](#) on HRAC mode of action updates.
- We created and posted a [web promo](#) for the “War Against Weeds” podcast.
- We responded to interview requests from The Wall Street Journal, Brownfield Ag News, and AgNet Media – the latter two involving our release on the use of artificial intelligence in weed management.
- We identified a recipient of the WSSA Excellence in Journalism award, to be announced during WSSA’s annual meeting.

PRESS RELEASES BY THE NUMBERS

| HEADLINE | TOTAL POTENTIAL AUDIENCE | RELEASE VIEWS | ONLINE PICKUP (# news outlets, tweets) | ENGAGEMENT ACTIONS (click-through, share) |
|--|--------------------------|---------------|--|---|
| Years of Effective Weed Control Required to Produce Prized Christmas Trees, WSSA Says Dec 13 2021 | 32,836,091 | 2,876 | 91 | 9 |
| Weed Science Societies Announce Upcoming Annual Meetings Nov 29, 2021 | 32,524,968 | 2,660 | 115 | 36 |
| Front-Line Responders Fight Plant Invaders That Fuel Fires Nov 9, 2021 | 28,302,060 | 2,608 | 113 | 7 |
| Oktoberfest: Time to Raise a Glass to Weed Control in Hops! Oct 5, 2021 | 31,954,243 | 2,452 | 95 | 33 |

| HEADLINE | TOTAL POTENTIAL AUDIENCE | RELEASE VIEWS | ONLINE PICKUP (# news outlets, tweets) | ENGAGEMENT ACTIONS (click-through, share) |
|--|--------------------------|---------------|--|---|
| Students Test Their Skills in Regional Weed Science Contests Sep 15 2021 | 35,900,202 | 2,256 | 123 | 17 |
| Weed Genomics Consortium Accelerates Genetic Sequencing of Weeds, Launches Conference & Training Workshops Aug 11, 2021 | 37,002,107 | 3,412 | 123 | 33 |
| WSSA Members to Present Latest Research During Upcoming Annual Meeting of the Aquatic Plant Management Society Jun 28, 2021 | 43,423,593 | 3,312 | 109 | 15 |
| The Results are in: WSSA Survey Ranks Most Common and Most Troublesome Weeds in Grass Crops, Pasture, and Turf May 11, 2021 | 38,694,676 | 3,390 | 100 | 15 |
| Free Educational Webinars Offered During "National Invasive Species Awareness Week" Apr 20, 2021 | 35,026,249 | 4,280 | 86 | 17 |
| Can Artificial Intelligence Help Growers Win the Weed Wars? Mar 17, 2021 | 41,445,792 | 4,563 | 56 | 18 |
| WSSA Honors Outstanding Weed Scientists During 2021 Awards Program Feb 17, 2021 | 39,187,853 | 3,927 | 55 | 22 |
| WSSA Cautions Against Poor Choices That Can Spread Invasive Weeds Jan 26, 2021 | 29,911,873 | 3,647 | 56 | 28 |
| WSSA and Affiliated Science Societies Share Plans for 2021 Virtual Annual Meetings Jan 13, 2021 | 31,852,538 | 3,258 | 69 | 3 |

What information was posted on the WSSA website?

- Our 13 press releases were posted to the [press section of the WSSA website](#).
- We posted a [fact sheet](#) and [web promo](#) on HRAC mode of action updates.
- We posted a [web promo](#) for the “War Against Weeds” podcast.

3. How much funds were requested? How much was spent?

- **Requested:** \$18,000
- **2021 Spending:** \$14,875 for Cision distribution contract, writing support.

4. What was the impact of the committee activities/accomplishments on the following: membership, publication, policy, legislation, and/or education?

Our press releases and other outreach initiatives have raised the visibility of WSSA, its members, weed science and weed-related issues among readers of a wide range of industry trades, newspapers and online media. A few examples of our 2021 press coverage are listed below – triggered by our press releases and the visibility of our members:

- **Ag Daily:** [Students test Their Skills in Regional Weed Science Contests](#)
- **Brownfield News:** [Robotic Success in Specialty Crops Has Row Crop Crossover](#)
- **The Barn Ag News Network:** [Years of Effective Weed Control Required to Produce Prized Christmas Trees, WSSA Says](#)
- **The Barn Ag News Network:** [Scientists Make Moves to Fundamentally Alter Weed Control](#)
- **The Daily Scoop:** [Weed Scientists Name Most Common, Most Troublesome Weeds](#)
- **The Daily Scoop:** [Focus on MOA and SOA to Improve Weed-Control Outcomes](#)
- **The Daily Scoop:** [Scientists Make Moves to Fundamentally Alter Weed Control](#)
- **Farm Progress:** [WSSA Honors Weed Scientists](#)
- **KQLX Ag News:** [WSSA Announces 2021 Virtual Meetings](#)
- **Markets Insider:** [Weed Science Society of America Honors Award Winners](#)
- **Next 9News, Denver:** [Broadcast Video on Tumbleweeds, Featuring Todd Gaines/Phil Westra](#)
- **Progressive Farmer:** [Meet the Worst Weeds in the Patch](#)
- **RealAgriculture Radio:** [Interview with Lee Van Wychen on Weed Survey](#)
- **Seed Today:** [WSSA Survey Ranks Most Common and Most Troublesome Weeds in Grass Crops, Pasture, and Turf](#)
- **Seed Quest:** [Can Artificial Intelligence Help Growers Win the Weed Wars?](#)
- **The New York Times:** [Attack of the Superweeds](#)
- **The Wall Street Journal:** [The Secret to a Low-Maintenance Flower Garden? Beautiful Weeds](#)
- **UC Weed Science Blog:** [Can Artificial Intelligence Help Growers Win the Weed Wars?](#)
- **U of Nebraska Newsroom:** [Graduate Students Earn Top Honors at Annual Weed Science Meeting](#)
- **UW-Madison News Service:** [UW–Madison Students Compete, Place at Weed Science Society of America Contest](#)

- **Vegetable Growers News:** [Head of University of Tennessee Plant Sciences Gets Weed Society Honor](#)

5. What is the current state of the committee's projects and activities?

- A second press release on upcoming annual meetings was released in Jan 2022.
- We have a press release on crested floatingheart that will release in advance of Valentine's Day.
- We have a variety of press release ideas in queue on topics that range from plant ID apps to weed management in hemp/cannabis.
- Work is nearly finalized on a project to drive interest in careers in weed science, which will include a promotional poster and career information for posting on the WSSA website.
- We are considering a plan to promote weed science books that might be useful to weed scientists and students.

6. 2022 Plan for Committee Activities

- Increase public awareness of weeds, their impact and effective management techniques
- Bring attention to important weed control programs and challenges
- Raise the visibility of WSSA and the weed science profession

- Plan of Action:
- Continue meeting every two weeks by teleconference to plan press releases, fact sheets and other public awareness initiatives.
- Continue to increase our social media presence.
- Continue to identify and act on emerging issues.
- Engage with Herbicide Resistance Education Committee and with "Take Action" commodity group committees to align messaging related to herbicide resistant weeds.
- Continue to work with Science Policy and Weed Loss committees to conduct national weed surveys.

7. Recommendations for Board/Society Action:

8. Funds requested for 2022:

- \$18,000 for Public Awareness initiatives
- Other requests: Currently there are no other requests.