



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings!

Greetings! May this find you well and having a wonderful new year! We have much to celebrate for previous successes and achievements. We have many challenges to address in the future. WEED PAIN, my Polaris Sling-shot, is in winter storage, but I am eager to ride it and mess up some more weeds!

I am also looking forward to seeing you at the 2025 WSSA and CWSS Joint Annual Meeting on February 23–27, 2025 at the Sheraton Wall Centre in Vancouver, BC. Thanks to President-Elect Hilary Sandler and the program committee of WSSA and CWSS members for putting together a great program and meeting.

The joint WSSA / CWSS meeting features four symposia including:

- Description of the EPA's Herbicide Strategy, Communication Resources, and Scientific Information Useful to Regulators, organized by Bill Chism and WSSA's Endangered Species Act Committee
- Not Your Old Professor's Journals – Rapid Change in Academic Publishing, organized by Sarah Ward, Chris Willenborg and WSSA's Publications Committee
- Experiences and Insights from Recently Funded Weed Scientists in NIFA's Competitive Grant Programs, organized by James Kells and Vijay Nandula
- Contribution of Genomics to Non-target Site Resistance Knowledge and Management, organized by Roland Beffa, Caio Brunharo and WSSA's Weed Biology/Ecology Committee

The keynote speaker for the joint General Session will be Dr. Jennifer Grenz from the Department of Forest Resources Management at the University of British Columbia. Her focus is on the application of a food systems lens to restoration ecology and invasion biology as well as the relationships between native and invasive plants and microbes. Her presentation, "Are They Rising from the Ashes? Re-Learning Invasive Species Management on Post-Wildfire Landscapes in British Columbia," will be given on Monday afternoon.

This year's meeting will offer a strong program for graduate students. Thanks to Isabel Werle, Graduate Student President, and her team for putting together many student events including a Student Bowling Night, the WSSA/CWSS Student Business Meeting and Luncheon, a Student Event: "Stand Out in the Crowd: Job Search and Interview Strategies," and a Student Workshop: "Explor-

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**WSSA-CWSS
Joint Meeting
February 24-27, 2025 • Vancouver, BC**

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ing Bioinformatics in Weed Science." Thanks to Marty Schraer and Darrin Dodds and all the judges for the Student Poster Contest and the Student Slide Talk Contest.

Meeting participants will also have opportunities for wonderful tours and activities like the Granville Market, a Harbor Boat tour and comedy show, a 5K Puff Run and visits to local craft breweries.

I am grateful for the wonderful people that are the Weed Science Society of America. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your president this year. I have been amazed at how quickly this year has gone by. As I near the completion of my term, I am awestruck at what we collectively have accomplished. I am also aware of the challenges that still need to be addressed.

We had a great year of outreach due to the WSSA Science Policy Committee. Lee Van Wychen, Janis McFarland, and the Regional Weed Society Presidents had many opportunities to promote weed science research and various issues to agencies, legislators and other stakeholders. I very much enjoyed visiting with the other Weed Science Society Presidents in May 2024 during our congressional visits and encourage future communication and collaboration among our National and Regional Weed Science Societies.

We successfully urged EPA to include Drift Reduction Adjuvants (DRAs) as a mitigation option in the Herbicide Strategy. We conducted a tour for EPA and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) with the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC). I thank Lee Van Wychen, Bill Chism, Mark VanGessel, Hilary Sandler, Sarah Chu and Josh Miranda for their efforts and accomplishments. Many thanks to Bill Chism, WSSA ESA Committee Chair, for organizing and hosting a webinar recapping the tour and ESA issues. This webinar can be found at <https://wssa.net/endangered-species/>. The WSSA ESA Committee has been widely recognized as a leader on ESA. Thanks to Bill Chism, Stanley Culpepper and everyone who helped with these events.

Many thanks to the other National and Regional Weed Societies for allowing me to participate in their meetings. I was able to participate in the annual meetings of the Western Society of Weed Science (WSWS), The Aquatic Plant Management Society (APMS), the Canadian Weed Science Society (CWSS) and the North Central Weed Science Society (NCWSS). These are great societies and the meetings were wonderful. Thanks for the hospitality. I am planning to attend the Northeastern Weed Science Society (NEWSS) and the Southern Weed Science Society (SWSS) meetings in January 2025.

Thanks to a great WSSA Board of Directors. I commend you for your excellent leadership and service. You were great to work with. Thanks to Past President Carroll Moseley for his leadership, guidance and encouragement. Also, thanks to all the previous WSSA Presidents that helped guide me. Thanks to WSSA President Elect Hilary Sandler, Vice President Ian Burke. Many thanks also to Secretary Kelly Backscheider, Treasurer Lauren Lazaro, Chris Willenborg and Sarah Ward, Co-Directors of Publications, John Lindquist, Chair, Constitution and Operating Procedures, Michael Flessner and Christy Sprague, Members at Large, Isabel Werle, Graduate Student Member, Lee Van Wychen, Executive Director of Science Policy, Eric Gustafson, Executive Secretary, Mark VanGessel, EPA Liaison, Jim Kells, NIFA Fellow, and Jill Schroeder, CAST Representative. Thanks also to our affiliated societies' representatives, including Andrew Howell, APMS, Darren Robinson, CWSS, Erin Burns, NCWSS, Steve Pyle, NEWSS, Peter Dotray, SWSS, and Alan Helm, WSWS.

Thanks to the Sustaining Members and the Sponsors of the society and meeting. Thank you for supporting the many events and awards. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Thanks to Hilary and Ian and the WSSA Committee Chairs and Members for

WSSA FUTURE MEETING SITES AND DATES

February 24–27, 2025

WSSA-CWSS Joint Meeting
Vancouver, British Columbia
www.wssa.net and
www.weedscience.ca

WSSA HOME PAGE
ACCESSED AT:

www.wssa.net

THINK NEWSLETTER

Deadline for April issue
March 1, 2025

SEND NEWSLETTER

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WSSA NEWSLETTER

VOL. 52, NO. 4 JANUARY, 2025
Published quarterly by the Weed
Science Society of America. Subscrip-
tion included in the annual dues paid
by members of the Society. Address
correspondence and information to:

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your efforts and achievements. We appreciate all you do. We have 46 WSSA Committees that work well for society and its members. Thanks to Bart Clewis, John Pocock, Lee Van Wychen and the WSSA Public Awareness Committee. This committee was quite productive in the number and quality of the releases sent out this year. Thanks to the Awards, Strategic Planning, Website and Finance Committees for their work. Thank you to the WSSA Publication Board, Co-Directors of Publications Chris Willenborg and Sarah Ward, Committee Members, Editors, Reviewers and Authors of the *WSSA Newsletter* and the Journals, *Weed Science*, *Weed Technology* and *Invasive Plant Science and Management*. Thanks to Carl Libbey for all your efforts and accomplishments on the *WSSA Newsletter*.

Thanks to the Editors William Vencill, Jason Norsworthy, and Antonio DiTommaso for all your efforts and accomplishments. Thanks for your commitment to stewardship and ex-

cellence. Thanks for your work transitioning the journals to open access. Thanks to Eric Gustafson and Interactive Management, Inc. for taking such good care of us. I apologize if you did not think I mentioned you. I am very grateful for your efforts and achievements. WSSA moves forward due to great volunteers. Please help. If you would like to serve on a committee, make your interest known to the WSSA Vice-President, a WSSA BOD member or a Committee Chair for the committee you are interested in. We also need volunteers to judge the contests and moderate sessions. Also, your suggestions are always welcome. Thanks again for the opportunity to serve. WSSA has let me see some wonderful successes. Weeds are incredibly adapted to dominate. We need your efforts and achievements. I wish you the best! Go mess up some weeds!

We look forward to seeing you in Vancouver!

Greg Dahl
WSSA President



In Memoriam

We are sad to announce the death of the following members who have recently passed away:

Prasanta C. Bhowmik
Russell Hahn

Their obituaries can be found on the Society's website: "[In Memoriam](#)."

WSSA PUBLICATIONS NEWS

Following the successful OA flip of *Weed Technology* last year, *Weed Science* and *Invasive Plant Science and Management* have completed the transition to full open access and continuous publication. All newly-published articles in WSSA journals are now accessible to anyone to download, read and cite, and accepted articles are published online as soon as formatting is complete, eliminating the wait for assignment to a journal issue. Older journal articles remain behind subscription paywalls unless the authors opted for open access at the time of publication. However, WSSA members will continue to have free access to all archived WSSA journal content as a membership benefit.

Our symposium "Not Your Old Professor's Journals: Rapid Change in Academic Publishing" is scheduled for 9–12 noon on Wednesday, February 26 at the WSSA/CWSS annual meeting. Topics will include the use of AI in academic publishing, predatory publishing scams, new publishing models for WSSA journals, and how to join WSSA editorial boards. Symposium speakers will include Catherine Hill, our Executive Publisher from the Cambridge University Press UK office, and there will be an open Q&A session with the WSSA journal editors. Whether you are an early career scientist just starting to publish, or you already have an extensive publication record — there will be something in this symposium for you! We look forward to seeing everyone in Vancouver.

WSSA HOME PAGE
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www.wssa.net

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WASHINGTON REPORT

by Lee Van Wychen, Director of Science Policy

USFWS PROPOSES LISTING MONARCH BUTTERFLY AS THREATENED UNDER ESA

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published a 12-month finding on the endangered species listing status of the monarch butterfly as “threatened” on December 12, 2024. The USFWS is seeking public input on a proposal under section 4(d) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Public comments will be accepted on the proposal until March 12, 2025. The Service will then evaluate the comments and any additional information on the species and determine whether to list the monarch butterfly.

With monarchs being listed as “threatened” (as compared to “endangered”), the USFWS can issue a 4(d) rule, which offers more flexible regulations, including special rules to tailor protections to the specific needs of the threatened species. A 4(d) rule can modify or exempt certain species protections to balance conservation efforts with economic impacts. It allows flexibility to incentivize positive conservation actions and public comment is critical to shape the 4(d) rule.

With the monarch butterfly being listed as a threatened species by USFWS, the EPA must include it within its standard process for pesticide label registrations under its **Herbicide Strategy**, treating it with the same consideration as other protected species. Potential impacts to pesticide labels will likely be seen starting in 2026 as new and previously registered active ingredients undergo registration review.

The monarch has two U.S. populations, a western one that overwinters in coastal California and an eastern one that migrates to central Mexico. The USFWS is proposing critical habitat for the western monarch at a portion of its

overwintering sites in coastal California, but not for the eastern monarch. In total, the USFWS is proposing 4,395 acres of **critical habitat** for the western monarch population across Alameda, Marin, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz and Ventura counties in **California**. A critical habitat designation does not impose additional requirements on the state or private land owners, unless the action involves federal funding, permits or approvals.

Information the USFWS is Looking for on Monarchs

The USFWS intends that any final action resulting from their proposed rule will be based on the best scientific and commercial data available and be as accurate and as effective as possible. Therefore, they request comments or information from other governmental agencies, Native American Tribes, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested parties concerning this proposed rule. In particular, they are seeking comments concerning:

(1) The species’ biology, range, and population trends, including:

- a) Biological or ecological requirements of the monarch species, including habitat requirements for feeding, breeding, and sheltering;
- b) Genetics and taxonomy;
- c) Historical and current range, including distribution patterns, alternative migratory pathways, and the locations of any additional populations of this species;
- d) Population dynamics and contributions from the nonmigratory populations, specifically resident monarchs in southern Florida, the Gulf Coast, the southern Atlantic Coast, and the southern Pacific Coast;
- e) Historical and current population

levels, and current and projected trends; and

- f) Past and ongoing conservation measures for the species, its habitat, or both.

(2) Threats and conservation actions affecting the species, including:

- a) Factors that may be affecting the continued existence of the species, which may include habitat modification or destruction, overutilization, disease, predation, the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms, or other natural or manmade factors;
- b) Biological, commercial trade, or other relevant data concerning any threats (or lack thereof) to this species;
- c) Existing regulations or conservation actions that may be addressing threats to this species; and
- d) Other potential threats that were not identified as key threats to the species.

(3) Additional information concerning the historical and current status of this species.

(4) Information to assist us with applying or issuing protective regulations under section 4(d) of the Act that may be necessary and advisable to provide for the conservation of the monarch butterfly. In particular, we seek information concerning:

- a) The extent to which we should include any of the Act’s section 9 prohibitions in the 4(d) rule;
- b) Whether we should consider any modifications or additional exceptions from the prohibitions in the 4(d) rule;
- c) Whether the provisions related to the maintenance, enhancement, removal, or establishment of milkweed should be revised to

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include spatial or temporal restrictions or deferments;

- d) Whether we should include an exception for the use of pesticides and, if so, what measures are reasonable, feasible, and adequate to reduce or offset pesticide exposure to monarchs from agricultural and non-agricultural uses (e.g., rangeland, rights-of-way, forestry, commercial areas, and mosquito control), including measures for specific classes of pesticides (e.g., herbicides, insecticides), pesticide uses, and application methods;
- e) Whether we should include an exception for direct impacts from transportation and energy infrastructure, including mortality from collisions with wind turbines; and
- f) Whether we could improve or modify our approach to the 4(d) rule in any way to provide for greater public participation and understanding, or to better accommodate public concerns and comments.

(5) Specific information related to critical habitat, such as the following:

- a) The amount and distribution of monarch butterfly habitat (i.e. *Asclepias spp.*)
- b) Any additional areas occurring within the range of the species in the United States, especially in breeding, migratory, or overwintering areas, that should be included in the critical habitat designation because they (i) are occupied at the time of listing and contain the physical or biological features that are essential to the conservation of the species and that may require special management considerations, or (ii) are unoccupied at the time of listing and are essential for the conservation of the species; and
- c) Special management considerations or protection that may be

needed in critical habitat areas we are proposing, including managing for the potential effects of climate change.

(6) Land use designations and current or planned activities in the subject areas and their possible impacts on proposed critical habitat.

(7) Any probable economic, national security, or other relevant impacts of designating any area that may be included in the final designation, and the related benefits of including or excluding specific areas.

(8) Information on the extent to which the description of probable economic impacts in the economic analysis is a reasonable estimate of the likely economic impacts and any additional information regarding probable economic impacts that we should consider.

(9) Whether any specific areas we are proposing for critical habitat designation should be considered for exclusion under section 4(b)(2) of the Act, and whether the benefits of potentially excluding any specific area outweigh the benefits of including that area. If you think we should exclude any additional areas, please provide information supporting a benefit of exclusion.

(10) Whether we could improve or modify our approach to designating critical habitat in any way to provide for greater public participation and understanding, or to better accommodate public concerns and comments.

To review the proposed rule and submit comments by March 12, 2025, please go to:

<https://www.regulations.gov/search?filter=FW S - R 3 - E S - 2 0 2 4 - 0 1 3 7 &withinCommentPeriod=true>

Because of the species' general habitat use and wide distribution, all sectors of society have an opportunity to participate in a broad range of conser-

vation efforts throughout the butterfly's range. For more information about the monarch listing proposal, and how to help conserve monarch butterflies, please visit:

<https://www.fws.gov/monarch>

CONGRESS PUNTS FARM BILL AND GOVERNMENT FUNDING DECISIONS INTO 2025

- The House Ag Committee passed their Farm Bill draft on May 24, 2024. The Senate Ag did not release their draft of the Farm Bill until November 19, 2024, almost two weeks after the elections.
- The 2023 Farm Bill extension expired on September 30, 2024.
- On December 21, 2024, the U.S. Senate passed a continuing resolution by a vote of 85 to 11, extending current government funding levels for three months, authorizing a one-year farm bill extension, and securing vital farm and disaster aid. The legislation, which extends FY 2024 appropriations levels through March 14, 2025 passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 366 to 34.
- The next session of Congress, the 119th, will begin on January 3, 2025 with a Republican House, Senate and Administration.

Some notable provisions included in the House Farm Bill:

- Provides \$2.5 billion in mandatory funding for a competitively awarded agriculture research facilities grant program. (i.e. Infrastructure funding for land-grants)
- Mandates \$100 million in funding for student scholarships at land-grant colleges and universities.
- Directs USDA to establish at least 15 Centers of Excellence, which were previously authorized to receive priority for funding. Changed the eligible areas of focus to include aquaculture, biosecurity, biotechnology, invasive species, water quality, and other topics.

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HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR THE 119th CONGRESS

On December 17, the House Republican Steering Committee selected the Republican members who will serve on the House Committee on Agriculture for the 119th Congress.

Returning Republican Members:

- Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson (PA-15), Chairman
- Rep. Frank Lucas (OK-03)
- Rep. Austin Scott (GA-08)
- Rep. Rick Crawford (AR-01)
- Rep. Michael Bost (IL-12)
- Rep. Scott DesJarlais (TN-04)
- Rep. Doug LaMalfa (CA-01)
- Rep. David Rouzer (NC-07)
- Rep. Trent Kelly (MS-01)
- Rep. Don Bacon (NE-02)
- Rep. Dusty Johnson (SD-AL)
- Rep. Jim Baird (IN-04)
- Rep. Tracey Mann (KS-01)
- Rep. Randy Feenstra (IA-04)
- Rep. Mary Miller (IL-15)
- Rep. Barry Moore (AL-02)
- Rep. Kat Cammack (FL-03)
- Rep. Brad Finstad (MN-01)
- Rep. Monica De La Cruz (TX-15)
- Rep. Ronny Jackson (TX-13)
- Rep. John Rose (TN-06)
- Rep. Zach Nunn (IA-03)
- Rep. Derrick Van Orden (WI-03)

New Republican Members:

- Rep. Dan Newhouse (WA-04)
- Rep. Tony Wied (WI-08)
- Rep. Rob Bresnahan (PA-08)
- Rep. Mark Harris (NC-08)
- Rep. Mark Messmer (IN-08)
- Rep. David Taylor (OH-02)

ANGIE CRAIG WINS VOTE TO LEAD HOUSE AGRICULTURE DEMOCRATS

Representative Angie Craig (D-Minn.) will lead Democrats on the House Agriculture Committee in the next Congress after winning a caucus vote on Decemeber 17, 2024.

Craig, 52, beat out Rep. Jim Costa (D-Calif.), 72, for the role by a vote of

121 to 91. She will become the first woman ranking member of the House Agriculture panel and is part of a larger generational shift among House Democrats, who have forced out a number of aging committee leaders in the wake of their November election losses.

The current ranking Democrat on the Agriculture Committee, Rep. David Scott (D-Ga.), dropped out of the race on December 16 after winning just five votes in Democrats' Steering Committee. Scott, 79, faced growing calls over the last several years from rank-and-file Democrats to step down from his committee role, amid concerns about his health, lack of leadership and struggle to negotiate the \$1.5 trillion farm bill.

An interesting side note is that Rep. Craig's fellow Minnesotan, Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), is set to take over as the top Democrat on the Senate Agriculture Committee in 2025.

The Democratic members of the House Agriculture Committee have not been released yet.

WSSA AND NAICC HOST EPA AND FWS ON ENDANGERED SPECIES ISSUES TOUR IN WISCONSIN

During the first week of September, WSSA and the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC) hosted staff from the U.S. EPA Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the USDA NRCS to examine the challenges and opportunities for implementing and improving EPA's "Herbicide Strategy" for protecting endangered and threatened species and their critical habitat as specified in the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The first herbicides that are going through the new "Herbicide Strategy" process this fall includes Liberty Ultra (a new herbicide registration) as well as herbicide re-registration decisions for oxyfluorfen, metribuzin, and possibly atrazine.

The tour covered multiple cropping systems and production scenarios across Wisconsin, including corn, soy-
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Wisconsin ESA Tour Participants (L to R, first row): Dawn Wyse-Pester, Director of Innovation, Research & Development at WinField United with Land O' Lakes; Hilary Sandler, WSSA President-Elect; Lori Nordstrom, Assistant Regional Director for Wisconsin and Minnesota, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS); Jan Matusko, Director EPA Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) Environmental Fate & Effects Division (EFED); (second row): Lee Van Wychen, WSSA Executive Director of Science Policy; Matt Eich, NAICC Independent Crop Consultant, South Dakota; Kris Garber, Senior Science Advisor, EPA OPP EFED; Sarah Chu, WSSA Science Policy Fellow; Josh Miranda, WSSA Science Policy Fellow; Kaitlin Picone, Senior Advisor for Stakeholder Engagement, EPA OPP; Ian Olson, NAICC Independent Crop Consultant, South Dakota; Steven Hoffman, NAICC Independent Crop Consultant, Wisconsin; (back row): Kevin Pontel, NAICC Independent Crop Consultant, Wisconsin; Neil Anderson, Acting Director, EPA OPP Biological and Economic Division (BEAD); Mark Van-Gessel, WSSA-EPA Liaison; Charles "Billy" Smith, Director, EPA OPP Registration Division (RD); Bill Chism, WSSA ESA Committee Chair; Greg Dahl, WSSA President; Ed Messina, Director, EPA OPP; James Todd, NAICC Independent Crop Consultant, Texas; Tim Kiely, Deputy Director, EPA OPP Pesticide Re-Evaluation Division (PRD). The photo was taken at the last stop of tour at the WinField United Innovation Center in River Falls, WI.

bean, alfalfa, potato and cranberry cropping systems. We discussed habitat requirements for two ESA species: the eastern massasauga rattlesnake and the rusty patched bumble bee and focused on how to improve ESA mitigation measures. We also saw the abundance of non-crop habitat available next to crop production fields and discussed how “habitat offsets” could be a very viable option for protecting ESA species, as compared to Pesticide Use Limitation Areas (PULAs) and spray drift and runoff/erosion reduction measures.

EPA UPDATES PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING MAPS TO PROTECT ENDANGERED SPECIES

On December 19, 2024, the EPA took another step to reduce potential impacts to farmers from implementing endangered species protections while continuing to protect endangered species by publishing a process (<https://www.epa.gov/endangered-species/process-epa-uses-develop-core-maps-pesticide-use-limitation-areas>) that it will use to develop maps for protecting species designated as threatened or endangered (listed) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and their designated critical habitats. These maps allow EPA to protect listed species from the use of pesticides through geographically specific mitigations. The process identifies areas where listed species are likely to be located and areas where they are not, which ensures that additional measures to protect listed species are only required in these areas.

A huge amount of credit for this improvement goes to Dr. Stanley Culpeper and Dr. Taylor Randell-Singleton at the University of Georgia for their work on refining habitat maps for two endangered salamander species in their state. They worked through a process that defined actual salamander habitat and where that habitat occurred. When the Enlist Duo label was

published in 2022 for ESA mitigations, almost one million acres in 11 Georgia counties were restricted due to the endangered salamander habitat. After refining the maps with actual salamander habitat, they found that only 0.37% of the area should be restricted due to salamander habitat.

As EPA assesses pesticide impacts on listed species, the agency may find that some mitigations are only needed to protect listed species. In those cases, EPA will only apply those mitigations where appropriate and necessary in geographically specific areas (referred to as Pesticide Use Limitation Areas or PULAs). PULAs are areas where pesticide exposures are likely to impact the continued existence of a listed species, which may include a reduction in survival or recovery of the species.

When developing a PULA for a specific species, EPA starts by developing a “core map.” A core map identifies areas that are important to a species, which could be a refined range map. In cases where range maps are broad and include areas where a species is no longer thought to live, then core maps would only include areas within the species range where the species likely currently lives. The process released today is intended to identify such areas and exclude areas from EPA’s core map where the species is not likely to live. After developing a core map for a species, EPA develops a PULA that accounts for pesticide movement from a use site (e.g., spray drift and run-off) by adding adjacent areas to the core map. Developing a core map or PULA does not alter FWS’ range map.

EPA’s goal is to develop core maps for all FWS listed species that may require protections with respect to pesticide exposures. The agency is focusing first on creating core maps for listed species identified in its [Vulnerable Species Action Plan \(VSAP\)](#), released in September 2024. This provides a framework for EPA to adopt early,

meaningful protections to address potential impacts for listed species that the Agency identifies as particularly “vulnerable” to pesticides. EPA has developed core maps for several VSAP species, which can be found on the agency’s website, and will be developing core maps for the remaining VSAP and other listed species and making them publicly available as they are completed. EPA has also prioritized a subset of listed species for core map development.

Additional information can be found in the core map development process document. Visit EPA’s website to learn more about how [EPA’s pesticide program](#) is protecting endangered species.

FEDERAL COURT JUDGE VACATES APHIS RULE ON GENETICALLY ENGINEERED ORGANISMS

On December 2, the federal district court for the northern district of California threw out streamlined regulations of bioengineered crops, creating uncertainty in ag biotech laboratories across the country. In 2020, USDA APHIS finalized a rule that simplified reviews of genetically engineered plants such as herbicide tolerant soybeans and Bt-cotton.

The rule also exempted from regulation crops made by editing the species own genes, on condition the gene-editing produces a trait that conventional cross-breeding could have created. In a lawsuit filed in 2023 by the National Family Farm Coalition, Friends of the Earth, Pesticide Action Network, Center for Environmental Health, Center for Biological Diversity, and Center for Food Safety, they argued that USDA had not followed procedures required when agencies create new regulations. The court agreed with plaintiffs that it was arbitrary and capricious for APHIS not to incorporate its noxious weed authority in its final rule, and to exempt from regulatory review GE

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plants with changes that could have been achieved through conventional breeding techniques without adequate substantiation for these positions in the final rule record. The court vacated the rule as of December 2 and ordered the parties to meet on outstanding issues in the case. USDA may revert to its prior rules until the case is fully resolved, which could take years.

BONANNO HONORED WITH IR-4 PROJECT SOAR AWARD



Rich Bonanno is currently the Executive Director of the Association of Southern Region Extension Directors (ASRED). He has

also served in the roles of former Associate Dean of NC State CALS, Director of NC State Cooperative Extension, and Vice Provost for Outreach and Engagement at NC State. Dr. Bonanno has been a long time member of the weed science societies and served as chair of WSSA's Science Policy Committee for many years.

Dr. Bonanno's legendary career and dedication to the land-grant mission has benefited countless growers and research units, including IR-4. As a specialty crop grower himself, Bonanno has a deep understanding of

fellow growers' needs. Bonanno also has a long history of collaboration with IR-4; he was a charter member of IR-4's Commodity Liaison Committee (CLC) beginning in 1992, and chaired this committee from 2014-2016 (until he began his influential time at NC State). More recently, Bonanno played a pivotal role in advocating for and supporting IR-4's move from Rutgers University to NC State. As Dr. Bonanno transitions from NC State to an influential new role with ASRED, the IR Project celebrates his commitment to the growers and researchers of our region and thank him for being an exceptional ally to IR-4.

BROOKE ROLLINS NOMINATED TO LEAD USDA



Rollins, 52, is a lawyer with agriculture ties who grew up in Glen Rose, TX where she was involved in 4-H and FFA. She graduated

from Texas A&M University with an undergraduate degree in agricultural development in 1994 before completing law school at the University of Texas. While at Texas A&M, Rollins was the first woman to be elected student body president.

After graduating from law school,

Rollins worked for several years at Hughes & Luce, LLP in Dallas and clerked under U.S. Federal District Court Judge Barbara M. Lynn. Rollins previously served as deputy general counsel, ethics advisor, and policy director to Texas governor Rick Perry.

Rollins was the president and CEO of the Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF) from 2003 through 2018. During her tenure at TPPF, the think tank grew from having a staff of three to a staff of 100. In 2011, Texas Monthly named Rollins one of the 25 most powerful Texans.

She served as domestic policy chief during Trump's first term, a portfolio that included agricultural policy. After leaving the White House, she became president and CEO of the America First Policy Institute.

This is one of the earliest nominations for a USDA Secretary that I can remember, following a presidential election. News and talk on Capitol Hill indicate she will have a fairly easy Senate confirmation hearing.

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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT
February 24–27, 2025	Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) and Canadian Weed Science Society (CWSS) Joint Annual Meeting	Vancouver, BC, Canada	www.wssa.net and www.weedscience.ca
March 10–13, 2025	Western Society of Weed Science (WSWS) Annual Meeting	Seattle, Washington	www.wsweedscience.org
July 14–17, 2025	Aquatic Plant Management Society (APMS) Annual Meeting	Providence, Rhode Island	www.apms.org
October 19–24, 2025	International Weed Science Society (IWSS) Weed Science Congress	Nanjing, China	www.iwss.info
December 15–18, 2025	North Central Weed Science Society (NCWSS) Annual Meeting	Grand Rapids, Michigan	www.ncwss.org

Additional Weed Science Meetings and Events can be found at <http://wssa.net/meeting/calendar-of-meetings/>

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