

## WASHINGTON REPORT

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### **Regan Confirmed as EPA Administrator**



Michael S. Regan (pronounced REE-gan) was confirmed by the Senate on March 10 by 66-34 vote to serve as the 15<sup>th</sup> Administrator of the U.S. EPA.

Regan is a native of Goldsboro, NC and received a B.S. in earth and environmental science at North Carolina A&T State University. He received a Master of Public Administration from George Washington University and worked at EPA from 1998 to 2008 working on air pollution issues. He then joined the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) for eight years before being selected by NC Governor Roy Cooper in 2017 to serve as the secretary of the NC Department of Environmental Quality.

### **Haaland Confirmed as Secretary of the Interior**



Rep. Deb Haaland (pronounced HAH-lend) was confirmed by the Senate on March 15 by a 51 – 40 vote to lead the Department of the Interior. She is the first Native American to run the Department of the Interior in its 171 year history, and the first Native American Cabinet secretary in U.S. history.

Haaland was born in Winslow, Arizona and is an enrolled member of the Laguna Pueblo. At 28, she enrolled at the University of New Mexico, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in English in 1994. She earned her J.D. in Indian law from the University of New Mexico School of Law in 2006, but is not a member of the New Mexico State Bar. Haaland served as the tribal administrator for the San Felipe Pueblo from 2013 to 2015 and was elected to a two-year term as chair of the Democratic Party of New Mexico before being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2018 for New Mexico's 1<sup>st</sup> District. She was subsequently re-elected for a second term in the House in 2020 before being nominated for Interior Secretary

### **Castille Appointed as New USDA-NIFA Director**



On Dec. 22, 2020, the Trump administration named Dr. Carrie Castille as the new director to USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The NIFA director position is a six year appointment and she will be the first female to serve in this role in a non-acting capacity.

Dr. Castille served as Assistant Professor and Agriculture and Natural Resource Leader at Louisiana State University prior to serving as Associate Commissioner and Senior Advisor to the Commissioner for the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry. She was currently serving as coordinator for USDA's Farm Production and Conservation mission area in the mid-south.

Dr. Castille was appointed by USDA Secretary Vilsack to the National Agriculture Research, Extension, Education, and Economics (NAREEE) advisory board from 2010 – 2017. During this period, she served as Chair of the NAREEE board, and also contributed to many organizations, including the American Public and Land Grant University (APLU) Council on Agriculture Research, Extension, and Teaching.

She holds a Ph.D. in Renewable Natural Resources and M.S. in Environmental Studies from Louisiana State University, and a B.S. degree in Industrial Engineering from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

**Blazek Named New White House Agriculture Advisor**



The White House recently announced that Kelliann Blazek will serve as special assistant to the President for agriculture and rural policy. Blazek most recently served as the first director of Wisconsin's Office of Rural Prosperity, which was created by Governor Tony Evers in 2020 to support the state's rural communities. Previously, Blazek worked as counsel to Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME) and taught food law and policy at the Antonin Scalia Law School. She has also worked at the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. Blazek holds a JD degree from the University of Wisconsin Law School and grew up on her family's farm in Wisconsin.

**Science Groups Call for Increased Federal Investment in Agricultural Research**

The National and Regional Weed Science Societies joined more than 130 scientific, academic, and agricultural stakeholders in urging newly confirmed USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack to increase public investment in food and agricultural research.

A [recent study](#) found that U.S. public agriculture R&D spending from 1910 to 2007 returned, on average, \$17 in benefits for every \$1 invested. However, the federal share of overall ag R&D spending as a percentage of GDP is now at its lowest point since the 1950s, and food and agriculture lags even further behind most other federal R&D areas. Agricultural research funding at the USDA has remained fairly flat over the last fifty years. In contrast, funding for other Federal research agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation, has increased 10- to 20-fold during the same period. Additionally, other countries, including Brazil, China, and India, are investing heavily in agricultural R&D, while the United States is falling behind.

**Final Appropriations for FY 2021 and Weed Science Society Requests for FY 2022**

	FY19 Final	FY20 Final	FY21 Final	FY22 Request
	----- Millions -----			
<b>USDA-ARS*</b>	\$1,303	\$1,414	<b>\$1,492</b>	<b>\$1,721</b>

<b>USDA-NIFA</b>	\$1,471	\$1,527	<b>\$1,570</b>	
-AFRI Competitive Grants	\$415	\$425	<b>\$435</b>	\$600
-Hatch Act (Exp. stations)	\$259	\$259	<b>\$259</b>	
-Smith Lever (Extension)	\$315	\$315	<b>\$315</b>	\$335
-IR-4 Program	\$12	\$12	<b>\$12</b>	\$20
-Crop Protection and Pest Management	\$20	\$20	<b>\$20</b>	\$25
<b>USDA-APHIS: Cogongrass eradication**</b>			<b>\$3</b>	\$4
<b>Army Corps- Aquatic Plant Control research</b>	\$6	\$6	<b>\$7</b>	\$13
<b>EPA - Great Lakes Restoration Initiative</b>	\$300	\$320	<b>\$330</b>	\$375
<b>DOI – Wildland Fire: Fuels Management</b>	\$189	\$194	<b>\$220</b>	\$240
<b>DOI – BLM: Rangeland Management</b>	\$104	\$106	<b>\$106</b>	\$116
<b>DOI- FWS: National Wildlife Refuge System: Wildlife and Habitat Management</b>	\$234	\$239	<b>\$240</b>	\$250

\* The \$1.721 billion request for USDA-ARS in FY 2022 includes a 5% increase over the FY 2021 enacted level, plus \$102.6 million for the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility and \$15 million for ARS’s “Big Data” Initiative, which is a 1% assessment on all its intramural and extramural programs to develop high performance computing infrastructures for modern agricultural research.

\*\* The final FY 2021 appropriation directs APHIS to reallocate \$3 million from its Field Crop and Rangeland Ecosystems Pests account to create a pilot program to partner with states (AL, GA, MS, and SC) for the control and eradication of cogongrass.

### **2020 Water Resources Development Act Becomes Law**

The 2020 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) was included in the massive 5000+ page Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 that was signed into law (P.L. 116-260) on Dec. 27, 2020. WRDA bills are authorization bills enacted by Congress, analogous to “Farm Bills”. WRDA bills deal with various aspects of water resources such as environmental, navigational, and flood protection issues that are mostly administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE). This is the 14<sup>th</sup> WRDA bill enacted since 1974 and the fourth since 2014.

The Aquatic Plant Management Society (APMS), along with the weed science societies supported passage of the Senate version of WRDA which had many invasive species provisions that were not in the House passed version. The 2020 WRDA:

- Authorizes **\$25 million** for a **Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB)** demonstration program to “determine the causes of, and implement measures to effectively detect, prevent, treat,

*and eliminate, harmful algal blooms associated with water resources development projects*". The HAB demonstration program will be carried out by ACOE with focus areas in the Great Lakes, the tidal and inland waters of New Jersey, the coastal and tidal waters of Louisiana, the waterways of the counties that comprise the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, California, the Allegheny Reservoir Watershed in New York, and Lake Okeechobee, Florida.

- Requires ACOE to add "**prevention**" to its aquatic invasives species research, in addition to its research on the management and eradication of aquatic invasive species.
- Directs ACOE to conduct a **terrestrial noxious weed control** pilot program in consultation with the Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds (FICMNEW) "*to identify and develop new and improved strategies for terrestrial noxious weed control on federal land under the jurisdiction of the Secretary (of the Army)*".
- Authorizes **\$50 million** per year for FY 2021 - 2024 for ACOE to "*enter into partnerships with applicable States and other Federal agencies to carry out actions to prevent the introduction of, **control, or eradicate invasive species that adversely affect water quantity or water quality***" in the Platte River Basin, the Upper Colorado River Basin, the Upper Snake River Basin, and the Upper Missouri River Basin. ACOE shall give priority to projects that are intended to control or eradicate **Russian olive** (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) or **saltcedar** (of the genus *Tamarix*).
- Authorizes **\$10 million** for the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the U.S. FWS, to establish a pilot program "*to remove **invasive plant species in riparian areas that contribute to drought conditions***" in the Lower Colorado River Basin; the Rio Grande River Basin; the Texas Gulf Coast Basin; and the Arkansas-White-Red Basin; and where appropriate, to replace the invasive plant species with ecologically suitable native species and to maintain and monitor those riparian areas.
- Authorizes **\$25 million** for the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the U.S. FWS, to establish a pilot program "*to develop and carry out effective measures necessary to prevent, control, or eradicate **aquatic invasive species in alpine lakes that are not located within a unit of the National Park System***".

### **WSSA Comments on Endangered Species Act Assessments for Triazines and Glyphosate**

Last fall, EPA released its draft biological evaluations (BEs) for the triazines and glyphosate for review and comment. Biological evaluations (BEs) are the beginning of EPA's Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation review process for pesticides where they determine if an endangered or threatened species or critical habitat could be affected by the use of that pesticide.

The WSSA submitted separate comments for the [triazines](#) and [glyphosate](#). In general, EPA's biological evaluations (BEs) lack a workable and consistent approach to endangered species assessments. An assessment process which essentially equates any exposure to a pesticide as a possible concern to any species does little to advance appropriate options which could be tailored to improve species protection. The implications of unrealistic analyses will result in

unjustified restrictions on the use of both triazine and glyphosate products which remain critical weed management tools across the U.S.

The WSSA would like to thank the many weed scientists who submitted comments documenting actual use rates and patterns for these herbicides. WSSA understands the complexity of ESA and respects the challenges that ESA poses to the EPA. The WSSA is committed and hopeful for the opportunity to work directly with EPA to provide scientific input to assist in the development of recommendations that protect the pesticide user, the environment, and the consumer while effectively feeding and clothing the world.

### **National Invasive Species Awareness Week (NISAW)**

NISAW Part I was February 22-26, 2021 and included a policy focused webinar series during the week in which over 1,900 people registered. The U.S. federal agencies responsible for invasive species management in aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, in general, have sufficient legislative authority from Congress to manage invasive species. However, federal invasive species programs remain **extremely underfunded**. In FY 2020, the Department of the Interior estimated it spent \$143 million to manage invasive species for 400+ million acres of public lands. That's roughly 35 cents per acre for all invasive species research, prevention, EDRR, management and restoration. As invasive species stakeholders, we need to seek full appropriations as authorized for these programs. That was the central theme of the NISAW webinar I presented on Feb. 26 titled "Show Me the Money". The recorded presentations are available at: [www.nisaw.org/nisaw-2021/](http://www.nisaw.org/nisaw-2021/). Many thanks to the North American Invasive Species Management Association (NAISMA) for organizing and hosting the webinar series.

**NISAW Part II** - Outreach and Education – is **May 15-22, 2021** and will focus on local invasive species prevention, removal, and educational events. If you are coordinating or aware of invasive weed removal or educational events, please add it [here](#). The North American Invasive Species Forum is also being held virtually during NISAW Part II. The Forum is an international event encompassing the interests of professionals involved in invasive species management, research, and regulation across North America. To learn more and register for the North American Invasive Species Forum, click [here](#)

### **New House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittee Leaders and Members for Ag; Interior & Environment; Energy & Water; and Commerce/Justice/Science.**

This [powerpoint presentation](#) from NISAW reviews the leaders and members of the following four appropriations subcommittees:

- Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA & Related Agencies
- Commerce, Justice, and Science & Related Agencies
- Energy and Water Development, & Related Agencies
- Interior, Environment & Related Agencies

The first 10 slides review Federal Agency spending on invasive species activities, however, the remaining 38 slides take a more in-depth look at the leaders and members of these subcommittees in both the House and Senate (and the invasive species programs they fund).

Every state except CO, SD, and WY has a member on the House or Senate Appropriations Committees in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress.

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