

2007 WSSA Committee Report to Members Summary for 2007 and Action Plan for 2008

Committee Code and Name: S65 – Public Awareness Committee

Committee Chair: Janis McFarland (Members: Mike Chandler (SWSS), John Jachetta (WSSA), Joyce Lancaster (ex-officio), Carol Mallory-Smith (WSSA), Carol Somody (WSSA), Tony White (WSWS), Lee Van Wychen (ex-officio). Additional members for 2008: Chris Boerboom (NCWSS), Kurt Getsinger (APMS), Dwight Lingenfelter (NEWSS))

Board Coordinator: Jill Schroeder

Committee Members Rotating Off: None

Appropriate Replacements: NA

Committee Goals for 2007 (what did the committee plan to accomplish in 2007): Increased public awareness of weeds, their impact, and management, through press releases and website information.

Summary of Progress for 2007:

What was accomplished toward the goals set by the committee?

Developed strategic plan; created press release approval process; created list of key messages, identified and utilized consumer media contacts/outlets and other distribution methods such as list serves; prepared and distributed six press releases; worked with the Website Committee to add a press release section and information/links concerning invasive plants; prepared fundraising letter.

What was the membership/committee involvement in committee activities? 300+ hours by committee members.

If funds were requested, how much was requested and how much was actually spent? \$25K was requested and spent, for press release distribution charges and hired communication expertise.

What was the impact of the committee activities/accomplishments on any or all of the following: membership, publication, policy, legislation, and/or education? Press releases and Dewey announcement were accessed by various types of media and the public, and featured on WSSA and other websites and in spin-off stories. “Summer May Be Over, But Some Pesky Weeds are Still Hard at Work” had 942 accesses, “Wildfires: Fueling the Argument for Increased Invasive Weed Control” had 538 accesses, “Invasive Plants Threaten National Landscapes” had 502 accesses, “Biofuel Crop: Panacea or Pandora’s Box” had 672 accesses, and “Tropical Soda Apple Overshadows Some Agricultural Industries in the Sunshine State” was just released (accesses not yet available). A total of 30 distribution methods were utilized, e.g. consumer media contacts (80 reporter contacts representing 68 newspapers). Sites displaying WSSA releases included AOL Money News, Forbes, the Los Angeles Times, and the Chicago Tribune.

What is the current state of committee/project activity and what is needed to further the goals of the committee/project? The committee is planning to at least double its press and other information releases in 2008 with the help of three additional PA Committee members, volunteer authors from the WSSA membership, and contract communication assistance.

Recommendations for Board/Society Action: 1) Assist the PA Committee in soliciting topics from the membership and committees, as well as identifying volunteers to draft press and other information releases. 2) Finalize Board goals for the Website. 3) Suggest that the Website Committee develop a plan for website search optimization.

Committee Goals for 2008: 12 press/information releases; enhance media/reporter contact list and list serves; define new outlets for media reports; identify key partners for outreach synergies.

Plan of Action for 2008: Conduct biweekly committee work teleconferences; solicit WSSA members to draft press releases; produce 12 press or other information releases, prepare Career Brochure. More details are included in the Strategic Plan.

Resources needed for 2008:

Finances: \$25K from Board to achieve public awareness goals and \$15K for Weed Science Subject Matter Liaison to EPA. This represents a decrease of \$15K from the 2007 budget. We plan to match or exceed the Board's resources by raising funds through the sustaining members (for additional PA Committee efforts outlined in the Strategic Plan, e.g. Reporters Notebook, Career Brochure, Matte Reports, potential part-time help for Science Policy Director of the National and Regional Weed Science Societies). Specifics are included in the Budget Report.

Membership involvement (person-hours): 500+