

2009 WSSA Committee Report to Members Summary for 2009 and Action Plan for 2010

Committee Code and Name: E13 – Public Awareness Committee

Committee Chair: Janis McFarland; **Members, 2010:** John Jachetta (WSSA), Joyce Lancaster (ex-officio), Anne Légère (CWSS), Dwight Lingenfelter (NEWSS), Greg MacDonald (SWSS), Don Morishita (WSSA), Judy Shearer (APMS), Carol Somody (WSSA), Tony White (WSWS), Bryan Young (NCWSS), Lee Van Wychen (ex-officio)

Board Coordinator: Jeff Derr

Committee Members Rotating Off, Feb. 2010: Mark Wrucke
Appropriate Replacements, Feb. 2010: Bryan Young

2009 Summary of Activities

What were the committee's goals for 2009? Increase public awareness of weeds, their impact, and management through press releases and website information. Increase awareness of weed science as a career.

List the committee's accomplishments in 2009: 1) Prepared and distributed 18 press releases. 2) Continued to utilize Master Media Lists using Cision and MediaAtlas and segmented by coverage area, including gardening & horticulture, agribusiness, farming, environment, lawn care, etc. Continued to complemented our current distribution (PR Web and 80 daily newspapers in key markets) to include trade publications, smaller daily and weekly newspapers, broadcast news outlets and online publications. 3) Provided final inputs to Weed Science Careers Brochure. 4) Provided final inputs to WSSA Membership Brochure. 5) Assisted with Letter on Weedy Biofuels to the Editor of Time. 6) Assisted with Letter requesting a rehearing of the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals decision defining pesticides as a pollutant and requiring Clean Water Act permits before they can be applied in or near water sources. 7) Established Twitter account.
Membership involvement (person-hours): 500+

What information was posted on the WSSA website? 18 press releases with links to associated photos and a Weed ID Quiz.

How much funds were requested? How much was spent? The PA Committee received \$15,000 from the Board for the activities of the Weed Science Subject Matter Liaison to the EPA and \$18,000 to achieve public awareness goals. A fund-raising letter and Golf Tournament raised an additional \$22,000 and \$12,267.80, respectively, for the committee's public awareness activities. Cost of the EPA Liaison was \$17,063.87. Public awareness activities cost \$20,622.90 (hired communication expertise and press release distribution charges of \$14,407.90 and \$6215.00, respectively.) Thus a total of \$37,686.77 was spent for the EPA Liaison and for public awareness using only \$3418.97 of the Society's funds. Therefore \$29581.03 of the Society's \$33,000 in budgeted funds was saved for the Society's use in 2010.

What was the impact of the committee activities/accomplishments on the following: membership, publication, policy, legislation, and/or education? The 18 press releases were accessed by various types of media and the public and were featured on WSSA and other websites and in spinoff stories. Examples of the many media contacting the PA Committee for further information and/or carrying press release content included: Better Homes & Gardens, Ag Fax, Ag Professional, Agri-News, Agri-Pulse, The Barn Radio Network, Basin Farmer, Chemistry & Industry, Croplife, Everglades Foundation, Farm & Dairy, Farm Talk, Farm Progress, Fine Gardening, Hay and Forage, Hobby Farms, Horticulture Magazine, Iowa Farmer, Invasive Plant Council News, Missouri Farmer Today, News from Planet Earth, The Packer, Seasons by Rebecca, Seeds, Southwest Farm Press, Sports Turf Online, Star Tribune, Texas Gardener, TMCNet, The Record (Gainesville, Florida), University of Kentucky News Bureau, Washington Gardener, Western Ag Reporter, Wisconsin State Journal, and Wildlife Gardeners. Confirmed full page reads ranged from 999 to 2255 for each release, while headlines/summaries ranged as high as 227,216.

The press releases addressed a wide range of topics that were of membership (M) interest, of educational (E) value to a wide audience, or else raised issues related to policy (P). Many releases served more than one purpose.

NATIONAL INVASIVE WEEDS AWARENESS WEEK (Jan. 16, 2009)	M	E	
JOINT MEETING OF WEED SCIENCE SOCIETIES TO HIGHLIGHT ADVANCES IN THE CONTROL OF INVASIVE PLANTS AND WEEDS (Jan. 26, 2009)	M	E	
WEED SCIENCE SOCIETY OF AMERICA ANNOUNCES WINNERS IN ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC AWARDS PROGRAM (Feb. 09, 2009)	M		
WEED SCIENCE SOCIETY OF AMERICA ASKS EPA TO PURSUE A REHEARING OF RECENT COURT DECISION ON PESTICIDES (permitting policies) (March 30, 2009)	M	E	P
WANT TO KEEP YOUR COMPOST WEED-FREE? (April 6, 2009)		E	
WHAT HOMEOWNERS CAN LEARN FROM FARMERS ABOUT WEED CONTROL (April 27, 2009)		E	
BLAZING TRAILS: DR. ELLERY KNAKE REMEMBERED FOR HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO WEED SCIENCE (June 1, 2009)	M		
FLORIDA TOUR SPOTLIGHTS INVASIVE PLANTS IN THE EVERGLADES (July 27, 2009)	M	E	
WEEDS HITCH A RIDE WITH CONTAINER-GROWN ORNAMENTALS (August 10, 2009)	M	E	
INVASIVE SALT CEDAR TRIGGERS LIVELY DEBATE AMONG WEED SCIENTISTS AND LAND MANAGERS (August 24, 2009)	M	E	P

U.S. INTERIOR SECRETARY TO ADDRESS JOINT ANNUAL MEETING OF WEED SCIENCE AND RANGELAND MANAGEMENT SOCIETIES (September 9, 2009)	M		
PREVENTING HURRICANE HAVOC (September 14, 2009)	M	E	
WEED SCIENTISTS TAKE STEPS TO PROTECT RARE ORCHID (September 28, 2009)	M	E	
TEAMS FROM ILLINOIS, MICHIGAN, PENNSYLVANIA AND ONTARIO TAKE TOP HONORS IN 2009 COLLEGIATE WEED SCIENCE CONTEST (October 12, 2009)	M		
NATIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES AWARENESS WEEK (October 26, 2009)	M	E	
FROM ROBOTICS TO CLIMATE CHANGE, ANNUAL MEETING TACKLES NEW ANGLES ON WEED CONTROL (November 9, 2009)	M	E	
GLYPHOSATE-RESISTANT WEEDS: CAN WE CLOSE THE BARN DOOR? (November 18, 2009)	M	E	
THE IR-4 PROJECT: PROMOTING EFFECTIVE WEED CONTROL FOR FOOD, FLOWERS AND SEASONAL FAVORITES (December 10, 2009)	M	E	

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

The PA Committee is currently working on three press releases (titles not finalized):

Reducing Spray Drift: Ten Techniques for Keeping Herbicides Where They Belong
Using Air to Protect Water
The Botany Behind Avatar

2010 Plan for Committee Activities

Goals for 2010:

- Develop ideas on how to establish a WSSA Foundation or enhance our current endowment and other programs to support long-range fiscal sustainability of WSSA public awareness efforts.
- Develop an outreach plan and materials to propose to the Policy Board for use in increasing weed awareness with the new administration and other government officials.
- Develop an ambassador program utilizing WSSA committee members and experts from IPM Centers and Extension to enhance public awareness of weeds and to support our public outreach.
- Develop and implement a broader outreach strategy on promoting the topic of weeds through radio, TV, Web, UTube and magazines.
- Develop a Weed Fact Sheet for use in outreach.
- Proposed press release topics include:
 - 1) *Allelopathic plants*
 - 2) *Aquatic weed management*

- 3) *Carbon sequestration – the critical role of weed control*
- 4) *Challenges of non-chemical weed control*
- 5) *Characteristics of a good biofuel crop*
- 6) *Critical role of weed control in sustainable agriculture*
- 7) *Economic benefits of weed control*
- 8) *Economic losses due to weeds*
- 9) *Farm Bill impacts on weed research and management*
- 10) *Herbicide stewardship*
- 11) *Homeowner weed challenges*
- 12) *Human health issues/allergies*
- 13) *Invasive algae*
- 14) *Invasive species impact on endangered species*
- 15) *Key weed science research grants*
- 16) *Potential impacts of climate change on weed management*
- 17) *Protection of natural habitat/biodiversity*
- 18) *Research topics of interest from regional or national weed science meetings*
- 19) *Tillage/carbon footprint*
- 20) *Tillage/erosion*
- 21) *Urban/school weed challenges*
- 22) *Weed management in biofuel crop production*
- 23) *Weed resistance management*
- 24) *Weed Science and Weed Technology journal updates, in summary format*
- 25) *Weed seed banks*
- 26) *Weeds in wildflower mixes*
- 27) *Why Join the Weed Science Society of America*
- 28) *WSSA Academic Subject Matter Expert*
- 29) *WSSA and regional meetings – meeting details*
- 30) *WSSA award winners*

Plan of Action: Video weed scientist Q&A at annual meeting for future public awareness activities; conduct biweekly committee work teleconferences; solicit WSSA members to draft press releases; produce educational and other press releases. More details are included in the Strategic Plan.

What is needed to further the goals of the committee/project? Informative and timely press release topics and contact name(s) submitted on an ongoing basis by WSSA members.

Recommendations for Board/Society Action:

Funds requested for 2010: \$15,000 from the Board for the Weed Science Subject Matter Liaison to the EPA and \$18,000 to achieve public awareness goals. This represents a flat budget compared to 2009. We will try to match the Board's resources by raising funds through the sustaining members and will provide an update at the summer board meeting.

Other requests for the Board: Assist the PA Committee by 1) soliciting ideas for raising awareness of weeds from the membership and committees, 2) identifying volunteers to draft press releases and other information, 3) sending a letter soliciting funds for public

awareness outreach, and 4) further strengthening the interactions between the Public Awareness Committee and other WSSA committees, especially the Professional Development Committee, with the goal of engaging broader member participation, especially by students.