

2008 WSSA Committee Report to Members Summary for 2008 and Action Plan for 2009

Committee Code and Name: E13 – Public Awareness Committee

Committee Chair: Janis McFarland **Members, 2009:** 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), Mark Wrucke (NCWSS), Lee Van Wychen (ex-officio)

Board Coordinator: Jeff Derr

Committee Members Rotating Off, Feb. 09:
Boerboom, Chandler, Getsinger, Mallory-Smith

Appropriate Replacements, Feb. 09:
Wrucke, MacDonald, Shearer, Morishita

2008 Summary of Activities

What were the committee's goals for 2008? Increase public awareness of weeds, their impact, and management through press releases and website information.

List the committee's accomplishments in 2008: 1) Prepared and distributed 18 press releases. 2) Built Master Media Lists using Cision and MediaAtlas and segmented by coverage area, including gardening & horticulture, agribusiness, farming, environment, lawn care, etc. 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) Created handout on How to Become a WSSA Member and Importance of Careers in Weed Science, as starting point for a Careers Brochure (in progress). 4) Published first WSSA Newslines (e-newsletter). 5) Developed Position Statement on Threat to Extension Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Programs by Last-Minute Change in 2008 Farm Bill. 6) Solicited chair and individuals to form a sub-team to develop Golf Event fundraising for 2009 WSSA meeting. 7) Made presentation to NIWAW on mission, goals and accomplishments of the WSSA PA committee.

Membership involvement (person-hours): 500+

What information was posted on the WSSA website? 18 press releases with links to additional information and photos. Position on the "Extension Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Programs Threatened by Last-Minute Change in 2008 Farm Bill" was also posted.

How much funds were requested? How much was spent? The PA Committee requested \$25,000 from the Board to achieve public awareness goals and \$15,000 for the activities of the Weed Science Subject Matter Liaison to EPA. A fund-raising letter raised an additional \$27,500. Public awareness activities cost \$31,964 (hired communication expertise and press release distribution charges of \$25,484 and \$6480, respectively). Cost of the EPA Liaison was \$10,348. Thus a total of \$42,312 was spent for public awareness and the EPA Liaison using only \$14,812 of the Society's funds. Therefore \$25,188 of the Society's \$40,000 in budgeted funds was saved for the Society's use in 2009. Cost of

communication expertise per release was reduced by 66% by transitioning to a new company for the last 10 releases.

What was the impact of the committee activities/accomplishments on the following: membership, publication, policy, legislation, and/or education? The following press releases were accessed by various types of media and the public, and featured on WSSA and other websites and in spin-off stories. Examples of the many media contacting us for further information and/or carrying press release content included the Christian Science Monitor, Newsweek, Wall Street Journal, Chicago Tribune, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Houston Chronicle, Philadelphia Courier Times, Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, New York Newsday, Newark Star Ledger, Vancouver Sun, Kansas City Star, San Francisco's TV 20, National Public Radio, Orion Samuelson's National Farm Report syndicated radio program, Associated Press, Google News, and Yahoo News. Confirmed full page reads ranged from 1249 to 3505 for each release, while headlines/summaries ranged as high as 145,500.

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) or legislation (L). Many releases served more than one purpose.

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| 1. Tropical Soda Apple Overshadows Some Agricultural Industries in Sunshine State – January 8 | | E | P | L |
| 2. The 48th Annual Meeting of the Weed Science Society of America Hosts International Experts on Weed Management - January 24 | M | | | |
| 3. Weed Science Society of America announces Scientific Award Winners - February 7 | M | | | |
| 4. The 9th Annual National Invasive Weed Awareness Week (NIWAW) Reminds Us to Spread the Word, not the Weeds - February 20 | | E | P | L |
| 5. Climate Change Fueling a New Generation of More Aggressive Weeds - March 25 | | E | P | L |
| 6. Weed Science Society of America: Algae-Harboring Hydrilla Causing Bald Eagle Deaths in The Southeast - March 31 | | E | | |
| 7. Beetles Help Take a Bite Out of One of the World's Most Aggressive Weeds (Loosestrife) - April 21 | | E | | |
| 8. Giant Cousin of the Carrot Plagues Backyard Gardeners with Blisters and Burns (Hogweed) - May 5 | | E | | |
| 9. Weed Science Society of America Warns Glyphosate Resistance Increasing - May 19 | | E | | |
| 10. 5th International Weed Science Congress Highlights the Impact of Weeds on Agricultural Systems, the Environment and the Global Economy - June 16 | M | E | | |
| 11. Weeds Constrain the Quality of Life of African Women - July 29 | | E | | |
| 12. Midwest Flooding Leads to Bumper Crop of Weeds - August 4 | | E | | |

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| 13. Underground Gardening by Earthworms is Spreading One of the Nation's Most Irritating Weeds - August 25 | | E | | |
| 14. Scientists are Cracking the Genetic Code of Weeds - September 8 | | E | | |
| 15. Is Your Bird Feeder a Weed Seeder? - October 13 | | E | | |
| 16. WSSA Asks Congress to Rescind Farm Bill Change that Threatens Extension Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Programs - October 27 | M | | | L |
| 17. Organizations Join Forces to Explore the Impact of Weeds and Invasive Plants on Farmers, Gardeners and Land Managers - October 28 | M | E | | |
| 18. Predicting the Perfect Predator for Garlic Mustard - December 8 | | E | | |

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

Committee is currently working on three press releases:

National Invasive Weed Awareness Week

WSSA-SWSS Joint Meeting

Compost, Manure, and Weed Seeds

2009 Plan for Committee Activities

Goals for 2009:

-Develop ideas on how to establish a WSSA Foundation 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 for 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.

-Finalize Weed Science Careers Brochure.

-Develop Weed Fact Sheet for use in outreach.

-Proposed press releases include:

WSSA Award winners

Invasive Species Impact on Endangered Species

Jill Schroeder New WSSA Academic Subject Matter Expert

The Critical Role of Weed Control in Sustainable Agriculture

National Research Institute and Key Weed Science Research Grants

The Value of Herbicides in Carbon Sequestration

Challenges of Non-Chemical Weed Control

Weeds in Wildflower Mixes

Exciting research topic from regional or national weed science meetings

Invasive Algae

Plan of Action: Solicit ideas at annual meeting for future public awareness activities; conduct biweekly committee work teleconferences; solicit WSSA members to draft press releases; produce 18 press or other information releases; finalize Career Brochure. More details are included in the Strategic Plan.

Recommendations for Board/Society Action:

Funds requested for 2009: \$18,500 from the Board to achieve public awareness goals and \$15,000 for Weed Science Subject Matter Liaison to EPA. This represents a \$6500.00 decrease from the 2008 budget which is a 16% reduction. 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 in soliciting ideas for raising awareness of weeds from the membership and committees, as well as identifying volunteers to draft press releases and other information.