



WEED SCIENCE SOCIETY of AMERICA

RESEARCH - EDUCATION - INNOVATION
FOUNDED 1956

Newsletter

Volume 53, No. 3
October, 2025



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Harvest Hellos from Cape Cod!

I hope your harvesting activities are going well. Many of us are settling into the new academic year, while others are collecting and analyzing crop data and preparing reports. The work you do as weed scientists is critical to helping our growers across the country manage their weed issues and helping to train the next generation of weed scientists. My best wishes to all our members as

we continue to pursue excellence and develop new tools to manage weeds.

Congratulations to the winners in the Regional Weed Science contests! These are fabulous events where everyone learns something new and gains valuable experience. Thanks to our Sponsors, Coaches, Volunteers, and all the teams and individuals who participated. These contests could not happen without all of you!

WSSA and the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants (NAICC) converged in Richmond, VA in September to host a guided tour in VA and NC with special emphasis on the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This was our second event of this type (we were in WI in 2024). Tour participants included scientists and professionals from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Representatives from WSSA included Bill Chism (Regulatory Consultant), Lee Van Wychen (Executive Director of Science Policy), Mark VanGessel (EPA liaison), our Science Policy Fellows Aleah Butler-Jones and Cole Woolard, and yours truly.

The tours took place on September 23–24, 2025. On the first day, stops included Cedar Point Farms in Wakefield, VA, Tidewater Agronomics Research Farm in Belvedere, NC, and a peanut harvest on Lassiter Farms near Jackson, NC. After an overnight stay in Roanoke Rapids, NC, we toured Fisher Family Partnership in Whitakers, NC, where we saw tobacco and sweet potatoes and finished the tour at Mush Island Farms in Weldon, NC.

Virginia Tech and North Carolina State University Extension Specialists gave great presentations on a host of weed and pest management challenges. Other stakeholder groups participating in the tour included the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, North Carolina Peanut Growers and the North Carolina Cotton Growers.

As tour participants, we observed cotton, peanut, and tobacco crops along with

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WSSA
Annual Meeting
February 9–12, 2026 • Raleigh, NC

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associated conservation and crop protection practices. Experts discussed the benefits of cover crops, the process of adding them to a farm management program, and the challenges and limitations that they may pose. Speakers also highlighted the role that IPM plays in the ability to reduce pesticide use, improve soil health, reduce water runoff and improve biodiversity.

Despite the challenges ahead, connecting farmers, researchers and federal regulators during the tour was a tremendous benefit. It fostered meaningful individual and group interactions and everyone left with a much greater understanding on how we must collaborate to provide food for the world profitably while protecting the environment for future generations. Plans are already underway to have another tour in 2026, location TBD. A special shoutout to our NAICC colleagues who were instrumental in pulling off the event; they were a fantastic group to work with!

Ian Burke, along with his Local Arrangements Committee (LAC), are working hard to develop a great program for WSSA in Raleigh, NC. The dates for the meeting are February 9–12, 2026. There will be multiple opportunities for offsite tours, including visits to Syngenta, BASF, and Cotton Incorporated facilities. Special events are planned for the students and the general membership. Be sure to look at the agenda before making your travel plans as the LAC are planning events on Sunday, Monday, and Thursday, going into the afternoon.

We are working with a new company for our registration and abstract submission process, FourWaves. They are a small Canadian company; their mission is to support academic and research communities by providing the most modern platform to allow members to meet, network and communicate. The Canadian Weed Science Society has worked with them for many years and has been pleased with their experience with FourWaves. We are optimistic that members of WSSA and the weed science regionals will have an easy experience with FourWaves. North Central's meeting will be first in the queue to venture into the new system and we anticipate a much smoother process than last year. You can visit their website at [Modern Conference Software for Academics - Fourwaves](#).

We have a few board positions opening up this year including Vice-President and Member-at-Large; Past-President Greg Dahl is finding candidates who will enter our elections, so stay tuned. We are also looking for a new chair for Constitution and Operating Procedures and a new chair for the Science Policy Committee. Please reach out to me if you are interested in either of these positions. The Board is a great way to give service back to WSSA and work with a group of super people who love Weed Science.

We have adopted a new logo. Thanks to all of you who voted and helped to decide on the winner. We will have introductory swag for all attendees of the 2026 Annual Meeting!

We have started a new group for WSSA: the Past Presidents Panel. We recognized that our Past Presidents have much experience and institutional knowledge that has gone underutilized. There have been two meetings thus far, attended by ~12 of our last 20 Presidents. They have provided guidance on navigating difficult political issues and helping the Board capitalize on its strengths. I am personally grateful that so many of our Past Presidents are interested in staying actively engaged with WSSA and being a fabulous resource for the Board and our members.

Last, but absolutely not least, a big Thank You to all our WSSA members for your support and guidance; your participation is key! Our society is as great as it is because of members like you. Please feel free to reach out to me, Eric Gustafson, and Lee Van Wychen if you have any questions, concerns, or comments regarding the activities of WSSA.

Kindest Regards,
Hilary Sandler
WSSA President

WSSA FUTURE MEETING SITES AND DATES

February 9–12, 2026
WSSA Annual Meeting
Raleigh, North Carolina
Ian Burke, Program Chair
www.wssa.net

**WSSA HOME PAGE
ACCESSED AT:
www.wssa.net**

THINK NEWSLETTER
Deadline for January issue
December 1, 2025

**SEND NEWSLETTER
MATERIAL TO:**
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Mount Vernon, WA 98274
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CALL FOR PAPERS

2026 WSSA ANNUAL MEETING

Raleigh, North Carolina • February 8-12, 2026

INVITATION

You are invited to submit titles and abstracts for papers and posters to be presented at the WSSA Meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina, February 8-12, 2026 — Sunday to Thursday. Volunteer papers may be presented orally in one of the meeting sections or as a poster. **An individual may personally present only one volunteer, non-poster paper.** This rule will be strictly followed. In addition to the volunteer paper, an individual may present a poster, may be co-author of papers presented by other authors, and may present an invited symposium paper. The abstract submission site will open October 30, 2025. The abstract submission website deadline is January 17, 2026.

DEADLINES FOR TITLES and AUTHOR, ABSTRACT, and SLIDE PRESENTATION SUBMISSIONS

- **Titles and Author Information** must be submitted electronically by **December 1, 2025**, to be considered. Those not submitted by this deadline will not be accepted. This deadline applies to symposium papers, as well as to volunteer papers and posters.
- **Abstract** texts must be submitted by **January 17, 2026**.
- PowerPoint **slide presentations** must be submitted by **February 2, 2026**.

MEETING SCHEDULES

Volunteer papers will be presented within a **15-minute schedule**. Concurrent sessions dictate that the time schedule be strictly followed. To allow for introduction, transition of speakers, and questions, you should plan to complete your oral presentation in 12 or 13 minutes. Papers should report the results of completed research or other substantive information. Ideally, research reported at the WSSA Meeting should be publishable in *Invasive Plant Science and Management*, *Weed Science*, *Weed Technology*, or a similar scientific journal.

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SYMPOSIUM PAPERS

Speakers participate in symposia by invitation. Deadlines and procedures for preparing and submitting abstracts of symposium papers are the same as for volunteer papers, except that the author must send a copy of the abstract to the symposium organizer.

COMPUTER AND PROJECTION EQUIPMENT

The WSSA has adopted LCD projection for PowerPoint presentations as the standard and will be used exclusively during the annual meeting. LCD projectors and Windows PC laptop computers will be supplied by WSSA members and coordinated by section chairs unless otherwise indicated. Presenters will **NOT** be allowed to use their own computers in the sessions. If possible, computers will be located on the podium in each session. If this is not possible, an infrared remote providing forward and backward control of the PowerPoint presentation will be provided in each session, by session chairs. Screens, microphones, carts, and extension cords will continue to be supplied by AV services and paid for by the Society. To make this process go as smoothly as possible, please follow the guidelines below.

PREPARATION OF ABSTRACT

Following are the guidelines for the preparation and submission of an abstract. Be alert to additional instructions that may appear on the site itself.

1. **Content** – The abstract should include a brief overview of essential aspects of experimental procedures and should highlight significant results and their interpretation. Write the abstract so it consists entirely of information. Do not include statements such as “The results of the experiments will be presented” or “The significance of these results will be discussed.”
2. **Formatting** – Typing and format instructions will be provided on the Title/Abstract Submission Page of the website.

Capitalize the first letter of all major words in the title and end the title with a period. Include both the common and scientific names of weeds and uncommon crop plants in the title (authorship of plants is not necessary), but only the common names of herbicides and well-known crop plants. **You do not need to type the title in bold-face;** the system will do that automatically. The site will provide a method for indicating the presenter, be sure to specify the presenting author.

Title Example. Role of Adjuvants on Sulfonylurea Herbicide Efficacy.

3. **E-mail Address** – For better communication among researchers, place the e-mail address of the senior author following the last sentence of abstract.
4. **Herbicide nomenclature** – A list of common and chemical names of herbicides approved by the WSSA is available at <http://wssa.net/Weeds/Tools/Herbicides>. When the common name refers to the parent acid, salt or ester forms used in the experiments should be identified at the first mention of the common name (e.g., methyl ester of diclofop). At the first mention of an herbicide application rate, list whether the weight is acid equivalent (ae) or active ingredient (ai) (e.g., kg ai ha⁻¹). If no common name is available, use its designation (trade name or code) followed by the full chemical name. If the chemistry is confidential, identify the source (company) in parentheses after designation.

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5. **Adjuvant nomenclature** – Where possible, use the *WSSA Herbicide Handbook*, 10th edition (2014), p.479–481; *Weed Science* (1985) 33 (Suppl. 1): 22–23; or the *WSSA Monograph* (1982) *Adjuvants for Herbicides*. Otherwise, use the most complete available chemical description of the adjuvant.
6. **Weed nomenclature** – Identify weeds by common names. At first mention of a weed, whether in the title or text, follow the common name with the scientific name (underlined and in parentheses). Do not repeat the scientific name in the text if given in the title. A list of WSSA approved common and Latin names of common weed species can be found at <http://wssa.net/wssa/weed/composite-list-of-weeds/>. If there is no WSSA-designated common name, use common scientific names from another source such as Hortus Third Dictionary.
7. **Crop nomenclature** – Scientific names for crop plants are optional. They are not needed for well-known crops but should be included for less common crops and whenever needed for clarity. Place scientific names, underlined and in parentheses, following first mention of the common name, whether in the title or text.
8. **Soil nomenclature** – Include the soil series with textural classification and the subgroup name using the terminology of the U.S. Dept. Agric. Natr. Res. Conserv. Serv. publication, *Soil Taxonomy*, U.S. Gov. Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1988. For soils outside the U.S.A., use the local official terminology.
9. **Measurements** – Report all measurements in International System of units (SI). Abbreviate units of measure if preceded by a number. See *Weed Science* (2003) 51:1029–1033 for additional suggestions and *WSSA Herbicide Handbook*, 10th edition (2014), p. 488–491 for metric conversions.
10. **Abbreviations** – Use abbreviations as shown at <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-file-manager/file/620670584ea75bf1c628d10b/WSSA-APPROVED-ABBREVIATIONS-FOR-FREQUENTLY-USED-TERMS-Feb2022.pdf>
11. **Numbers** – Use Arabic numerals for all numbers with two or more digits and for all measurements such as time, weight-length, area, quantity, or degree except when the number is the first word in the sentence. Spell out numbers when they are the first word in a sentence or when they are less than 10 and not measurements.

SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACT

Volunteer papers, posters, and symposium papers all require abstracts to be submitted electronically.

- **Deadline is by January 17** for submission of the abstract
- Additional instructions will be provided on the Title/ Abstract Submission Page.

The Program will be printed exactly based on what was submitted, other than format and font changes for uniformity; therefore, proofread your submission very carefully. Primary contact authors will receive an email indicating their abstract was received and a later email confirming the section/day/time when and where the paper will be presented.

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FORMAT OF SLIDE PRESENTATIONS

All presentations **MUST** be in PowerPoint (any version) for MS Windows (PC compatible). **The section chairs have requested that ALL presentations be prepared and uploaded on the abstract submission site so that preloading prior to the meeting can be accomplished** (see Submission of Presentations). Please limit the size of presentations to less than 200 MB. If your presentation contains video clips or animation you must contact the section chair for approval one week **PRIOR** to sending your presentation to ensure compatibility with the equipment. Limit fonts used in the presentation to basic fonts, as not all machines may have the same choice of fonts. Examples of standard fonts are Times, Arial, Courier, Tahoma, or similar equivalents. Section chairs and computer operators are not responsible for changes in fonts, bullets, and other formatting at the time of presentation. Use up-to-date virus protection software to avoid infecting the computers provided by the section chairs.

SUBMISSION OF SLIDE PRESENTATIONS

Presentations must be uploaded on the submission site prior to the meeting. Section chairs must receive the presentation at least one week in advance of the meeting **no later than February 2, 2026**. Please coordinate with your section chair if you want to preview your presentation at the meeting to ensure that the formats/fonts are all as you intended them to be. Due to the limited time and equipment, last-minute editing is highly discouraged. Submission of files at the time of the presentation or at any other time during the session will **NOT** be allowed.

Be alert to changes, modifications, and refinements to these guidelines between now and the meeting. This information will be published in the October and January issues of the WSSA Newsletter. For non-WSSA members, the WSSA Newsletter is available on the WSSA website (<http://www.wssa.net>).

POSTER PREPARATION, FORMAT AND SUBMISSION

The information presented as a poster is very similar to that presented as an oral paper, but it is presented physically on poster board rather than orally at the meeting. When submitting for a poster on the abstract system, in addition to specifying Poster Session, authors should indicate a category from Section 1 through 16. Poster presentations will be grouped by these categories.

- 1. Poster Boards. One space 48 x 48 inches will be provided for each poster. There will be no exceptions to the rule of one space per poster. Posters should be no larger than this size.**
2. Content of Poster. Texts, graphs, and tables must be easily read from a distance of 6 feet (2 m). Titles and headings should be larger and readable from a greater distance.
3. Because of costs and logistics, it will not be possible to provide electrical connections, video equipment, or other special equipment for posters.
4. Groups of authors may present more than one poster but at least one author must be present at each poster during the time designated exclusively for viewing the poster.
5. Posters may be presented by personnel of the same sustaining member companies and may concern commercial products, but they must present results of completed research with these products rather than promotional material about them.

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POSTER SESSION

There are two sessions for presentation of posters (sorted by odd and even numbers). Authors are expected to be at their poster during the period reserved for viewing the poster to answer questions and to discuss their research with interested parties.

Participants in Section 17, the Poster Session, will meet at a location designated in the program before the Poster Session begins to elect a vice-chair of the section and discuss recommendations for improvement of the Poster Session.

Commercial Exhibits. There are key differences between a poster and a commercial exhibit. The commercial exhibits are presented by Sustaining Members of WSSA and consist of educational information that may be of a promotional nature about products and/or services.

STUDENT CONTEST INFORMATION

A. ELIGIBILITY

1. Any student who is a WSSA member and has registered to attend the current annual meeting is eligible to compete in the poster or oral presentation contest. WSSA will offer the Single Slide Talk (SST) competition (the 15-minute oral option will NOT be available).
2. A Single Slide Talk (SST) competition is being offered to both WSSA students at the 2026 meeting. It provides students with the opportunity to profile their research and enhance communication skills. A separate document will be available describing this activity in more detail including how students will be judged and the rules for the competition.
3. **A student can only participate in ONE contest per annual meeting**, either the oral presentation contest or poster presentation contest during the same annual meeting. Students are eligible for participation in the Student Competition multiple times during a M.S. program and a Ph.D. program
4. A student can only win 1st place in the poster or oral presentation contest once per degree program. Once a student places 1st in a given contest (i.e., oral, SST, or poster presentation contest), they are no longer eligible to compete in said contest during the course of their current degree program. A student may win 1st place in the poster presentation contest and 1st place in the oral presentation contest while in a M.S. or Ph.D. program; however, a student may not enter both contests at the same annual meeting. A student may win 1st place in the poster or oral presentation contest in the M.S. degree program and then compete and win 1st place for an oral or poster presentation while in a Ph.D. degree program.

B. RULES AND PROCEDURES

1. Notice of the contests will be included with the Call for Papers.
2. A contestant may enter the poster or oral presentation contest multiple years per degree program. Persons who have graduated from a degree program (M.S. or Ph.D.) and are actively pursuing an additional degree may only enter the contest for that degree program during the first annual meeting following graduation.
3. Contestants will indicate in the title submission that they wish to enter either the poster or oral presentation contest. Title and contest declaration must be turned in by the deadline that title submissions are due. If a contestant does not turn in a title and contest declaration by the time that title submissions are due, they will be ineligible for the contest unless the Student Program Chairperson declares the student eligible based on student's situation. **ABSTRACTS FOR CONTEST PRESENTATIONS** must be submitted electronically by **February 10, 2026**. This allows the committee to prepare copies or e-mail abstracts to the appropriate judges prior to the contest.
4. Evaluation forms and rules will be posted to the WSSA website.

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CALL FOR JUDGES!! WSSA STUDENT ORAL AND POSTER CONTEST

The Graduate Student Contest is an integral part of the 2026 annual meeting of the WSSA. Please consider serving the WSSA as an oral or poster competition judge and contributing to the development of young weed scientists. The opportunity to serve as a volunteer contest judge is open to all registered WSSA members. This includes government, university, private industry, and student members.

Please respond by December 1 with your ability to serve the WSSA to Darrin Dodds: dmd76@msstate.edu

In responding as volunteer contest judge:

- Indicate your preference for **15-minute oral, SST, or poster** contest judging assignment. “No preference” is also an acceptable indication.
- You are welcome to **judge in multiple contests** if your schedule permits. Multiple assignments will be made only as need dictates.
- When responding, indicate whether or not you may have a particular **conflict of interest** (i.e., advised student presenting in SST, my office mate is presenting in the PhD poster contest).

PROGRAM CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION:

WSSA Program Chair: Ian Burke (icburke@ncsu.edu)

Ex-Officio: Eric Gustafson (info@wssa.net)

Section Chairs:

Section	WSSA Chair
Agronomic Crops	Laura Smith
Horticultural Crops	Jichul Bae
Turf and Ornamentals	Navdeep Godara
Pastures, Rangelands, Forests, and Rights of Way	David Russell
Wildland and Aquatic Invasives	David Clements
Regulatory Aspects	Leo Galindo-Gonzalez
Teaching and Extension	Sarah Hans
Formulation, Adjuvant, and Application Technology	Cody Chytyk
Weed Biology and Ecology	Aniruddha Maity
Biocontrol of Weeds	Alida Janmaat
Physiology	David Belles, Neeta Soni
Soil and Environmental Aspects	Ankit Yadav
Integrated Weed Management	Dilshan Benaragama
Targeted and Autonomous Weed Control Technologies	Shaun Sharpe
Genomics	Martin LaForest
Poster Sessions	Vanessa Jones, Virginia Oeggerli
Student Contest	Breanne Tidemann

WASHINGTON REPORT

by Lee Van Wychen, Director of Science Policy

MAHA REPORT RELEASED SEPT. 9, IMPROVEMENTS MADE COMPARED TO MAY DRAFT

On September 9, 2025, the Make Our Children Healthy Again (MOCHA) [Strategy Report](#) was published by the [MAHA Commission](#). A follow-up to the first draft published in May 2025, the MOCHA Strategy Report outlines 128 policy recommendations to address the growing incidence of chronic illness among American children. While the MOCHA Strategy Report still identifies chemical exposure as a contributor to childhood chronic illness, the report's tone is tempered regarding any specific chemical threats.

Shift in Tone on Pesticides

- **May 2025 report:**
 - Singled out glyphosate and atrazine for potential health effects.
 - Relied on disputed or questionable sources for glyphosate claims.
 - Warned about corporate influence and bias in pesticide science.
- **September 2025 report:**
 - No longer singles out glyphosate or atrazine.
 - Does not call for bans or direct restrictions on pesticide use.
 - Promotes **confidence in EPA's "robust" science-based** pesticide review process.
 - Calls for **streamlining approval processes** to ensure timely access to new pest-management products.
 - Affirms that **key crop protection tools will remain available to farmers**.

Precision Agriculture & Innovation

- Strongly prioritized in the final report.
- Recommends research and programs to:
 - Optimize pesticide applications.

- Reduce overall pesticide volumes.
- Support farmer adoption of precision technologies.
- Encourages **USDA-EPA partnerships** with private industry for technology development and deployment.

Soil Health & Sustainability

- Expanded emphasis beyond pesticides.
- Promotes soil stewardship through programs like **EQIP** and **CSP**.
- Highlights practices that build **soil organic matter** and enhance soil composition.
- Encourages more **locally driven decision-making** in conservation efforts.

Public Education & Trust

- Encourages **greater transparency and awareness** of pesticide review processes.
- Positions EPA's regulatory role as rigorous and reliable.
- Shifts away from the earlier narrative of corporate manipulation of science.

Overall Approach

- **May 2025 report:** adversarial tone, pesticide-focused critiques, suspicion of corporate influence.
- **September 2025 report:** tempered, farmer-friendly, focused on **regulatory reform, precision agriculture, and soil stewardship**.
- Implementation and adoption will determine whether these strategies meaningfully improve agricultural practices and public health.

Prior to the release of the MAHA report, which was initially due out August 12, the WSSA joined 31 other national organizations in a letter to Health and Human Services Secretary Kennedy, USDA Secretary Rollins and EPA Administrator Zeldin urging them to seek public comment after the

MAHA report was released. The letter and signatories are available [HERE](#).

I would like to give a special thank you to my Science Policy Fellows, Aleah Butler-Jones and Cole Woolard for their in-depth analysis and help with this article.

REGENERATIVE FARMING PILOT PROGRAM PROPOSED

The MAHA report also includes a proposal to launch a regenerative farming pilot program. The term "regenerative farming" is not specifically mentioned, but instead falls under the guise of "**Soil Health and Stewardship of the Land.**" The initiative aims to provide farmers with tools and support to improve soil health, enhance sustainability, and increase the adoption of practices like prescribed grazing, soil health systems, and water management. It remains to be seen how USDA will define and implement this pilot program. Many different definitions and concepts exist for regenerative farming, but I believe weed research and management, such as cover crops and no-till, will be at the core of this. WSSA will continue to work with USDA as they move forward with this program.

USDA ANNOUNCES MAJOR REORGANIZATION PLAN

On July 24, 2025, USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins announced a multi-year agency reorganization plan that will relocate more than half of its Washington, DC-based workforce to five regional hubs—Raleigh, NC, Kansas City, MO, Indianapolis, IN, Fort Collins, CO, and Salt Lake City, UT. On August 1, Secretary Rollins announced a 30-day public comment period for stakeholders to provide feedback on the Department's reorganization plan, as outlined in the

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[Secretary’s memorandum \(PDF, 2.6 MB\)](#) Please see below for more details.

The plan includes the phased closure of three or four of the 94 USDA ARS research facilities, including the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center and the George Washington Carver Center in Maryland. The U.S. Forest Service conducts research currently in five regional stations. Those labs would be consolidated at a single station in Fort Collins, CO, risking the loss of regional expertise and long-term forest experiments.

Of the approximately 4,600 USDA employees currently based in the Washington, DC region, no more than 2,000 would remain after the reorganization is complete. The rest would be transferred to regional offices in an effort “to better serve rural communities and reduce operational costs.” While no layoffs are planned, significant staff attrition is expected.

All stakeholders, including USDA employees, members of Congress, and agricultural and nutrition partners, were encouraged to provide feedback to reorganization@usda.gov by August 26, which has been extended to September 30, 2025. The National and Regional Weed Science Societies expressed their opposition to any proposal under the USDA Reorganization Plan that would result in the closure or downsizing of ARS laboratories. Comments are [HERE](#).

BOTH HOUSE AND SENATE AG APPROPRIATORS REJECT PRESIDENT’S “SKINNY” BUDGET

The House Appropriations Committee passed their agriculture spending bill on June 30 by a vote of 35 to 27 and the Senate passed their ag spending bill on July 10 by a 27 to 0 vote. Thankfully, both spending bills rejected most of the Administration’s proposed deep cuts to agricultural research.

The biggest area of concern in the President’s Budget Request (PBR) for FY 2026 was for USDA NIFA. The FY 2025 estimated funding for NIFA is \$1.686 billion, while the PBR was \$1.044

billion, a 38% cut. The House Ag Appropriators marked up their bill at \$1.654 billion, which is a 1.9% cut, but the Senate marked up their bill at \$1.69 billion, a 0.3% increase.

Within the NIFA “Research and Education” account, the FY 2026 PBR had eliminated \$265 million in funding for the **Hatch Act**, which funds our agricultural experiment stations. However, thankfully, both the House and Senate Ag Appropriators restored the \$265 million in full.

The **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)** was proposed to be cut by \$50 million in the PBR for FY 2026, but the House Ag Appropriators kept the funding at FY 2025 levels at \$445 million, while the Senate bumped it up by \$200 K. The same can be said for the **IR-4 Program** being held level at \$15 million for FY 2026. The sentiment on the Hill this year is that flat funding is considered a victory.

Within the NIFA “Extension” account, the FY 2026 PBR would have cut **Smith Lever 3(b) & 3(c)** extension funding from \$325 million to \$175 million, a 46% cut. However, both the House and Senate Ag Appropriators rejected that cut and kept funding at FY 2025 levels at \$325 million.

Within the NIFA “Integrated” account, the FY 2026 PBR **eliminated** every program in the account. The NIFA Integrated account requires funded projects to incorporate a 1) research component, 2) an education component, and 3) extension activities to address critical issues in agriculture. However, the House and Senate Ag Appropriators restored funding at FY 2025 levels. This includes the **Crop Protection and Pest Management (CPPM)** program at \$21 million and the Organic Transitions Program at \$7.5 million. The Methyl Bromide Transitions program was reduced from \$2 million to \$1 million in the House, but Senate kept it level at \$2 million.

Finally, the House Ag Appropriators provided \$1.79 billion for the **Agricultural Research Service (ARS)**, which is \$2.5 million above the FY 2025 enacted program level, and includes increases for high-priority initiatives, addresses emerging pests and diseases, but eliminates funding for climate hubs. The FY 2026 PBR proposed a cut of \$88 million for USDA-ARS. The Senate Ag Appropriators provided an even greater increase to \$1.83 billion.

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	FY 2023 Final	FY 2024 Final	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 President	FY 2026 House	FY 2026 Senate
USDA Research Program	----- \$ Millions -----					
USDA-ARS	1,744	1,788	1,788	1,700	1,791	1,827
USDA-NIFA	1,701	1,679	1,687	1,044	1,654	1,692
Hatch Act: Ag Exp. Stations	259	259	265	0	265	265
Smith-Lever 3(b) and 3(c): Extension	325	325	325	175	325	325
AFRI: Ag & Food Research Initiative	455	445	445	405	445	445.2
IR-4 Program: Minor crop use	15	15	15	15	15	15
CPPM: Crop Prot. & Pest Mang't	21	21	21	0	21	21

Ag research funding for FY 2023, FY 2024, and FY 2025 for select programs. The proposed funding for FY 2026 by the President, House and Senate are in the three columns on the right. The colored numbers indicate **increases (green)** or **decreases (red)** compared to the FY 2025 appropriation.

SOME AG RESEARCH FUNDING INCLUDED IN THE ONE BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL ACT (OBBBA)

Following approval by the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, OBBBA moved through congressional consideration, where the agriculture provisions originally introduced by those committees remained largely intact. On July 1, the Senate voted 51–50, with Vice President J.D. Vance casting the tie-breaking vote, to approve an amended OBBBA. On July 3, the House took up the Senate-amended version of OBBBA, voting 218–214 to approve the bill. On July 4, 2025, the president signed the OBBBA (P.L. 119-21) into law. Here are some details of ag research provisions in the OBBBA:

Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR): The OBBBA allocates \$37 million for FY 2026 to FFAR to promote public-private innovation partnerships that fund research addressing big food and agriculture challenges.

Specialty Crops Research Initiative (SCRI): The OBBBA significantly increases mandatory funding for the SCRI, scaling up funding from \$80 million in FY 2025 to \$175 million in FY 2026. This increase in funding for SCRI is only for FY 2026, and would revert to \$80 million in FY 2027 without a new farm bill or a second reconciliation package. The SCRI enhances research on pest control, crop breeding and mechanization for high-value crops.

Research Facilities Act: To modernize aging research infrastructure at the 1862, 1890 and 1994 land grant universities, the bill provides \$125 million in mandatory annual funding starting in 2026 and each fiscal year thereafter for grants under the Research Facilities Act. (7 U.S.C. 390d). This program has only been getting about \$1 million per year in discretionary funding, so this is a major win for land grant universities.

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

(SCBGP): The OBBBA increases funding for the SCBGP from \$85 million to \$100 million in FY 2026. The SCBGP is a federal program that provides funding to states and territories to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. These crops receive support through locally-led projects. The program aims to boost the industry by funding projects that focus on research, marketing, and education.

Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention (PPDMDP): The OBBBA increases the funding for APHIS's PPDMDP from \$75 million in FY 2025 to \$90 million in FY 2026. APHIS administers this program with a focus on strengthening prevention, detection, and mitigation efforts on invasive plant pests and diseases. Projects are categorized under six goal areas, including enhancing pest/disease analysis and survey, targeting domestic inspections, strengthening pest identification, safeguarding nursery production, conducting outreach, and enhancing mitigation and rapid response.

Urban, Indoor, and Other Emerging Agricultural Production Research, Education, and Extension Initiative: The OBBBA provides \$2 million in mandatory funding for each of fiscal years 2024 through 2031. This program provides competitive grants to support research, education, and extension activities for the purposes of facilitating the development of urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural production, harvesting, transportation, aggregation, packaging, distribution, and markets, including determining and developing the best production management and integrated pest management practices.

Scholarships for Students at 1890 Institutions: The OBBBA will increase mandatory funding from \$40 million to \$60 million to remain available until expended. This program is considered a “stranded” program in the farm bill

and has not been issued any new funding since September 2024.

What's Next

The policy changes included in the OBBBA are some of the most significant in Farm Bill history because of what's included and what's left out. For the first time in 50 years (and 10 Farm Bills) the OBBBA separates nutrition assistance from commodity subsidies and risk management insurance. There are questions of how, or even whether, future farm bills might pass Congress.

While a handful of ag research programs were authorized in OBBBA, the vast majority of ag research programs in Title VII still need to be reauthorized before the September 30, 2025 deadline. It remains to be seen whether Congress can pass a “skinny” Farm Bill or Farm Bill 2.0 before then. Otherwise, Congress will have to pass a third extension of the 2018 Farm Bill to get us through 2026.

APPROPRIATIONS FOR EPA — MIXED NEWS

The EPA's enacted budget for FY 2025 budget was \$9.14 billion, but the proposed FY 2026 budget from the President requested only \$4.16 billion, a 54.5% reduction. This cut would significantly impact programs like state grants, water infrastructure funding, and enforcement. The EPA is funded under the Interior & Environment Appropriations Subcommittee in both the House and Senate. The House passed their version of the bill on July 22 by a partisan vote of 33 to 28. The Senate passed their version of the Interior & Environment appropriations bill on July 24 by a vote of 26 to 2. The House version proposes \$7.01 billion for EPA in FY 2026, a 23% reduction. The Senate version proposed a less drastic cut to \$8.64 billion, or a 5% reduction compared to FY 2025.

On the bright side, both the House and Senate bills maintained pesticide licensing, which was one of the few

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EPA programs spared. The Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) funding was held level at \$134 million, which is a definite win in this budget environment. Report language in the bill also calls for reducing the backlog and timely completion of a third-party audit as required in PRIA 5.

CONGRESS PUSHES BACK ON PRESIDENT'S DEEP CUT TO INTERIOR

For the Department of the Interior FY 2026 funding, both the House and Senate proposed smaller cuts—and in some cases, increases—compared to the President's budget request.

In the House, considerably less severe funding cuts are proposed for the Bureau of Land Management (-8% vs. -32%), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (-6.5% vs. -32%), the U.S. Geological Survey (-5.6% vs. 39%), and the National Park Service (-6% vs. -37%) compared to the President's request. The USGS Ecosystems Mission Area, slated for termination in the President's proposal, would shrink by only 3% to \$290 million in the House bill.

The Senate has adopted a more generous approach: USGS is looking at a 2.4% increase, with its Ecosystems Mission Area slated for a nearly 3% boost to \$308 million, compared to the President's proposed elimination of the program. The National Park Service is looking at a 2% cut, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is facing a 1% cut, and the Bureau of Land Management is slated for a nearly 3% cut.

The U.S. Forest Service, targeted for a 75% reduction in the President's proposal, would see nearly level funding in the House (-0.2%) and a 1% increase in the Senate.

ADAM TELLE IS NEW ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF ARMY – CIVIL WORKS



On August 2, Adam Telle was confirmed by the Senate on a 72–22

vote to be the new Assistant Secretary of Army – Civil Works (ASA (CW)). Telle is a native of Northport, AL and a graduate of Mississippi State University. He has spent the last 20 years in DC, including 10 of those years working for Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS) who was a strong supporter of the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) in Vicksburg, MS. He had strong support from Sen. Bill Hagerty (R-TN), where he has served as his Chief of Staff for the past four years.

As ASA(CW), Telle will carry out the administration's priorities relating to ports, waterways, and flood control infrastructure. Specifically, the ASA(CW) establishes policy direction and provides supervision of the Department of the Army for authorized civil functions pertaining to river and harbor, flood and storm damage reduction, shore protection, aquatic ecosystem restoration, and related efforts.

ARMY CORPS' AQUATIC PLANT CONTROL PROGRAM AT RISK WITHOUT RESEARCH FUNDING

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) Aquatic Plant Control (APC) program — the only federally authorized initiative dedicated to the research and development of science-based strategies to manage invasive aquatic plants — is facing a critical funding shortfall.

Established in 1958 under Section 104 of the River and Harbor Act, the APC program plays a vital role in protecting U.S. waterways from noxious aquatic plants that threaten navigation, flood control, agriculture, fish and wildlife habitat, and public health. For more than six decades, it has led the charge in developing and sharing new technologies to manage aquatic invasive species, such as hydrilla and Eurasian watermilfoil, which now threaten to spread across an additional 5 to 7 million acres if left unchecked.

Despite its proven return on investment and its small footprint in the Corps' \$10 billion budget, the program

received no dedicated funding in FY 2025, jeopardizing ongoing research and development critical to ecosystem health and waterway management. From FY 2018 to FY 2024, funding for APC research has hovered between \$5 and \$7 million annually.

The outlook for FY 2026 remains uncertain. While the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee included \$3 million for APC research in its July 17 markup, the USACE FY 2026 Work Plan still includes \$0 for the program. Aquatic plant management leaders remain hopeful that the Senate will prioritize APC funding when it reconvenes after the August recess.

Leaders from the Aquatic Plant Management Society (APMS) and its affiliate societies, as well as the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA), Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Foundation (AERF), and North American Lake Management Society (NALMS) have urged appropriators and USACE leadership to recognize the importance of continued investment in APC research. Their joint letter underscores the program's national significance and calls for restored funding to ensure effective, science-driven aquatic invasive species management continues.

[Letter to USACE leadership and congressional appropriators](#)

PR: ["WSSA and APMS Urge Army Corps for Renewed Aquatic Plant Control Program Funding"](#)

SENATE CONFIRMS BRIAN NESVIK AS NEW DIRECTOR OF THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE



On August 1, 2025, the Senate confirmed Brian Nesvik on a 54–43 vote to be the next Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Nesvik is a native of Casper, WY and spent 30 years with the Wyoming

CONTINUED on pg 13 >>

Game and Fish Department and served as the agency's director from 2019 until his retirement in 2024. He also served in the Army National Guard for 35 years.

Senator John Barrasso (R-WY), on behalf of the nominee, said "I look forward to working with Brian to restore science to conservation policies." Some organizations, like the Sierra Club, have opposed Nesvik's nomination to the position, citing his support for removing Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections for grizzly bears. Others, like the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, welcomed his confirmation, citing their longstanding collaboration and expressing optimism about working together to conserve fish and wildlife habitats while enhancing hunting and fishing opportunities.

REGULATORY OVERHAUL NEEDED TO ADVANCE AG TECHNOLOGY, LAWMAKERS TOLD

On July 22, 2025, four panelists representing ag technology interests called on Congress to overhaul federal regulations to speed the approval of new ag technologies. Speaking before the House Agriculture Committee in a hearing titled "[Past Breakthroughs and Future Innovations in Crop Produc-](#)

[tion](#)," they pointed to long delays at the EPA that are stalling innovation in crop protection tools.

Don Cameron, vice president and general manager of Terranova Ranch in California's Central Valley, said EPA staffing shortages are a major factor slowing the registration process. There simply aren't enough EPA staff to keep up with the workload.

Terry Abbott, chairman of the Council of Producers and Distributors of Agrotechnology (CPDA), noted that **more than \$500 million** worth of member-developed products are currently stuck in the EPA's regulatory backlog. He urged Congress to fully fund the agency's Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) and to update the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act (PRIA) to strengthen transparency and predictability in the review process.

COMMENT PERIOD OPENS FOR PROPOSED NEW RULE ON DRONE BEYOND VISUAL LINE OF SIGHT (BVLOS)

On August 5, 2025, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) released a [new proposed rule](#) that would eliminate the requirement for operators to view drones in their visual line of sight. By eliminating these requirements, the Department of Transporta-

tion (DOT) believes the proposal will significantly expand the use of drones in farming. For more information about the proposed rule, see the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAAs) [Beyond Visual Line of Sight \(BVLOS\) fact sheet](#). The comment period for the [new proposed rule](#) closes on **October 6, 2025**.

PERC RELEASES UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEM TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PESTICIDE APPLICATOR TRAINING MATERIALS

On August 6, 2025, the [Pesticide Educational Resources Collaborative \(PERC\)](#) announced the release of the [Unmanned Aerial Systems \(UAS\) Task Force Recommendations Report](#), a comprehensive set of training content considerations designed to support states, tribes, and territories in the certification of pesticide applicators using UAS.

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NIFA Announced RFAs for AFRI

The USDA National Institute of Food Agriculture (NIFA) announced its Request for Applications (RFAs) for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Competitive Grants Program. There were 37 program areas, with each program area having a specific application deadline. The complete RFA with program information and deadlines can be reviewed at [FY25 AFRI FAS RFA](#). Program areas of potential interest to the weed science community that are still open include “Pest and Beneficial Species in Agriculture Production Systems – A1112” with an application deadline of November 6, 2025 and “Critical Agricultural Research and Extension (CARE) – A1701” with an application deadline of November 13, 2025. Grant submissions are currently being accepted with no information on how the process will be affected with the current government shut-down.

Another program area of interest is “Rapid Response to Emerging and Re-emerging Pest and Disease Events Across Food and Agricultural Systems – A1713.” This program area has a continuous application deadline – within 180 days of effects associated with the emergence or re-emergence of pest. Program Area A-1712 “Rapid Response to Weather Events Across Food and Agricultural Systems” is a continuous RFA with additional information available at [Rapid Response to Weather Events Across Food and Agricultural Systems \(A1712\) | NIFA](#). One suggestion in developing proposals is that a direct connection between research and US agriculture and producers be clearly outlined. The following link [FY25 AFRI FAS RFA](#) provides the Program Area Priority Contact for questions members may have about a specific program area or grant application. Additional information can also be found at the following link [Agriculture and Food Research Initiative - Foundational and Applied Science Program | NIFA](#). Other areas of potential interest that have not been announced include the Methyl Bromide Transition (MBT) Program, IR-4, Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), and Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI). The Crop Protection and Pest Management (CPPM) program funding for 2025 will be distributed to existing projects or previously peer reviewed and meritorious but unfunded proposals. Finally, there are opportunities for Workshops and Equipment Grants within several of the Program Areas. Workshop Grants must be submitted a minimum of 150 days before the Workshop begins.

Work on the Endangered Species Act

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently released the Pesticide App for Label Mitigations (PALM) tool to help pesticide users comply with new listed species-related mitigation menus. [PALM](#) is a web based version of the existing spray drift buffer and runoff/erosion mitigation point calculators. This app is easier to use than the original spray drift and runoff calculators.

The EPA has developed a series of spray drift and runoff/erosion mitigations suitable for agricultural sites. However, those mitigations may not be suitable for non-agricultural sites. The WSSA Endangered Species Act Committee is working with our members to develop a series of white papers to describe weed management and actions to protect non-target species on non-agricultural sites to the EPA, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Marine Fisheries Service. The papers will cover weed control in aquatics, forests, ornamental/nursery operations, pasture/rangeland, and rights-of-way.

The EPA has registered three new herbicides within the past year that have language to protect listed species and their critical habitats. All of these labels require the user to check Bulletins Live! Two to determine if the application location falls within a Pesticide Use Limitation Area (PULA). In addition to other label mitigations (i.e., to mitigate human health risks and exposure to non-listed organisms), glufosinate-p labels require the user to comply with ecological spray drift buffers (10 ft for ground applications and 50 ft for aerial applications) and meet a requirement for 3 runoff/soil erosion mitigation points. Diflufenican labels additionally require the user to meet a requirement for 2 runoff/soil erosion mitigation points. Trifludimoxazin labels require the user to comply with ecological spray drift buffers (15 ft for ground applications and 110 ft for aerial applications) and meet a requirement for 6 runoff/soil erosion mitigation points.

The EPA is reviewing the registration package for a biopesticide that is an irradiated pollen derived from non-glyphosate resistant varieties of Palmer amaranth (*Amaranthus palmeri*). The irradiated pollen results in reduced seed production in female Palmer amaranth plants.

**WSSA Newsletter items from
Bill Chism, Cameron Douglass,
and Lee Van Wychen**

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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT
October 19–24, 2025	International Weed Science Society (IWSS) Weed Science Congress	Nanjing, China	www.iwss.info
November 2–7, 2025	Canadian Weed Science Society (CWSS) Annual Meeting	Gatineau, Quebec	www.weedscience.ca
December 15–18, 2025	North Central Weed Science Society (NCWSS) Annual Meeting	Grand Rapids, Michigan	www.ncwss.org
January 5–9, 2026	Northeastern Weed Science Society (NEWSS) Annual Meeting	Hershey, Pennsylvania	www.newss.org
January 26–29, 2026	Southern Weed Science Society (SWSS) Annual Meeting	Nashville, Tennessee	www.sww.ws
February 9–12, 2026	Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) Annual Meeting	Raleigh, North Carolina	www.wssa.net
March 2–5, 2026	Western Society of Weed Science (WSWS) Annual Meeting	Tucson, Arizona	www.wsweedscience.org
July 13–16, 2026	Aquatic Plant Management Society (APMS) Annual Meeting	Phoenix, Arizona	www.apms.org

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

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THINK NEWSLETTER

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