

# WSSA Public Awareness Committee Interim Report July, 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), Sarah True (WSSA Student Representative), Bryan Young (NCWSS), Lee Van Wychen (ex-officio)

**Board Coordinator:** John Jachetta

**Committee Members Rotating Off:**  
Tony White

**Appropriate Replacements:**  
Currently under consideration

## 2010 Summary of Activities (through 06/030/10)

What are the committee's goals for 2010? Increase public awareness of weeds, their impact, and management through press releases and website information.

List the committee's accomplishments (through 06/30/10): 1) Prepared and distributed six press releases through a variety of distribution outlets (PR Web, 80 daily newspapers, trade publications, gardening magazines, smaller daily and weekly newspapers, broadcast news outlets and online publications.) 2) Video-taped attendees at the national meeting regarding various weed topics.  
Membership involvement (person-hours): 125+

What information was posted on the WSSA website? Six press releases with links to additional information and photos.

How much funds were requested? How much was spent? The PA Committee received an \$18,000 allocation from the Board for 2010 to achieve public awareness goals and \$15,000 to support the activities of the Weed Science Subject Matter Liaison to EPA. A fund-raising letter raised \$31,500. Public awareness activities through 6/30/10 cost \$13,006 (hired communication expertise, press release distribution charges, and costs of booth at annual meeting). Cost of the EPA Liaison through 6/30/10 was \$7,716, for an expense total of \$20,722.

What was the impact of the committee activities/accomplishments on the following: membership, publication, policy, legislation, and/or education?

- The following six press releases were accessed by the public and by various print, online, and broadcast media, which used them to create spinoff stories. The press releases addressed a range of topics that were of membership (M) interest, of educational (E) value to a wide audience, and/or raised issues related to policy (P). Most releases served more than one purpose, and all are accessible long-term on the WSSA website.

1. PLANT LIFE ON PANDORA (February 1, 2010)	M	E	
2. WINNERS ANNOUNCED IN WEED SCIENCE SOCIETY OF AMERICA'S ANNUAL AWARDS PROGRAM (March 1, 2010)	M		
3. NEW APPLICATION TECHNOLOGIES KEEP HERBICIDES WHERE THEY BELONG (March 17, 2010)	M	E	
4. WEEDS ACROSS BORDERS: CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF CROSS-COUNTRY COLLABORATION TO HALT THE SPREAD OF WEEDS (April 19, 2010)	M	E	
5. WSSA ISSUES STRONG APPEAL TO USDA FOR RESTORATION OF FUNDING FOR WEED SCIENCE (May 12, 2010)	M	E	P
6. THE BATTLE TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE (June 28, 2010)	M	E	

- A committee member authored an article on annual and perennial weeds for Horticulture Magazine's *Science Matters* column. Horticulture is a consumer publication with nearly 180,000 subscribers.
- Among the many press outlets using the releases during the first half of 2010 were: AG Exec, AG Professional, AgriMarketing, Agro News Update, Arkansas AgFax, Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station News, Bismarck Farm & Ranch Guide, Bismarck Tribune, BNA, Connecticut Post, ContraCosta Times, Corn and Soybean Digest, DocStoc.com, Earth Times, Eldorado (Arkansas) News-Times, Enterprise Post, Pegasus Publications (producer of three garden publications and a radio show in Canada), Farms.com, Farm and Ranch Guide, Farm Futures, Farm Progress, Growing Produce, Hay and Forage, High Plains Journal, Hobby Farms, Illinois Agrinews, Indiana Prairie Farmer, INHS Library News, Inside Bay Area, Iowa Farm Bureau Press, Iowa Farmer Today, Midwest Producer, MSU Spotlight, MWCA Library News, Naked News (Bloomberg), New Mexico State University News Center, No-Till Farmer, Ohio Farmer, Reno Gazette-Journal, Penn State Live, Pennsylvania Farm Country Radio/American Farm Country Radio (WSSA President was interviewed about releases on two occasions), Precision Ag, Precision Pays, Seed Quest, Street Insider, Sugar Producer, Texas Gardener, The Grower, Topix.net, University of Arkansas newsletter, University of California ARN Employee Newsletter, University of Nevada News, Wallace's Farmer, Washington State University CAHNRS News, and Western Farm Press Bumpers College (Ark.).
- Confirmed full page reads of our releases via PRWeb ranged from 961 to 2505 for each, while headline impressions on the Web ranged as high as 167,317.

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

Six more press releases are planned for 2010. Videos taped during national meeting are being reviewed and best ones will be loaded to the WSSA website.

## **2010 Plan for Committee Activities**

### Other Goals for 2010:

“Favorite Myths” section for WSSA website. Proposed content to be vetted through Board.

Assist with developing a framework of ways to excite students about a career related to agricultural crop production, with more organized WSSA efforts through FFA, 4-H, National Ag in the Classroom, etc. Proposed partners include the Professional Development Committee, Student Association, WSSA President-elect, Education Committee, and Public Awareness Committee. (This idea will be taken to the summer, 2010 Board Meeting to discuss during strategic planning.)

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

## **Recommendations for Board/Society Action:**

Funds requested for 2011: Not yet determined.

### Other requests for the Board:

1. Request approval for a continuing survey (Appendix 1) to start this year.
2. 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.

May 18, 2010

TO: Weed Science Society of America Public Awareness Committee

FROM: John Jachetta, Ph.D., President

RE: WSSA Annual Survey Proposal

As the WSSA Public Awareness Committee continues to help shape the strategic framework of the organization, Dow AgroSciences is proposing and pledging long-term support for an annual WSSA membership survey to identify the leading weed management trends and issues facing the industry.

Releasing the results of the annual membership survey, implemented and executed by members of the WSSA, would help enhance the organization's profile within the agricultural industry, elevate awareness of the organization outside its traditional audience and improve communication regarding weed management trends, challenges and solutions.

*Objectives:*

- Increase awareness of leading weed challenges and potential solutions
- Enhance the profile of the WSSA within the agricultural industry
- Elevate awareness of the organization and its mission outside agriculture

*Program Overview:*

- Implement an annual WSSA membership survey to identify, quantify and qualify leading issues in weed management, the latest weed control practices, significant weed control trends and the impact of increasingly hard-to-control weeds
- Dow AgroSciences is pledging long-term support for the initiative by offering:
  - Initial development of survey questions to be finalized and approved by the WSSA Public Awareness Committee
  - Survey execution/deployment to membership through third-party vendor
  - Survey tabulation and internal results report
  - External survey results report draft, press release development and ongoing support
  - Possible survey results announcement event, such as a webcast or webinar for members and outside invitees, logistics support
- Survey Timeline:
  - May-August: Develop and finalized survey
  - September: Deploy survey to WSSA members
  - October: Results tabulation
  - November: Results report announcement/release

Dow AgroSciences is excited about supporting the WSSA with this initiative that will provide a communication and educational platform for the organization's membership and provide the industry with greater insight into the specific weed challenges facing agriculture.