

EPA Liaison: Mark VanGessel

EPA Liaison Advisory Committee met October 3, 2022

EPA STAFF UPDATE

Many of the EPA staff are still working remotely. Administrators are in the office regularly, but most of the staff are in only 1 to 2 days per week. Not aware of any major changes at the administration level to report.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Visited EPA Headquarters on November 9 and 10. Met with small groups within Health Effects Division, Biological and Economic Analysis Division, Registration Division, and Environmental Fate and Effects Division. These were general discussions, no specific agenda items, but did discuss where they may need input from WSSA members. Endangered species was the most common topic, and more specifically, it centered on expanding the mitigation pick list. I mentioned the WSSA Annual Meeting was in Arlington and encouraged everyone to participate. This was before the specifics for federal employee registration and so I was not able to provide any details on this. However, I followed up with all the meeting organizers once the WSSA BOD met and worked out how this was to happen.

Webinars

Sugarbeet. As part of the monthly seminar series on pest management at EPA, Tom Peters from North Dakota State University presented a seminar entitled “Corn is King but Sugar is so Sweet: Beet Sugar Production in the US”. The seminar focused on weed management for sugarbeets in the North Dakota/Minnesota region; however, he discussed differences for weed management in other major sugarbeet production areas. About 130 folks were on the webinar. The following week there was another webinar on sugarbeet for disease and insects.

EPA’s Endangered Species Workplan was presented as a webinar explaining their proposed strategy for reducing pesticide exposure to non-target organisms through the FIFRA registration, re-registration and other FIFRA review process actions. Taken together, these steps are also intended to move EPA toward fulfilling its ESA obligations. The emphasis will focus on minimizing off-field movement through erosion, off-field water movement, and/or drift. This was an EPA webinar, but had a lot of interest for WSSA members.

UPCOMING/FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Field Tour

I was approached by Northeastern IR-4 Regional Coordinator to participate in their EPA tour planned for June 21, 2023. This will be an opportunity to interact with EPA and discuss weed management issues important for specialty crops.

I plan to visit with EPA personnel after the WSSA Annual Meeting to discuss a potential summer event. This could include a field tour on a specific topic or a field day designed to

demonstrate basic agronomic principles that are important for weed management. A number of contacts at EPA have mentioned that an “Agronomy 101” field day would be very beneficial.

Discussions with EPA and USDA personnel have mentioned that the distinction between FIFRA and Endangered Species for pesticide regulation is often not recognized by WSSA members. For the spring WSSA Newsletter will submit an article to highlight the distinction (FIFRA considers both risks and benefits, while ESA only considers the pesticide’s risk).

Will also discuss with EPA personnel areas of better communication. More specifically, based on the WSSA meeting are there topics that need more attention or more focus in the near future.