



WSSA Committee Report on 2020 Activity

Committee Code and Name: E13, Public Awareness (PA)

Committee Chair: Carroll Moseley NE

Committee Members for this year:

- Neha Rana NC
- David Simpson NC
- Harlene Hatterman-Valenti NC
- Jacob Barney NE
- Art Gover NE (*Serving while J. Barney has a conflict*)
- Caren Schmidt NE
- Reginald Fletcher S
- Dilpreet Riar S
- Bart Clewis S
- Rebecca Fletcher W
- Joe Armstrong W
- Andy Hulting W
- Andrew McKenzie-Gopsill Canada
- Mark Heilman APMS
- Erika Haug APMS
- Ryan Wersal APMS
- Nicholas Steppig Graduate Student Representative
- Camp Hand Graduate Student Representative
- Wykle Greene Graduate Student Representative
- Lee Van Wychen Ex Officio
- Eric Gustafson Ex Officio
- Linda Edgerton Ex Officio

Board Liaison:

- WSSA President

Committee Members Rotating Off:

- Carroll Moseley, Chair
- Camp Hand
- Mark Heilman
- Andrew McKenzie-Gopsill

- Neha Rana
- Nick Steppig
- Ryan Wersal

Appropriate Replacements:

- Reid Smeda (for Hatterman-Valenti)
- Wes Everman (for Caren Schmidt)

Summary of Activities

1. What were the committee's goals for this year?

- Increase public awareness of weeds, their impact and effective management techniques
- Bring attention to important weed control-related programs and challenges
- Raise the visibility of WSSA and the weed science profession

2. List the committee's accomplishments (through December):

- Wrote 11 press releases and distributed online through the [Cision PRWeb](#) press release distribution service. We also emailed them directly to our custom list of industry journalists. See the "Press Releases by the Numbers" section at the [bottom of this report](#) for release topics and performance details.
- Created a new fact sheet on weed genomics.
- Significantly boosted our social media presence by engaging committee members in tweeting re: each new release. The effort was led by Camp Hand, a graduate student representative on our committee. Average engagement actions for each release more than doubled as a result – rising from an average of 8 per release in 2019 to an average of 18 per release in 2020.
- Collaborated with the Syngenta public relations team to significantly expand our press release distribution list.
- Selected the second recipient of the WSSA Excellence in Journalism Award.

3. What information was posted on the WSSA website?

- 11 press releases were posted to the [press section of the WSSA website](#). In addition, we posted supporting photos and a [WSSA fact sheet on genomics](#).

4. How much funds were requested? How much was spent?

- **Requested:** \$18,000 for Public Awareness initiatives
- **2020 Spending:** 14,192.50

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

Our press releases and other outreach initiatives spanned a wide range of topics of interest and educational value to our membership, the broader industry and the public – from the importance of FIFRA and IR-4 to advances in green chemistries and weed genomics.

Our releases have raised the visibility of WSSA, its members, weed science and weed-related issues among readers of a wide range of industry trades, newspapers and online media.

This coverage was triggered both by current and past press releases and by the visibility of WSSA and its leadership team. Examples of 2020 press coverage are below:

- **AgDaily:** [Celebrating National Pesticide Safety Education Month](#)
- **AgFax:** [Mapping Weed Genes – Looking for Ways to Delay Resistance](#)
- **AgFax:** [DTN's Unglesbee Wins Weed Science Society Award](#)

- Farm Journal/The Daily Scoop: [3 Ways to Stop Weeds from Stealing from Your Bottom Line](#)
- Gold Country Seed: [Soybean Herbicide Injury](#)
- Houseman Services: [How Do I Identify Lawn Weeds](#)
- Kansas State University News: [K-State scientist earns early career award for fighting weeds](#)
- New York Times: [The Dirty Secret About Weeding](#)
- Salon: [Will rising temperatures make superweeds even stronger](#)
- Seed Today: [Outstanding Student Weed Scientists Recognized by WSSA](#)
- SeedQuest: [Scientists highlight improved green chemistries for weed management](#)
- The Van Trump Report: [Beating Back Weeds with Electricity](#)
- RFD-TV, Nashville: [WSSA Provides an Update on Weed Genomics & What Scientists Are Learning](#)
- MarketWatch: [WSSA Announces Opposition to Weakening of FIFRA Regulations](#)
- Newsbreak: [How a Little-Known Research Organization Keeps Watermelon on Your Picnic Menu](#)
- One News Page Global Edition: [Scientists Highlight Improved Green Chemistries for Weed Management](#)
- Washington (Ind.) Times Herald: [Slow the Spread: National Invasive Species Awareness Week](#)

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

- Three press releases are written and are pending final review/release early in 2021. They focus on the following topics:
 - **Annual meeting release** with details on virtual sessions planned by WSSA and sister societies early in 2021.
 - **Invasive species release** that focuses on ways invaders become established and on preventive measures the public can take.
 - **Intelligent machines release** that focuses on how artificial intelligence is expanding control options in flower, herb and vegetable crops.
- We also are evaluating a new press release on HRAC updates.
- We have worked to standardize the formatting/labeling of our fact sheets, which we expect to post soon.

7. **2021 Plan for Committee Activities**

- Increase public awareness of weeds, their impact and effective management techniques
- Bring attention to important weed control programs and challenges
- Raise the visibility of WSSA and the weed science profession

Plan of Action:

- Continue meeting every two weeks by teleconference to plan press releases, fact sheets and other public awareness initiatives.
- Continue to increase our social media presence.
- Work with EPA liaison and others on identification of emerging issues.
- Engage with Herbicide Resistance Education Committee and with “Take Action” commodity group committees for herbicide resistant weed message synergies.
- Continue to work with Science Policy and Weed Loss committees to conduct national weed surveys.

8. Recommendations for Board/Society Action:

Funds requested for 2020:

- \$18,000 for Public Awareness initiatives; no increase over 2019.

Other requests:

- Currently there are no other requests.

9. Addendum: Press Releases by the Numbers

HEADLINE	TOTAL POTENTIAL AUDIENCE	RELEASE VIEWS	ONLINE PICKUP # of news outlets	ENGAGEMENT ACTIONS (click-through, print, share, download, tweet)
Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) Finalizes Program for its March Meeting in Maui	24,355,186	85	119	12
JANUARY 23, 2020				
National Pesticide Safety Education Month – Learn and Practice Principles of Safe Pesticide Handling and Use	21,307,413	4,050	120	11
FEBRUARY 03, 2020				
Weed Science Society of America Honors Award Winners at Annual Meeting	22,469,013	3,038	116	21
MARCH 03, 2020				
Outstanding Student Weed Scientists Are Recognized by WSSA	8,300,671	1,875	101	4
APRIL 30, 2020				
Slow the Spread: National Invasive Species Awareness Week Encourages Outreach and Education	7,492,113	2,675	110	51
MAY 15, 2020				
Applications Now Open for WSSA Graduate Student Travel Scholarships	6,336,410	4,359	121	8

HEADLINE	TOTAL POTENTIAL AUDIENCE	RELEASE VIEWS	ONLINE PICKUP # of news outlets	ENGAGEMENT ACTIONS (click-through, print, share, download, tweet)
JUNE 19, 2020				
How a Little-Known Research Organization Keeps Watermelon on Your Picnic Menu	5,208,375	2,082	84	30
JUNE 25, 2020				
Scientists Highlight Improved Green Chemistries for Weed Management	5,346,464	3,837	103	15
JULY 14, 2020				
WSSA Announces Opposition to Weakening of FIFRA Regulations	29,374,288	2,464	77	7
OCTOBER 21, 2020				
WSSA Provides an Update on Weed Genomics & What Scientists Are Learning	31,071,092	2,704	84	11
NOVEMBER 3, 2020				
Weed Science Societies Announce Plans for Virtual Annual Meetings	30,674,760	2,842	96	25
NOVEMBER 17, 2020				