



WEED SCIENCE SOCIETY of AMERICA

RESEARCH - EDUCATION - INNOVATION
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Newsletter

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Modernizing the WSSA Annual Meeting and Strengthening Our Voice in Washington

This spring, WSSA advanced two important initiatives that support a common objective: improving how we communicate weed science among ourselves and to the policymakers whose decisions affect our discipline.

A New Program Structure for the 2027 Annual Meeting

The WSSA annual meeting program has evolved over many years as new research areas, production systems, and management technologies have emerged. That growth has demonstrated the breadth of our discipline, but it has also created overlap among sections and made it increasingly difficult to place interdisciplinary presentations within a single traditional category. Consequently, many presenters opted for a few popular sections, and other sections had very few submissions. After deliberation, the board decided to revise the sections for our annual meeting.

For the 2027 Annual Meeting, WSSA is moving to a more focused structure consisting of 10 program sections:

- Weed Ecology, Evolution & Population Dynamics
- Integrated Weed Management Systems
- Herbicide Discovery, Chemistry & Trait Technologies
- Herbicide Resistance Biology & Management
- Application Technology, Product Performance & Efficacy
- Precision Weed Management & Digital Agriculture
- Invasive Plant Science & Management
- Specialty Crops & Horticulture Weed Management
- Weed Science Education, Extension & Policy
- Emerging Technologies & Future Weed Management

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Looking for a Way
to Serve?
Check out page 3.

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The new framework reflects several important changes occurring across weed science. Herbicide discovery, chemistry, formulations, metabolites, and herbicide-tolerant traits are brought together in a section focused on product and trait innovation. Herbicide resistance receives a dedicated section encompassing resistance evolution, mechanisms, diagnostics, stewardship, and related management work. Weed ecology now explicitly includes evolution, population dynamics, climate effects, seedbanks, fitness, and genomics. The structure also gives greater visibility to integrated management and rapidly advancing technologies. Integrated Weed Management Systems will encompass cultural practices, cover crops, crop competition, and regenerative production systems. Precision Weed Management & Digital Agriculture will provide a home for robotics, artificial intelligence, machine vision, sensors, autonomous application, and decision-support systems. Application Technology, Product Performance & Efficacy will remain focused on spray technology, adjuvants, tank mixtures, volatility, drift, and also include herbicide efficacy optimization.

Other sections consolidate work that previously crossed several program areas. Invasive Plant Science & Management will encompass invasive species biology and management in aquatic, rangeland, rights-of-way, and other natural areas and align with the name of one of our Journals. Specialty Crops & Horticulture Weed Management will bring together vegetables, fruits, orchards, turf, and ornamentals. Weed Science Education, Extension & Policy will include adoption, communication, economics, workforce development, training, regulation, and science policy.

Finally, Emerging Technologies & Future Weed Management provides a flexible venue for bioherbicides, RNA-based technologies, natural products, electrical and laser weed control, and other concepts that may not yet fit comfortably within established categories.

We all recognize that program sections influence which scientists encounter one another's work, how emerging research areas gain visibility, and where new collaborations begin. The revised framework is intended to reduce unnecessary overlap, create stronger and more cohesive sessions, and align our sections to our active committees.

Presenters should review the new section scopes carefully when submitting abstracts. Section chairs and the Program Committee will continue to help place papers and posters where they will reach the most appropriate audience.

The new structure will be implemented for the 2027 WSSA Annual Meeting in Denver.

WSSA Takes Its Priorities to Washington

WSSA also continued to strengthen its national science-policy engagement through its recent Washington, D.C., fly-in, conducted in collaboration with the National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research. National and regional weed science society leaders met with congressional offices and senior representatives of the USDA, the Agricultural Research Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The delegation's objective was straightforward: ensure that federal decision-makers understand the importance of weed science to agricultural pro-

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WSSA FUTURE MEETING SITES AND DATES

February 8–11, 2027
WSSA Annual Meeting
Denver, Colorado
Dawn Refsell, Program Chair
www.wssa.net

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ACCESSED AT:
www.wssa.net**

THINK NEWSLETTER
Deadline for October issue
September 1, 2026

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE

We have several open board positions that will need filling in the upcoming election period (Fall 2026). Selection of Vice-President is an annual occurrence. In addition in 2026, we will be electing a new Secretary and Treasurer. If you are interested in any of these positions, please contact me as soon as possible at hsandler@umass.edu. The expectation is that the holders of these positions will attend (in-person) the summer and annual Board meetings. More details on the positions can be found in our MOPs ([Manual Of Operating Procedures - Weed Science Society of America](#)).

Vice-President: Being elected as Vice-President is a 4-year commitment as you will rotate through the Executive Officer roles of President-Elect, President, and Past-President. The Vice-President is charged to survey the membership on society-relevant issues. They review committee reports and assess the status of current committees.

Secretary: The position of Secretary is held for a 3-year term. The primary duty is to record and prepare the minutes of all Board meetings and to record any votes taken by the Board.

Treasurer: The term of the Treasurer is 3 years. The Treasurer is Chair of the Finance Committee and works with the Executive Secretary and the Finance Committee to prepare budgets and reports for the Society. At the completion of their term, they will serve as a member of the Finance Committee for three years.

Please reach out if you wish to be considered for one of these service positions. It's a great opportunity to

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED from pg 2

ductivity, natural-resource protection, technological innovation, and a safe and reliable food supply.

Discussions emphasized WSSA's four core policy priorities: sustaining research and Extension capacity, advancing integrated weed management, protecting crop productivity and natural resources, and developing a capable weed science workforce. The meetings occurred as Congress continued work related to the Farm Bill and USDA and ARS considered significant organizational and workforce changes.

Several discussions were particularly encouraging. Congressional offices expressed continued support for agricultural capacity funds and the IR-4 Project. Capacity funds are essential to land-grant research, education, and Extension, while IR-4 enables growers, researchers, and industry to generate the data required to register pest-management products for specialty crops.

USDA-ARS leaders also emphasized a renewed focus on hiring. That message aligns closely with WSSA's concern about the loss of federal weed science expertise and the need to rebuild scientific capacity within the agency. Meetings with EPA provided additional insight into efforts to address the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act backlog and the institutional constraints

affecting timely registration decisions.

The fly-in also demonstrated the importance of sustained engagement. Congressional staff members who had participated in previous meetings remembered WSSA and its policy priorities. Effective science advocacy rarely results from a single visit. It depends on consistent messages, credible scientific information, and relationships developed over time.

Equally important, the visit strengthened coordination among WSSA and the regional weed science societies. A unified national and regional presence reinforces the message that weed management challenges cross geographic, institutional, and commodity boundaries.

The new annual meeting structure and the Washington fly-in may appear to be separate activities, but they are closely connected. One improves how WSSA organizes and communicates science within the profession. The other improves how we communicate its value to policy-makers and the public. Both are essential to maintaining a scientifically relevant, professionally valuable, and nationally influential Weed Science Society of America.

Ian Burke
WSSA President

find out more about the inner workings of WSSA and to work with your colleagues to keep our society strong and vital.

Hilary Sandler
Past-President

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WASHINGTON REPORT

by Lee Van Wychen, Director of Science Policy

MEET THE 2026–2027 SCIENCE POLICY FELLOWS



Sally Reed is a second-year Ph.D. student in Plant, Soil, and Environmental Sciences with a concentration in Weed Science at the University of Tennessee under the advisement of Dr. Larry Steckel. Her dissertation research focuses on understanding and overcoming Group 27 herbicide resistance in Palmer amaranth.

Sally earned her B.S. in Crop Sciences from the University of Illinois. Beginning in high school, she spent her summers working for Monsanto and later Bayer, where she gained experience across multiple facets of row crop agriculture, from field research and agronomy to precision agriculture and supply chain operations. These experiences cultivated her interest in weed science and the challenges facing modern crop production. She then earned her M.S. in Plant Sciences from the University of Tennessee, where her thesis, *"Optimizing Corn Production in Tennessee: Enhancing Yield Potential and Nitrogen Use Efficiency,"* provided a systems-level perspective on crop production before she pursued her Ph.D. in Weed Science.

Through her work, Sally aims to develop practical strategies to help producers address herbicide resistance and preserve the long-term effectiveness of herbicides. Her passion lies in bridging the gap between research, policy, and practice to support informed decision-making in agriculture. Sally is excited to serve as a Science Policy Fellow and looks forward to learning from and contributing to discussions surrounding agricultural and pesticide policy and its role in supporting the production of food, fiber, and fuel. She extends her gratitude to the WSSA and the Science Policy Commit-

tee for their continued support of student engagement in science policy.



Jacob Felsman is a third-year Ph.D. student at Michigan State University under the supervision of Dr. Christy Sprague. Jacob's dissertation focuses on the diversification of integrated weed management in Michigan's dry edible bean production. He received his B.S. in Crop Sciences from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. While completing internships in the crop protection sector, he grew an interest in weed science. Upon completion of his B.S., he went on to pursue his M.S. in Agronomy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison under the direction of Dr. Rodrigo Werle. Jacob's goals through his research are to help crop producers diversify their weed management practices to be more resilient agronomically and environmentally, and to maximize profitability. Through this opportunity, Jacob is looking forward to learning more about the intersection of public policy and the scientific/agricultural sectors. Jacob would like to extend his gratitude to his advisors and mentors, past and present, for their guidance. He also thanks the WSSA for providing experiences like the Science Policy Fellowship that help students grow both personally and professionally.

CROPLIFE AMERICA & RISE REGULATORY CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

The annual CropLife America and RISE Regulatory Conference took place in Arlington, Virginia, from May 13–15, 2026, bringing together stakeholders from industry, academia, government, and regulatory agencies to discuss emerging issues in pesticide policy and regulation. Topics ranged

from MAHA initiatives and Endangered Species Act (ESA) implementation to digital labeling, artificial intelligence, fluorinated pesticides, and updates from the EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs.

Throughout the conference, a recurring theme was the importance of collaboration. As agriculture faces increasingly complex scientific and regulatory challenges, discussions emphasized the need for industry, academia, growers, regulators, and government agencies to work together to develop practical solutions. There was also a strong sense that science and regulation should not be viewed as barriers to innovation, but rather as important tools for shaping the future of agriculture.

Many sessions focused on the challenges and opportunities associated with bringing innovative technologies to agriculture while navigating an increasingly complex regulatory landscape. Discussions emphasized the importance of finding solutions that are rooted in sound science while remaining practical and workable for growers. Updates from EPA leadership and the Office of Pesticide Programs reflected ongoing efforts to modernize regulatory processes, including improvements to submission systems and the exploration of digital labels.

The conference also featured sessions on fluorinated pesticides and PFAS, highlighting the intersection of science, regulation, and public perception. Discussions emphasized the complexity of these topics, including differing definitions, evolving regulatory approaches, and the challenges of communicating nuanced scientific information to a broad audience. As interest in these chemistries continues to grow, effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders will remain essential.

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A key takeaway from the conference was that while the agricultural industry has made tremendous advances in science and innovation, it has not always communicated those advances effectively to consumers and other stakeholders. As a result, scientists, regulators, growers, and industry leaders have an important opportunity to engage more proactively and ensure that discussions surrounding agriculture are grounded in clear, accessible, and evidence-based information.

Overall, the conference reinforced that the future of agriculture will depend not only on innovation, but also on collaboration and communication. Addressing the challenges associated with producing food, fiber, and fuel will require continued engagement across disciplines and a shared commitment to science-informed decision making.

PRESIDENTS FLY-IN TO DC: APRIL 20–24, 2026

We had 10 weed science society presidents and special representatives fly into Washington for a record number of meetings both on and off Capitol Hill, including 50 congressional visits. During some time slots we had four meetings at once but with 10 of us, we could divide and conquer.

Our main objectives for the week included:

1. Support the USDA NIFA IR-4 Project at \$16 million in FY 2027

- The IR-4 Project has been flat-funded at \$15 million since FY 2023, despite rapidly growing demand.
- The IR-4 Project, established by USDA in 1963, generates the residue, efficacy, and crop safety data required to register pest management tools for specialty crops. These crops contribute approximately \$9 billion annually to U.S. GDP and support over 110,000 jobs, representing an estimated 600:1 return on federal investment.
- Demand for IR-4 research far exceeds available resources. Each year, the program receives roughly 200 re-

search requests, but current funding allows support for only about 40. Modest growth to \$16 million would help close this gap and ensure continued access to safe, effective pest management tools for specialty crop growers.

2. Support the USDA NIFA Crop Protection and Pest Management (CPPM) Program at \$22 million in FY 2027

- The President's FY 2027 Budget Request eliminates the CPPM program. CPPM has been flat-funded at \$21 million since FY 2023.
- CPPM addresses real-world weed, insect, and disease challenges through applied, science-based solutions grounded in Integrated Pest Management (IPM). The program supports:
 - Regional and state Extension IPM specialists, and
 - A competitive grants program that delivers practical, field-ready solutions.
- Eliminating CPPM would significantly weaken the nation's IPM infrastructure, reduce grower access to timely pest management guidance, and undermine progress on resistance management and sustainable crop protection.

3. Support Section 10205 – Uniformity of Pesticide Labeling in the House Farm Bill (H.R. 7567)

- Under the Federal Insecticide, Fun-

gicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conducts a rigorous, science-based review to ensure pesticides meet federal standards for human health and environmental safety before registration.

- FIFRA Section 24 allows states to regulate pesticide use within their borders, but Section 24(b) preserves national uniformity by prohibiting states from imposing labeling or packaging requirements that differ from the EPA-approved label.
- Section 10205 reaffirms this longstanding principle of label uniformity, ensuring that pesticide labels remain:
 - Science-based
 - Nationally consistent
 - Clear and enforceable for growers, applicators, and regulators
- 4. The Weed Science Societies Support the Following EPA Regulatory Priorities**
- A clean, bipartisan PRIA 6 reauthorization
 - Focused on regulatory performance, predictability, and implementation efficiency, without non-germane policy amendments.
- Adequate funding for EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP)
 - Sufficient resources are needed for staffing, technology upgrades, and process improvements to

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Left to right: John Byrd–WSSA EPA Liaison, Shawn Askew–SWSS President, Ian Burke–WSSA President, Katelyn Venner–NEWSS President, Dawn Refsell–WSSA President-Elect, Lee Van Wychen–Executive Director of Science Policy, Scott Hutchins–USDA REE Under Secretary, Byron Sleugh–WSWS President-Elect, Brett Miller–NCWSS President, Todd Baughman–WSSA NIFA Fellow, Mark Bernards–NCWSS Past President, Steven Mirsky–USDA Director of Digital Agriculture.

WASHINGTON REPORT CONTINUED from pg 5

meet statutory deadlines for both PRIA and non-PRIA actions. CropLife America and the PRIA Coalition have submitted FY 2027 appropriations requests supporting \$166 million for OPP.

- Continued refinement of EPA regulatory processes
 - To ensure timely completion of regulatory actions and elimination of the existing registration and review backlog.

Press release on the week's activities: [WSSA Promotes its Core Priorities in Washington, D.C.](#)

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Left to right: Mark Bernards-NCWSS Past President, John Byrd-WSSA EPA Liaison, Shawn Askew-SWSS President, Lee Van Wyche-Executive Director of Science Policy, Byron Sleugh-WSWS President-Elect, Senator Joni Ernst-Iowa, Dawn Refsell-WSSA President-Elect, Brett Miller-NCWSS President, Katelyn Venner-NEWSS President, Ian Burke-WSSA President, Todd Baughman-WSSA NIFA Fellow.



Left to right, front row: John Byrd-WSSA EPA Liaison (BTW, John's wooden bow ties made of rare tree species were a hit all week), Todd Baughman-WSSA NIFA Fellow, Lee Van Wyche-Executive Director of Science Policy, Mark Bernards-NCWSS Past President, Byron Sleugh-WSWS President-elect. Back row: Dawn Refsell-WSSA President-Elect, Brett Miller-NCWSS President, Shawn Askew-SWSS President, Ian Burke-WSSA President, Katelyn Venner-NEWSS President.



Left to right: Katelyn Venner-NEWSS President, Todd Baughman-WSSA NIFA Fellow, Shawn Askew-SWSS President, Brett Miller-NCWSS President, Byron Sleugh-WSWS President-Elect, John Byrd-WSSA EPA Liaison, Mark Bernards-NCWSS Past President, Dawn Refsell-WSSA President-Elect, Ian Burke-WSSA President. A serious, but fun loving group ready for the next batch of Congressional visits. Note the tote bags of weed bingo with Bernards and Askew. Always a popular hit on Capitol Hill.



Doing the Capitol Hill March, Left to right: Shawn Askew-SWSS President, Brett Miller-NCWSS President, Dawn Refsell-WSSA President-Elect, Byron Sleugh-WSWS President-Elect and Mark Bernards-NCWSS Past President. Note: The Jefferson Library of Congress building is in the background.



A busy meeting at the EPA. Left to right: Ian Burke-WSSA President, Mark Bernards-NCWSS Past President, Byron Sleugh-WSWS President-Elect; Katelyn Venner-NEWSS President; Rebecca Haynie-CropLife America Director of Science Policy; Shawn Askew-SWSS President; Dawn Refsell-WSSA President-Elect; Bill Chism-WSSA Director of Regulatory Policy; Venus Welch-White-Director of Government Relations for CropLife America; Kyle Kunkler-EPA Deputy Administrator for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention; Todd Baughman-WSSA NIFA Fellow; Mark Bernards-NCWSS President; and John Byrd-WSSA EPA Liaison. Missing from photo were Ed Messina-EPA's Director of the Office of Pesticide Programs and Stanley Culpepper-WSSA's Chair of the Science Policy Committee.



Having a little fun at a Washington Nationals game on a Monday night before we got down to business. Thanks to Dawn for organizing that. Ian's Atlanta Braves triumphed. Left to right: Lee Van Wyche, Executive Director of Science Policy; Todd Baughman, WSSA-NIFA Fellow; John Byrd, WSSA EPA Liaison; and Screech, the 6'2" bald eagle and official mascot of the Washington Nationals.

HHS AND EPA TO PROVIDE NEW MONEY FOR INNOVATIVE WEED MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGIES

On February 27, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), EPA, and USDA announced funding for plans to increase innovative weed management and regenerative agriculture techniques.

EPA will provide \$30 million for a “Grand prize challenge” for cost-effective alternatives to pre-harvest desiccation use of pesticides, which is a potential contributor to human exposure. This challenge will lead to reduced usage of pesticides while providing new innovative tools for farmers to use. Read more [HERE](#).

Under the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) will provide \$100 million “to identify new and innovative and cost-effective technologies that reduce reliance on chemical crop protection tools in order to improve human health, including the health of farmers, such as *electrothermal and electrical weeding technologies, robotic weeding systems, precision mechanical weed control, thermal weed control, biological and non-toxic herbicides, mulching systems, and integrated systems.*”

Stanley Culpepper and I have had a couple meetings with ARPA-H in past two days and they are on a tight timeline (2 weeks) to generate new technology in the categories mentioned above. They would like a page summary of these ideas and are looking for future deliverables, not policy proposals. This could be a great opportunity for weed science to advance new and upcoming technologies. If you are interested in contributing. Please let Stanley or I know ASAP.

APMS FLY-IN TO WASHINGTON, DC DURING JUNE 2–4, 2026

Time at the Pentagon with the Army Corps of Engineers. Only three got to attend the meeting, but Troy, Rob and Gray represented APMS proudly. Left

to Right: Gray Turnage–Mississippi State University; Troy Goldsby–Aqua Services, A Jones Lake Management Partner; and Rob Richardson–North Carolina State University (below).



During June 2–4, the Aquatic Plant Management Society (APMS) held its fly-in into Washington, DC. APMS leadership included Mark Heilman with SePRO, Troy Goldsby–Aqua Services, A Jones Lake Management Partner; Gray Turnage with Mississippi State University; and Rob Richardson with North Carolina State University. They had meetings with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and members of Congress.

Getting ready for a meeting with the head of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Brian Nesvik. Left to right: Mark Heilman–SePRO, Gray Turnage–Mississippi State University, and Troy Goldsby–Aqua Services, A Jones Lake Management Partner.



Troy, Rob and Gray met at the Pentagon with senior leadership and key administrators within the U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers to discuss the continued importance of the Aquatic Plant Control (APC) Research Program.



While aquatic plants may not immediately come to mind when considering national infrastructure priorities, invasive aquatic vegetation can have significant impacts on navigation, water supply, hydropower generation, flood control, recreation, fisheries, and ecosystem health throughout the U.S.

Authorized under Section 104 of the River and Harbor Act of 1958, the APC program remains the nation’s only federally authorized research and development program dedicated specifically to invasive aquatic plant management. For nearly seven decades, the program has provided the scientific foundation for developing, evaluating, and implementing effective management strategies for some of the country’s most problematic aquatic invasive species.

They also met with Brian Nesvik, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to discuss support for the agency’s Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Rapid Response Fund and opportunities to improve collaboration on consultations related to invasive aquatic plant management within critical habitat areas.

The AIS Rapid Response Fund was established as a \$4 million pilot program through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and has already sup-

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ported successful responses to multiple newly discovered aquatic invasive plant populations.

We also had a half dozen meetings on Capitol Hill or virtually with key staff from the House and Senate discussing appropriations and Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) reauthorization issues.

Among the issues discussed was support for key EPA regulatory activities and programs, including:

- Reauthorization of a clean, bipartisan Pesticide Registration Improvement Act (PRIA 6) focused on maintaining regulatory performance, predictability, and implementation efficiency.
- Sufficient funding for the EPA Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) to hire staff and implement technology and process improvements necessary to meet statutory deadlines for both PRIA and non-PRIA actions. Crop-Life America and the broader PRIA Coalition have requested \$166 million in FY27 appropriations to support these efforts.

USDA ANNOUNCES THE CREATION OF THE NATIONAL PROVING GROUNDS NETWORK

On April 7, USDA's Research, Education, and Economics Under Secretary Dr. Scott Hutchins announced the launch of the USDA National Proving Grounds Network for AgTech (NPG-Ag), a nationwide initiative designed to rigorously evaluate agricultural technologies under real-world U.S. farming and ranching conditions.

The initiative will be spearheaded by USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS), working in coordination with other USDA research agencies. Dr. Steven Mirsky will serve as the Director of Digital Agriculture, a position that reports directly to the ARS Administrator Joon Park. Grand Farm, a North Dakota-headquartered AgTech ecosystem and innovation testbed, will serve as the USDA's National Program Manager, alongside land-grant universities across the country that will serve as primary research and testing partners.

As chairman of the Senate Agricul-

ture Appropriations Committee, Sen. Hoeven (R-ND) has secured \$11 million for the cooperative agreement to date, which helped secure Grand Farm's role as USDA's National Program Manager. This includes \$2 million in additional funding that Hoeven provided in FY 2026 to create an ARS work site at Grand Farm, which USDA is utilizing to establish the Program Management Office for the NPG-Ag. [Read more here.](#)

WEED SCIENCE SOCIETIES SUPPORT LETTER ON RESTRUCTURING OF USDA REE MISSION AREA

The six national and regional weed science societies joined 50 other stakeholder organizations in a letter to the House and Senate Agriculture Committees raising concerns about recent changes within USDA's (USDA) Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission area.

The letter warns that significant staffing reductions across REE agencies—including the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Economic Research Service (ERS), and National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)—combined with proposed laboratory closures and reorganization efforts, risk undermining the nation's agricultural research capacity. In addition, the signatories point to delays in distributing congressionally appropriated research funds and inconsistent agency directives as factors disrupting ongoing research projects, slowing grant processing, and affecting university-based agricultural science programs.

The coalition urges Congress to conduct oversight hearings, require detailed accounting of workforce and funding disruptions, and ensure transparent implementation of any restructuring within USDA's REE mission area. [The letter can be found here.](#)

USDA FINALIZES NEPA RULE

On April 7, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins announced the USDA has finalized a rule modernizing the National Environmental Policy Act

(NEPA) regulations. This final rule adopts the changes introduced in the interim final rule published on July 3, 2025, which consolidated seven agency-specific NEPA regulations into a single, department-wide framework, reducing the overall volume of regulations by 66%.

NEPA requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects and any related social and economic effects of their proposed actions prior to making decisions. These actions can include permit applications, federal land management actions and construction of highways and other public facilities.

Since last July, agencies at USDA have shown they can reduce environmental review timelines by up to 80%. Secretary Rollins says these faster, more efficient reviews are saving the department millions in taxpayer dollars. The quicker reviews mean the loans, critical infrastructure and forest health projects that rural communities, farmers, and ranchers depend on can move forward sooner.

HOUSE INTERIOR AND ENVIRONMENT APPROPRIATIONS BILL APPROVED

The House Appropriations Committee recently approved the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, which would reduce funding for the EPA by roughly 20%, including a 29% cut to its Science and Technology account. However, on the bright side, there is a \$3 million increase for EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP), which is an area we focused on for our Capitol Hill visits. Several Department of the Interior agencies would also receive modest reductions, including the U.S. Geological Survey (-3.7%), National Park Service (-1%), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (-5%), and Bureau of Land Management (-4.4%). The measure advanced on a 35-27 vote.

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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT
November 23–26, 2026	Canadian Weed Science Society (CWSS-SCM) Annual Meeting	Saskatoon, Saskatchewan	www.weedscience.ca
December 7–10, 2026	North Central Weed Science Society (NCWSS) and Northeastern Weed Science Society (NEWSS) Joint Annual Meeting	Columbus, Ohio	www.ncwss.org and www.newss.org
January 25–28, 2027	Southern Weed Science Society (SWSS) Annual Meeting	Corpus Christi, Texas	www.swss.ws
February 8–11, 2027	Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) Annual Meeting	Denver, Colorado	www.wssa.net
March 8–11, 2027	Western Society of Weed Science (WSWS) Annual Meeting	Irvine, California	www.wsweedscience.org
July 12, 2027	Aquatic Plant Management Society (APMS) Annual Meeting	Austin, Texas	www.apms.org

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

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