

SCIENCE POLICY REPORT

September 2006

Beginning, Mid-Career, and Retired Weed Scientists: Apply for AAAS Fellowship

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) solicits candidates from a broad array of disciplinary backgrounds to apply for a year-long Science and Technology Policy Fellowship in Washington DC. Fellows come from a range of sectors, including academia, industry, and non-profits, representing a spectrum of career stages, from recent PhD graduates to faculty on sabbatical, to retired scientists and engineers. The age span in the past five classes of Fellows has been from the late twenties to early seventies. The AAAS also serves as the “umbrella” organization for other scientific societies that sponsor a Fellow, such as the Agronomy, Crop and Soil Science Societies.

The Fellowship is a great opportunity to work closely with federal decision-makers in agencies such as the USDA, EPA and the National Science Foundation among others. Fellows receive a stipend of up to \$87,000 for the year, which is based on years of professional experience. Relocation expenses of up to \$3500 are also provided. The deadline for applications for the 2007-2008 Fellowship class is December 20, 2006. For more information, please visit: <http://fellowships.aaas.org>

Applying for Federal Job Related to Weed Science

In June, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) rejected the proposal for a federal job series classification of weed science. In fact, OPM rejected every one of the job series classifications requested by USDA and combined or eliminated some other job series. There are several factors for this, but if you look at the newest federal job series created, they are in the technology sector like “Information Technology Specialist”. OPM has been working to “simplify” jobs to cater to the “re-toolable generalist” approach. This is OPM’s final decision in a project that began in 1997 to develop a Job Family Position Classification Standard (JFS) for professional work in the Biological Sciences Group, 0400. The new GS-400 classification standard can be viewed at: <http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/gso400p.pdf>. This 99 page document describes OPM’s decisions in detail.

Not to panic weed scientists. The upside of this is anyone graduating with a degree related to weed science or invasive plant management will qualify for just about any job listed under the “GS-401: General Natural Resources and Biological Sciences” job series. In addition, many weed science graduates qualify for other GS-400 series jobs such as agronomy, horticulture, botany, plant physiology, forestry, rangeland, and ecology positions. To search all Federal jobs, please visit USA jobs at: <http://www.usajobs.gov>

I will continue to work with the Federal Agencies that hire and employ individuals required to have more specialized training in weed science and invasive plant management in order to help

them include more specific language that defines the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary in our discipline.

WSSA Submits Comments on APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine Rule

In June, I worked with the WSSA's Federal Noxious and Invasive Weeds Committee (E4) to gather comments on how the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) can improve their Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Regulations. Thanks to Jen Vollmer for her extensive remarks. Under the Plant Protection Act, states cannot enact more stringent regulations governing a pest or weed than the rules that APHIS has imposed. However, when APHIS is silent, states may act. The Plant Protection Act provides that States may obtain an exemption from the Secretary of Agriculture if that State faces a particularly severe threat - but no State has yet been granted such an exemption.

The overall goal of this rule was to better define the process that States would pursue to petition APHIS. The WSSA urged APHIS to delete proposed language requiring that subdivisions of State act only through the State, and instead implement the Plant Protection Act's broader exemption that extends to allow political subdivisions to make requests to APHIS directly. We also urged APHIS to add language to articulate the agency's process in circumstances where insufficient evidence may be present, and to provide additional guidance regarding the quantity and quality of data required by APHIS to support a Special Needs Request.

USDA-ARS Software Available for Site-Specific Weed Management

Scientists in the USDA-ARS Water Management Research Unit at Fort Collins, CO have developed a software program to assist farmers in determining the best site-specific weed management (SSWM) strategy for their fields. The software, called "WeedSite" was co-developed by WSSA member Lori Wiles and can be downloaded for free at:
<http://arsagsoftware.ars.usda.gov>

Growers draw weed maps of their fields based on a simple low-cost method that uses a digital camera and a GPS unit. The software identifies weeds within the photographs, then constructs a weed map with links to the photos. WeedSite then uses that information to calculate the effects of various SSWM practices.

EPA Publishes New Pesticide Container and Containment Rule

In August, the EPA published its final rule establishing standards for pesticide containers and containment. The rule, which will be implemented over the next 3 to 5 years, establishes standards for refillable and non-refillable containers, including design specifications for rinsing, durability, and standardized closures. Triple rinsing or pressure rinsing to the 99.99 percent removal standard was considered an important adoption in the final regulations. The rule also requires pesticide labels to provide instructions on how to properly clean containers before disposal or recycling.

The regulations affect registrants, distributors, dealers, commercial applicators, and custom blenders, but do not extend to containment at individual farms. The rule is intended to promote the safe refill and reuse of refillable containers and to ensure that pesticides will be stored and transferred under conditions that prevent spills and releases of pesticides into the environment. Additional information about the rule and who is affected can be found at:
<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/regulating/containers.htm>

USDA Awards \$4.1 Million in Grants to Manage Invasive Species Affecting Grazing Lands

On July 28, USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Mark Rey awarded \$4.1 million to fund projects to manage and control invasive plants, animals or insects that adversely affect private and tribal grazing lands. Twenty-seven projects in 20 states received grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$300,000. This is the first year for this grant program.

All of the 27 projects involved some aspect of invasive weed management. Grant awardees ranged from county weed control and management districts to non-profit groups, universities, and state departments of agriculture. The funds are administered through the NRCS Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI). To view the full listing of grants and to get more information about the GLCI, please visit: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/glci>

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