

WASHINGTON REPORT

September 27, 2019

Lee Van Wychen

2019 Science Policy Fellows: John Schramski and Haleigh Summers



The Science Policy Fellow (SPF) is a new position supported by WSSA that is designed to assist me as Executive Director of Science Policy while providing the SPF with a short-term, robust experience in dealing with a broad array of weed science policy issues. The SPF's receive a stipend to help them cover their time and travel to Washington DC and the WSSA annual meeting. This year's SPF's are John Schramski and Haleigh Summers.

John is a second year master's student at Michigan State University working with Dr. Christy Sprague. He worked as a crop consultant after receiving a bachelor's degree in Crop and Soil Science from Michigan State in 2013. While working with growers, he became interested in weed science and managing herbicide-resistant weeds. His current research is focused on integrating fall-seeded cereal cover crops with herbicide programs to manage glyphosate-resistant horseweed in no-till soybean and understanding the different growth habits of fall and spring emerged horseweed. John is interested in how policy can shape the development of new weed management strategies to help growers.

Haleigh is a second-year master's student at Penn State with Dr. Heather Karsten. Her thesis projects include analyzing long-term data on reducing herbicides in a no-till dairy cropping system, looking at cultural and mechanical management options for glyphosate-resistant pigweed species, and studying early and late-season control of glyphosate-resistant horseweed (marestail). She received her bachelor's in Agronomy and Seed Science at Iowa State University. She is passionate about helping farmers become more environmentally friendly while still being profitable and believes policy will play a key role in this in the future.

America Grows Act Would Boost Federal Ag Research Funding

The National and Regional Weed Science Societies [have supported](#) legislation introduced by Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) that would authorize a 5% inflation-adjusted annual increase for the next 5 years for

agricultural research at USDA-ARS, NIFA, ERS, and NASS. The America Grows Act (S. 2458) is modeled after the 21st Century Cures Act passed in 2016, which spurred additional funding for NIH. The America Grows Act would provide critical investments in research to address production, nutrition, food security, and other major challenges across the U.S. food and agricultural sector.

Congress and White House Agree on 2-Yr Budget Deal; Fund Government Through Nov. 21.

In August, Congressional and White House leadership reached a budget deal that will lift budget caps that were set to take effect this fall and raise the debt ceiling until July 2021. It provides nearly equal increases for defense and domestic programs, raising federal spending by a total of \$320 billion. Without a budget deal, defense spending would have been cut by \$71 billion and nondefense spending – which includes most research funding programs – would have been cut by \$55 billion in FY 2020 alone.

Despite not knowing what the FY 2020 budget allocation, the House passed 10 of 12 of their FY 2020 spending bills this summer while the Senate decided to wait. Based on the budget agreement numbers and committee allocations, the House will have to trim about \$895 million from its \$24.3 billion agricultural appropriations bill it passed in June.

The Senate has been busy since returning from the August recess and has passed 10 out of 12 bills out of committee, but has not yet passed any bills through the full Senate. With FY 2020 spending beginning on Oct. 1, Congress sent a temporary government-wide funding bill to the President on Sep. 26. The bill extends funding at FY 2019 levels through Nov. 21 and will buy lawmakers additional time to work out spending differences between the House and Senate appropriations bills.

Weed Science Societies Comment on Glyphosate Proposed Interim Registration Review Decision

The National and Regional Weed Science Societies submitted comments on EPA's proposal to mitigate potential risks with glyphosate use while noting its importance in the management of invasive and noxious weeds in agricultural and non-agricultural settings. Scientific literature has clearly shown that the benefits of glyphosate outweigh any potential ecological risks. Improvements to labels that are consistent across all glyphosate products will help to further mitigate these risks. Final comments: http://wssa.net/wp-content/uploads/Weed-Science-Societies-Comments-on-Glyphosate-PID_final.pdf

WSSA Position Statement on Glyphosate

In 2015, glyphosate was classified as a “probable carcinogen” by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). IARC has applied the same classification to red meat, hot beverages, and emissions from high-temperature frying, as well as to more than 70 other chemicals. This designation has caused widespread public concern about the safety of glyphosate while being the recent focus of multiple

lawsuits. WSSA has developed this document to inform the membership and general public of its position on this topic. <http://wssa.net/wp-content/uploads/WSSA-glyphosate-position-8-9-19-FINAL.docx>

EPA Seeks Comment on Process for Evaluating Pesticide Synergy for Ecological Risk Assessments

EPA has developed an interim process to review synergy data for mixtures of pesticide active ingredients and potentially incorporate that information into their ecological risk estimates. EPA generally evaluates pesticide ecological risks based on toxicity information from studies conducted with single active ingredients. This is based on best available evidence on pesticide interactions and the expectation that those interactions are rare. More recently, patent claims of synergy against target pests have raised questions and concerns about the adequacy of estimating risk of each individual active ingredient alone, especially for products mixed prior to application or products containing multiple active ingredients.

EPA is looking to determine whether synergy data supporting patents is useful for their ecological risk assessments and whether they should modify their interim process. The interim process and background documents are available at: <https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=EPA-HQ-OPP-2017-0433> Comments are due **October 24, 2019**.

IR-4 Will Move from Rutgers to NC State

On July 10, the IR-4 Project Management Committee (PMC) considered a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) drafted by North Carolina State University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (NC State). This MOA presented an opportunity for IR-4 Headquarters to relocate its operations from the long-term host institution, New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station/Rutgers University, to NC State. After significant discussion, the PMC unanimously agreed to advance the agreement to Rutgers legal counsel for concurrence.

The PMC based its decision on the 10-year commitment by NC State to host IR-4 Headquarters as well as the vision of the leadership of the NC State's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences on the many ways that IR-4 fits into the strategic direction of the college. While New Jersey Agricultural Experimental Station continues to value the IR-4 Project, Rutgers could not make a long-term commitment to continue as the host institution.

The relocation, once approved by Rutgers, will transition over the next two years, with scheduled completion by September 30, 2021. The long transition will allow IR-4 Headquarters to remain operational with minimal interruptions and lessen the impact of the move on current employees at IR-4 Headquarters. Rutgers administrators are committed to working closely with NC State to ensure a smooth transition.

The IR-4 Project provides safe and effective pest management solutions to specialty crop growers. It is funded through federal funds administered by USDA-NIFA, Agriculture Research Service and Foreign Agriculture Service with significant direct and in-kind funds from the land-grant university system, specialty crop commodity associations and the crop protection industry. Field research farms, analytical laboratories and coordination offices are located in over 20 states to facilitate national registrations of needed chemical and bio-based pesticides. Since 1963, IR-4's national headquarters has been hosted by Rutgers. Rutgers will continue to participate in IR-4 with activities at two of its research farms in New Jersey.

BLM Headquarters is Moving West

In a letter to U.S. senators on July 16, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) formally announced it will move about 325 staff in Washington, D.C. to 11 western states to join the rest of BLM's almost 10,000 employees. The reorganization, first considered under former Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, is aimed at putting more agency officials closer to the lands they manage out West, though critics have questioned moving tenured policy officials far from the nation's capital. Only BLM's Deputy Director of Policy and Programs along with 60 other BLM staff will remain in D.C. at the Department of Interior headquarters.

Grand Junction, CO will be the new headquarters for the BLM Director, Deputy Director and their 25 attendant staff. In addition, 58 positions will move to the Denver Federal Center in Lakewood, CO, where BLM's state office and national operations center will take on a larger role. There are already thousands of federal employees stationed at the Denver Federal Center — a massive 670-acre site that includes 90 buildings that house employees with 26 federal agencies, including BLM, the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey. It is the largest concentration of federal buildings and agencies outside Washington.

While Colorado is slated to get 85 positions, another 236 positions are proposed to be divided up among the following western state BLM jurisdictions: AK – 4, AZ – 39, CA – 20, ID – 18, MT – 3, NV – 49, NM – 39, OR – 5, UT – 44, and WY – 15.



2015 WOTUS Rule Repealed

On September 12, EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler and Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works R.D. James announced the repeal of the Obama administration's Clean Water Rule, better known as the Waters of the United States rule, or WOTUS. The 2015 rule has never fully taken effect because there have been multiple court challenges. The repeal formally restores the previous regulatory regime nationwide until the Trump administration releases its own rule to deal with the issue of conflicting Supreme Court rulings on WOTUS.

In December 2018, EPA and the Army Corp proposed a new definition that would clearly define where federal jurisdiction begins and ends in accordance with the Clean Water Act and Supreme Court precedent. After a public comment period this spring, the proposed new WOTUS definitions are expected to be finalized this winter.

Public Lands and Water Management Bill Becomes Law

This spring, the "John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019" became law (P.L. 116-9). It's the first major public lands and water management bill passed since 2009 and contains over 100 pieces of legislation that are laid out in nine titles. In Title VII, "Wildlife Habitat and Conservation", the new law amends the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act to protect federal "water, oceans, coasts, and wildlife **from invasive species**". The new law defines a number of terms, including "invasive species" and directs the head of each federal Agency (specifically Army Corp of Engineers, Agriculture and Interior) to plan and carry out activities on land directly managed by the Agency to protect water and wildlife by controlling and managing invasive species: (1) to inhibit or reduce the populations of invasive species; and (2) to effectuate restoration or reclamation efforts.

While the new law does not authorize any additional appropriations, it directs the Agency heads to allocate their existing invasive species funding in the following manner:

- **use not less than 75 percent for on-the-ground control and management of invasive species**, which may include: (1) the purchase of necessary products, equipment, or services to conduct that control and management; (2) the use of integrated pest management options, including options that use pesticides; (3) the use of biological control agents; (4) the use of revegetation or cultural restoration methods; (5) the use of monitoring and detection activities for invasive species, including equipment, detection dogs, and mechanical devices; (6) the use of appropriate methods to remove invasive species from a vehicle or vessel capable of conveyance; or (7) the use of other effective mechanical or manual control methods.
- **use not more than 15 percent for investigations, development activities, and outreach and public awareness efforts** to address invasive species control and management needs.

- **not more than 10 percent may be used for administrative costs** incurred to carry out those programs, including costs relating to oversight and management of the programs, recordkeeping, and implementation of a strategic plan.

Weed Scientists Needed at USDA-NIFA

Intensive hiring efforts are currently underway at USDA-NIFA to recruit highly qualified candidates for vacant positions that need to be filled at their new location in Kansas City. Please go their careers page for a condensed list of current and upcoming job announcements at: <https://nifa.usda.gov/career-opportunities>

Lee Van Wychen, Ph.D.
Executive Director of Science Policy
National and Regional Weed Science Societies
5720 Glenmullen Pl, Alexandria, VA 22303
Lee.VanWychen@wssa.net
Phone: 202-746-4686