

**For Immediate Release**

**Contact:**

Lee Van Wychen  
Science Policy Director  
National & Regional Weed  
Science Societies  
[Lee.VanWychen@wssa.net](mailto:Lee.VanWychen@wssa.net)  
202-746-4686

## **Budget Cuts Would Eliminate the Nation's Only Federal Research Program for Aquatic Weed Control**

- *Weed scientists protest the decision to 'zero out' funding*

**LAWRENCE, Kansas** – April 4, 2011 – Today the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA) announced it has joined nearly a dozen national and regional weed management associations in expressing strong support for continued funding of an Army Corps of Engineers program targeting aquatic weed control.

For more than 40 years, the Army Corps of Engineers has served as the lead federal agency protecting our nation's waterways and water supply from invasive weeds by developing and sharing new and improved management technologies. The agency's Aquatic Plant Control Research Program (APCRP) is the only federally authorized research initiative focused on effective, science-based strategies for managing invasive aquatic species. However, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has 'zeroed out' this critical program in its 2012 Civil Works budget.

In a letter to Jo Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), WSSA joined with scientific societies from across the nation to express "shock and disappointment" at the decision and asked that the APCRP be funded at the President's 2010 budget request of \$4 million.

"Elimination of aquatic plant control research will undoubtedly have an enormous negative impact on our water resources," said Michael Barrett, Ph.D., president of WSSA. "Invasive aquatic plants cost the nation an estimated \$250 million annually, with documented infestations in all 50 states. Those costs are expected to continue to rise as new, exotic plant pests reach our shores each year."

Invasive aquatic weeds contribute to flood damage, reduce fish and wildlife habitats, decrease property values, disrupt hydropower generation, impede the delivery of drinking and irrigation water, obstruct commercial and recreational navigation, and endanger native species.

The Army Corps' research program has developed innovative, integrated approaches for managing invasive aquatic plants, including biological, chemical and cultural controls. The organization has had a tremendous impact in protecting biodiversity and restoring aquatic ecosystems, while saving tens of millions of dollars annually. For example:

- Innovative research by the Army Corps has led to breakthroughs in the use of biocontrol agents to manage invasive aquatic plants such as hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*), melaleuca (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*), alligatorweed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*) and waterhyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*).
- Army Corps scientists have helped the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency evaluate new reduced-risk herbicides that are applied at very low rates. As a result, nearly 40 percent less herbicide is now needed to manage many of our most problematic aquatic weeds.

“As scientists with a clear understanding of aquatic ecosystems, we recognize that the benefits of the Army Corps' Aquatic Plant Control Research Program far outweigh the cost of maintaining this small but nationally significant program,” Barrett said. “Without it, we will lose valuable scientific expertise and the ability to pursue long-term solutions that provide consistent and environmentally sustainable results. Our waters will degrade and the economic and environmental toll from invasive aquatic plants will accelerate even further.”

Joining WSSA in its appeal were the Aquatic Plant Management Society, North Central Weed Science Society, Northeastern Weed Science Society, Southern Weed Science Society, Western Society of Weed Science, Florida Aquatic Plant Management Society, MidSouth Aquatic Plant Management Society, Midwest Aquatic Plant Management Society, Northeast Aquatic Plant Management Society, South Carolina Aquatic Plant Management Society and Western Aquatic Plant Management Society.

The full text of the letter to Assistant Secretary Darcy is available on the WSSA website: [www.wssa.net](http://www.wssa.net).

### **About the Weed Science Society of America**

The Weed Science Society of America, a nonprofit scientific society, was founded in 1956 to encourage and promote the development of knowledge concerning weeds and their impact on the environment. The Weed Science Society of America promotes research, education and extension outreach activities related to weeds, provides

science-based information to the public and policy makers, fosters awareness of weeds and their impact on managed and natural ecosystems, and promotes cooperation among weed science organizations across the nation and around the world. For more information, visit [www.wssa.net](http://www.wssa.net).