



Southern Weed Science Society

Note From the President:

It is a great honor to serve as your 2025 Southern Weed Science Society president and I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity. It is humbling when I look at the list of previous SWSS presidents and the legacy they established in weed science. My goal is to serve the society with the same level of leadership that has come before me and work to continue strengthening it for years to come. I attended my first SWSS meeting in Houston, TX in 1997 and the SWSS has always provided me with the opportunity for professional development throughout my career.

I just returned from a trip to Washington DC as part of the National Coalition for Food and Agriculture Research (NCFAR) fly-in. It was an exciting experience for me and the other weed science presidents as we made over 30 Congressional visits in three days advocating for agriculture covering a wide range of topics from the need for a new farm bill to funding for agriculture research. It struck me at the number of people there advocating for their causes and how few were in DC speaking up for agriculture. It is a critical time in agriculture and weed science and I encourage all of our members to speak up when you have the chance to ensure we have sound ag policy and adequate funding to bring new technologies to growers. The 2025 annual meeting in Charleston, SC was a success even though the snow delayed departures for some attendees. The Charleston Marriott staff did a great job handling many last-minute requests due to the winter storm. There were 290 attendees, and 223 presentations (113 oral and 110 posters) made at this year's meeting.

It takes a lot of people working behind the scenes to pull off a successful meeting. Just to call out a few groups, I would like to thank the SWSS board for your service and dedication to the society. Thanks also to Matt Cutulle and Mike Marshall for handling the local arrangements for the Charleston meeting, from arranging the Top Golf event on Sunday to loading poster boards on Thursday your efforts were greatly appreciated. Finally, I would like to thank the section chairs for their help with making sure the daily sessions and student contest ran smoothly.

Our membership is the reason for our continued success as a society, I encourage you to get more involved in SWSS if you are not already serving in some capacity. It is a rewarding experience that you won't regret. I hope you have a great summer and I look forward to seeing you in Nashville in 2026.

Eric Palmer
2025 SWSS President



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Are You on a SWSS Committee?

The Southern Weed Science Society is successful due to the many volunteers that help the organization run. Serving the organization is an excellent way to ensure its continued success and interact with fellow members.

To find the current SWSS Committee List for 2025 and for more information about each committee and its role within the organization, please click here:

<http://www.swss.ws/society-information/commitees/>.

If you're interested in volunteering for a committee, please contact the chair of the committee or send an email to communications@swss.ws.



@SouthWeedSciSoc



2025 Graduate Student Paper & Poster Contest

The 2025 SWSS student contest in Charleston, SC was a great contest. We had a total of 79 participants. This years contest consisted of 6 paper sections (3 MS and 3 PhD) and 4 poster sections (2 MS and 2 PhD). Below are the results of the 2025 SWSS annual meeting student contest.



Year	Poster Contest Participants				Oral Paper Contest Participants			Total Participants
	Under-grad	MS	PhD	Total	MS	PhD	Total	
2025	0	15	13	28	29	22	51	79
2024	1	23	22	46	26	24	50	96
2023	0	14	15	29	29	29	58	87
2022	3	30	13	46	25	24	49	95
2021	0	22	24	46	28	34	62	108
2020	0	13	9	22	29	26	55	77

Student contest award winners included:

Posters		
M.S. Section 1	1 st – Giulia Bortolon	Louisiana State University
	2 nd – James Malone	University of Arkansas
M.S. Section 2	1 st – Akashdeep Singh	Auburn University
	2 nd – Aman Jakhar	Virginia Tech
PhD Section 1	1 st – Bismark Anokye	Texas A&M University
	2 nd – Fatemah Esmaeilbeiki	Virginia Tech
PhD Section 2	1 st – Ryan Hamberg	Texas A&M University
	2 nd – Kayla Broster	Mississippi State University
Paper		
M.S. Section 1	1 st – Colton Fuller	University of Tennessee
	2 nd – Colden Bradshaw	North Carolina State University
M.S. Section 2	1 st – Michael Dodde	University of Arkansas
	2 nd – Samuel Kreinberg	University of Arkansas
M.S. Section 3	1 st – Wesley Herrman	University of Arkansas
	2 nd – Jackson Alsdorf	North Carolina State University
PhD Section 1	1 st – Matthew Woolard	Texas Tech University
	2 nd – Brock Dean	North Carolina State University
PhD Section 2	1 st – Navdeep Godara	Virginia Tech
	2 nd – Megan Singletary	Texas Tech University
PhD Section 3	1 st – Gustavo Camargo Silva	Texas A&M University
	2 nd – Cory Ketchum	University of Arkansas

Thanks to all that served as moderators, committee members, and judges to make this student contest a success!



**Southern Weed
Science Society**

SAVE THE DATE:
 SWSS Annual Meeting
 January 26-29, 2026
 Nashville, Tennessee

2024 SWSS Award Winners

Outstanding Young Weed Scientist (Academia) - Vijay Singh, Virginia Tech



Dr. Vijay Singh is an Assistant Professor and Extension Weed Specialist in the School of Plant and Environmental Sciences at Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center, Virginia Tech. He received his BS and MS from the CCS Haryana Agricultural University, India. Dr. Singh began his weed science career as a Research Scientist with International Rice Research Institute. Later, he moved to the US and obtained his PhD in weed science from the University of Arkansas and gained postdoctoral experience at Texas A&M University. Currently, he provides expertise on weed research and extension in row-crops (corn, soybean, cotton), small grains, and vegetables. He is also working on digital agriculture and data driven technologies under Virginia Tech's Smart Farming Initiative. Dr. Singh has authored/ co-authored 44 journal articles and book chapters, 38 extension publications/ newsletters, 1 book, and 109 abstracts in conference proceedings. He has delivered 125 presentations at professional meetings and conferences and has given keynotes and invited talks on several occasions. Dr. Singh organized or contributed to around 20 extension events annually, which were attended by more than 10,000 stakeholders in the past 5 years. As a PI/co-PI he secured \$9.5 million worth of grants, where his program received \$2.1 million in competitive funds. Dr. Singh graduated 2 students, currently advising 4 (2 PhDs and 2 MS), served on student committees, and mentored several undergraduate students. Dr. Singh's students have won numerous awards and scholarships, including positions in the weed contest, and society's outstanding student award. Along with Southern Weed Science Society (SWSS), Dr. Singh served on the executive committees of 2 more societies; Northeastern Weed Science Society (NEWSS) and Weed Science Society of America (WSSA). He judged students' oral and poster contests, and served as section chair at SWSS, NEWSS, WSSA, and American Society of Agronomy (ASA) annual meetings. Dr. Singh is serving as an associate editor of Agronomy Journal (ASA) and Frontiers in Agronomy, a reviewer for many other journals, and edited/reviewed more than 130 journal articles. Previously, he received awards recognizing his contribution to weed science including Outstanding Researcher Award 2024 (NEWSS), and Outstanding Reviewer Award 2024 (Weed Technology; WSSA). He hopes to continue to serve weed science societies in the future as well.

2024 Outstanding Educator Award - Nick Basinger, University of Georgia



Dr. Basinger is an Associate Professor of Weed Science at the University of Georgia in the Department of Crop and Soil Science. Dr. Basinger received his Masters and Ph.D. from North Carolina State University where he studied the impacts of weed interference on biomass accumulation of weed and crop species as well as the impacts on crop yield of several annual and perennial horticultural crops under the direction of Drs. Katie Jennings and David Monks. At the University of Georgia Dr. Basinger has 55% research, 40% teaching, and 5% service appointments in the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences. His work focuses on altering and manipulating agroecosystems to minimize the effects of weeds. He is devoted to Integrated Weed Management (IWM) as a means to manage weeds, minimize the potential for herbicide resistance, and improve the productivity of desirable crops in crop and forage systems.

Since his appointment to the University, he has been teaching undergraduate and graduate-level courses. He teaches across all three UGA campuses, through distance education with students on these campuses, and across the state of Georgia. He teaches Weed Science (CRSS 4340/6340-CRSS 4340L/6340L), Herbicide Technology (CRSS 6350), and Experiential Weed Science Contest Preparation (CRSS 6360). He has been the UGA weed team coach since 2019 and continues to work to encourage students to view weed science through an integrated

lens. His approach to teaching is one where students learn to think critically, and as a result, act thoughtfully. Providing students with hands-on applications of content discussed in class lectures allows them to see a more complete picture of the concept than any lecture can provide. In his own experience, these opportunities provide “teachable moments” that force students to troubleshoot issues and see the impacts of their actions.

In addition to teaching courses, he is currently the Director and Coordinator of the Masters of Plant Protection and Pest Management (MPPPM) program at UGA. This program is a terminal master's program where students focus on the plant protection disciplines in preparation for extension or industry job placements. He has been a member of SWSS since the beginning of his Masters degree in 2012, has served as the chair for the Outstanding Graduate Student Award for the WSSA and SWSS, and has served as a judge for student oral and poster contests since 2019. He looks forward to expanding his service to the SWSS as a Member at Large representative from academia.

Outstanding Graduate Student (M.S.) - Megan Singletary, Texas Tech University



Megan Singletary of Mission, TX, graduated from Texas A&M University in 2018 with a B.S. in Animal Science and a minor in Agronomy. Her interest in crop production and research grew substantially after participating in a summer internship with Wonderful Citrus in Edinburg, TX. After her bachelor's degree, Megan participated in a 6-month Co-Op with Corteva AgriScience as a sorghum breeding assistant in Weslaco, TX. She worked as the southern California and Baja California assistant strawberry breeder at Driscoll's in Oxnard, CA from 2018 to 2020. Her work with host-resistance to powdery mildew and two-spotted spider mite created an appreciation for the role of pest management, which led her to pursue her M.S. in Plant and Soil Science from Texas Tech University under the direction of Dr. Peter Dotray. Her thesis research focused on the evaluation of weed control and crop tolerance in AxantFlex cotton, a new quadruple-stack herbicide tolerant technology developed by BASF Corporation. Results from her thesis will assist producers on how best to adapt their weed management practices in light of a new cotton germplasm. As a Master of Science graduate student, Megan presented 13 abstracts/proceedings at scientific conferences and received 8 awards. She was a member of the 2022 SWSS contest first place team sprayer calibration and served on the SWSS graduate student organization board as Social Media Chair, Vice-President, and now President. Megan has authored one peer-reviewed journal publication from her thesis research and has an additional paper in review. She has presented or co-presented at 16 grower meetings. Megan is currently pursuing a PhD degree in Plant and Soil Science with an emphasis in Crop Protection at Texas Tech University.

Outstanding Graduate Student (PhD) - Mason Castner, University of Arkansas



Mason received a B.S. in Plant and Soil Sciences from Oklahoma State University in 2017. During his time at OSU, Mason gained valuable experience during his two summers as an intern for Syngenta and two summers with Farr Agriculture Consulting in Crawfordsville, AR. His time in Arkansas led him to continue his education at the University of Arkansas under the direction of Dr. Jason Norsworthy where he obtained his M.S. and Ph.D. in Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences with a concentration in Weed Science in 2020 and 2024, respectively. Mason's dissertation focused the novel herbicide tetflupyrolimet and specifically answering key questions for producers in the Midsouth prior to commercialization of the herbicide for use in rice. His research addressed weed spectrum and efficacy in both paddy and furrow-irrigated rice, rice tolerance, off-target movement, dissipation in soil and risk of carryover, resistance screenings, soil moisture, and a ¹⁴C component. (continued on page 6)

During his time at the University of Arkansas, Mason authored or co-authored 6 peer-reviewed papers in academic journals, 11 extension or technical reports, and 87 abstracts from scientific presentations at national and regional conferences. Mason was recognized as the Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences Outstanding M.S. Student, the Dale Bumpers Distinguished M.S. Scholar, Ron and Alice Talbert Endowed Weed Science Scholar, Gerald O. Mott Meritorious Graduate Student in Crop Science and was a Doctoral Academy Fellowship recipient. He also had the privilege of being selected for SWSS Endowment Enrichment scholarship in 2023.

Mason has received 18 oral and 5 poster contest awards from research presentations at the annual meetings of the Southern Weed Science Society, Weed Science Society of America, Arkansas Crop Protection Association, Beltwide Cotton Conference, and the Rice Technical Working Group. Mason was also actively involved in the Southern Weed Science Society, where he served as Vice President and President of the SWSS Graduate Student Organization from 2022-2024. He was a member of the first place University of Arkansas SWSS Weed Team in 2022 and 2023 and finished as the second and third place individual in these contests, respectively. Mason is forever grateful for the opportunity to participate and develop as a young weed scientist in the SWSS and would strongly encourage other students to become involved as they further their education.

SWSS Fellow Award - Dr. John Richburg



John Richburg is an Integrated Field Scientist for AL and GA with Corteva agriscience. He is a native of Grove Hill, Alabama where his first agriculture experiences were on the family's cattle farm. He received his B.S. from Auburn University in Agronomy and Soils in 1988 and a M.S. under Dr. Harold Walker at Auburn in Weed Science in 1991. He completed his Ph.D. in Weed Science under the direction of the late Dr. John Wilcut at the University of Georgia in 1994. John began his professional career with Dow AgroSciences in 1994 as a Weed Scientist at the company's Greenville, MS Field Station with emphasis on rice, soybeans and cotton. In 1999 he relocated to Dow AgroSciences's global headquarters in Indianapolis, IN as the lead biologist in Herbicide Discovery for rice herbicides. He held several other Discovery and Field R&D roles before relocating back to Greenville, MS in 2003 as the Field Station Leader. In early 2009 he transitioned into a regional manager role for Field Development R&D then in 2010 to his current role. Throughout his career, he has helped develop products including Strongarm for peanuts, Clincher, Grasp, GraspXtra and RebelEX for rice and WideStrike/WideStrike3 insect protection in cotton. He was instrumental in the development of Enlist Cotton and the Enlist Weed Control System as well as several new insecticide, fungicide and nematocidal products. He has authored or co-authored 27 refereed journal articles, 190+ abstracts, hundreds of internal project summary milestone reports and 6 patents. John has been involved with SWSS since 1989 serving in various roles including judge for the weed contest, judge for the student paper contest, Chairman of the Student Awards Committee, the Finance Committee, Chairman of the Sustaining Members Committee and previously as an Industry Rep on the SWSS Board. He is active in numerous other professional organizations and served as MWSS President 2007-2008.

Updates Corner

History and an Update from the SWSS Endowment Foundation

The SWSS Endowment Board was voted into existence in 1983. Over the next 2 years an Ad Hoc committee developed the structure, by-laws, and goals of the Endowment Foundation. The SWSS Endowment Foundation Committee, as we know it, was created in 1986. Initial funding of \$5,000 from a generous donation from Mobay Chemical Company and a Casino Night that was held during the SWSS Annual Meeting.

The goal of the SWSS Endowment Foundation is for the purpose of advancing the scientific and educational objectives of the Society and operates as a not-for-profit corporation. The Endowment Fund is set up to generate dividends and interest that are to be used to support awards and programs that encourage outstanding students to pursue academic training in weed science.

The roles of the SWSS Endowment Foundation Board are -

- a. Oversee the financial health and disbursement of the Endowment Foundation Fund.
- b. Conduct fundraising activities to generate funds for the Endowment.
- c. Support student activities for educational and professional advancement.
- d. Promote the projects and activities funded by the SWSS Endowment Foundation and encourage support for the Foundation from the general SWSS membership.
- e. Submit report of yearly activities to the SWSS Executive Board.

Current members of the SWSS Endowment Foundation are -

- Connor Webster
- Gary Schwarzlose
- Lauren Lazaro
- Lawson Priess
- Sandeep Rana
- Gustavo Silva, Texas A&M Graduate Student

Goals of the SWSS Endowment Foundation

- Prepare and Communicate 2025 Budget (where are the Foundation dollars going?)
- Develop Yearly Activities and Key Contacts
- Evaluate other financial support opportunities

What can you do?

- Participate in the Endowment Foundation activities (Silent Auction, Raffle, etc.)
- When registering each year, or any other time of the year, you can contribute (tax deductible) to the Endowment Foundation.
- <https://www.swss.ws/swss-endowment-donation/#!/form/SWSSEndowmentDonation>

Possible Changes in SWSS Constitution and Bylaws

W. Carroll Johnson, III, Ex-officio for SWSS Constitution and Operating Procedures

A priority of the SWSS Executive Board and the Endowment Foundation is to clarify the role of the Endowment Foundation in societal programs, educate the general SWSS membership, and efficiently use the fiscal resources in a manner consistent with the original intentions of the Endowment Foundation. This priority was illustrated by Dr. Randy Ratliff presenting an enlightening history of the Endowment Foundation at the General Session. In recent years, the silent auction and sale of raffle tickets were examples of aggressive fundraising efforts to support the Endowment Foundation and the programs underwritten.

Related discussions pointed towards the need to have a representative of the Endowment Foundation serve as an ex-officio member on the SWSS Executive Board. Briefly, an ex-officio member is an appointed position with specific duties and full voting privileges. The intent is to strengthen linkages and communication between SWSS Executive Board actions and the Endowment Foundation. If the decision is made by the SWSS Executive Board to pursue this action, the next step is for the SWSS membership to vote on this proposal since it involves changing the SWSS Constitution and Bylaws. With Executive Board approval, there will be an announcement with detailed discussion published in the August 2025 Newsletter and a final vote by the SWSS membership as part of the autumn 2025 officer election.

Feel free to contact any of the SWSS Executive Board members if you have any questions or concerns about the likely upcoming vote.

Weeds Contest Information

SWSS Weed Contest
August 8, 2025
University of Arkansas, Newport, AR

Primary Contacts: Bob Scott - bscott@uada.edu
Tom Barber - tbarber@uada.edu
Hannah Wright-Smith - hewright@uada.edu

The purpose of the Southern Weed Contest is to provide an educational experience from which undergraduate and graduate students in Southern Universities can broaden their applied skills in Weed Science. The contest provides an opportunity for Weed Science students be exposed to weed scientists from other universities and industry, apply what they have learned using a contest to measure their capabilities, as well as to socialize. It is hopeful that the contest will increase the visibility of Weed Science and intensify the interest level of those participating in the discipline of Weed Science.

Any undergraduate or graduate student currently enrolled and pursuing a B.S., M.S., or Ph.D. degree is eligible to participate. Each graduate team will consist of three or four members, composed of (a) graduate, (b) undergraduate, or (c) a combination of graduate and undergraduate students. If a university does not have sufficient students for a team, up to two students may enter as individuals. All students will compete using the same contest material. A team may also bring two alternates. Alternate scores will only count toward individual awards. Team scores will be determined from averaging the individual scores from each team member; unless a three-person team is entered. Then the three highest individuals will be averaged. A maximum of two coaches per team can attend the contest. Students will be allowed to participate in the contest five times as a team member or alternate; however, the student can only participate as a team member three times. Undergraduate participation will not count against the five-time rule.

Names of team members and alternates must be provided by July 4, 2024 to contacts above.

Washington Report

WRDA 2024 Signed Into Law on Jan. 4, 2025

The bipartisan Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) was signed into law on January 4, 2025, a month after the leaders of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee announced a final agreement. Congress has passed WRDA legislation on a biennial basis since 2014. WRDA 2024 maintains the regular consideration of this infrastructure legislation, and it provides Congress the opportunity for input into the projects undertaken by the U.S Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE).

Section 104 of the River and Harbor Act of 1958 (33 U.S.C. 610) directs the Secretary of the Army to enter into partnerships with applicable States and other Federal agencies to carry out actions to prevent the introduction of, control, or eradicate, to the maximum extent practicable, invasive species that adversely impact water quantity, water quality, or ecosystems in the Platte River Basin, the Upper Colorado River Basin, the Upper Snake River Basin, the Lake Erie Basin, the Ohio River Basin, and the Upper Missouri River Basin. The Secretary of the Army shall give priority to projects that are intended to control or eradicate Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*), hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*), or saltcedar (of the genus *Tamarix*).

WRDA 2024 directs the Secretary of the Army to include the Connecticut River Basin to its list of priority areas to carry out actions to prevent the introduction of, control, and eradication of hydrilla.

CAST and SoAR Combine

The Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) and the Supporters of Agricultural Research (SoAR) Foundation have merged. Both organizations have focused on advancing agricultural science and innovation.

CAST, which produces reports and conducts webinars on agricultural science and innovation topics, will acquire SoAR's resources and mission. This includes taking possession of several reports published by SoAR. Since its founding by the late Dr. William Danforth, the SoAR Foundation has driven impactful campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of agricultural research funding, securing significant funding boosts for USDA's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI).

CAST was established in 1972 as a result of a 1970 meeting sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council. CAST is a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization with a membership composed of scientific and professional societies, universities, companies, nonprofits, libraries, and individuals. CAST's Board is composed of representatives of the scientific societies, commercial companies, nonprofit or trade organizations, universities, and a Board of Directors. All six of the national and regional weed science societies are members of CAST. Our CASR Representatives include:

WSSA- Jill Schroeder	NEWSS- Randy Prostack
APMS- Gray Turnage	SWSS- Todd Baughman
NCWSS- Tom Peters	WSWS- Greg Dahl

CAST's primary work is the publication of task force reports, commentaries, special publications, and issue papers written by volunteer experts—economists, legal experts and scientists from many disciplines. These documents cover issues related to:

- Food sciences
- Agricultural technology
- Animal sciences
- Plant and soil sciences

Brooke Rollins Confirmed as USDA Secretary



On February 13, Brooke Rollins was confirmed as the 33rd Secretary of Agriculture by 78-22 vote in the Senate. She is the second female to hold that position. Brooke is originally from Glen Rose, Texas. Most recently, Rollins served as the Founder, President, and Chief Executive Officer of the America First Policy Institute (AFPI). During President Trump's first administration, she was the Director of the Domestic Policy Council and Assistant to the President for Strategic Initiatives in the White House. She also previously served as Director of the Office of American Innovation.

Rollins graduated with honors from Texas A&M University with a degree in agricultural development and was the first female to be elected student body president. After earning her Juris Doctor with honors at the University of Texas School of Law, she served as Governor Rick Perry's policy director before running the Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF) for 15 years. At TPPF, Rollins elevated a small policy organization to a national force and redefined the possibilities for a state-based think tank — setting the model and aspiration for AFPI. Rollins and her husband, Mark, call Fort Worth, Texas home, and spend a large majority of their free time taxiing their four very active children to baseball games, cattle shows, piano lessons, and Aggie football games.

Scott Hutchins Nominated to Lead USDA REE Mission Area



Scott Hutchins has been nominated to serve as the Deputy Undersecretary for the USDA Research, Education and Economics (REE) mission area, which includes the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Economic Research Service (ERS), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Office of the Chief Scientist. He previously served in this role from January 2019 to January 2021.

Hutchins, an entomologist, has been an adjunct professor of entomology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln since 1997. He served as a research and development leader at Dow Agrosciences (later Corteva Agriscience) from 1987 to 2018. A date for his nomination hearing in front of the Senate Agriculture Committee has not been set yet.

Lee Zeldin Confirmed as EPA Administrator



On January 29, 2025, Lee Zeldin was sworn in as the 17th Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Administrator Zeldin will work closely with the dedicated career officials at the agency to fulfill the agency's mission to protect human health and the environment.

Zeldin is currently in his 22nd year in the United States military, having deployed to Iraq in 2006 with the Army's Elite 82nd Airborne Division and continues to serve as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army Reserve. He served in the New York State Senate from 2011-2014 and later represented New York's First Congressional District in the United States House of Representatives from 2015-2023.

During his eight years in Congress, Zeldin worked across party lines to preserve the Long Island Sound and Plum Island. He supported key legislation that became historic, bipartisan success stories like the Great American Outdoors Act and Save our Seas Act to clean up plastics from our oceans. He also led the fight for Sea Grant, combated per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water, voted for the Lautenberg Chemical Safety Act, and supported clean energy projects on Long Island.

At just 23, Lee became the youngest attorney in New York State at the time. Born and raised in Suffolk County, New York, Lee and his wife Diana are proud parents to their twin daughters, Mikayla and Arianna.

Doug Burgum Confirmed as Secretary of the Interior



On January 30, the Senate confirmed Doug Burgum as the 55th Secretary of the Interior Department with a 79-18 vote.

Raised in Arthur, North Dakota, Burgum worked as a chimney sweep to help pay his way through North Dakota State University before earning an MBA from Stanford University. In 1983, Doug literally “bet the farm” to provide seed capital for a software startup called Great Plains.

Doug led Great Plains through a successful IPO and grew the company to over 2,000 employees before its acquisition by Microsoft. Burgum remained with Microsoft for six years as the Senior Vice President of Business Solutions.

In 2016, Burgum was elected to serve as North Dakota’s 33rd Governor. In 2020, he was re-elected in a landslide. Under his leadership, North Dakota passed the largest tax cut in state history and dramatically reduced red tape. Forbes named him “America’s Best Entrepreneurial Governor.” During his tenure, North Dakota experienced the highest growth in real GDP and had the lowest unemployment rate in the country.

Burgum has three adult children. He is married to Kathryn Burgum, a nationally recognized advocate for addiction recovery.

Jacob Barney Appointed to Invasive Species Advisory Committee



Virginia Tech ecologist appointed to prestigious national Invasive Species Advisory Committee.

Jacob Barney, professor of invasive plant ecology in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Virginia Tech, has been appointed by the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Office of the Secretary to serve a two-year term on the Invasive Species Advisory Committee.

Joint Statement of Cooperation Between EPA and FWS to Protect ESA Species

On January 14, 2025, the EPA and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) signed a Joint Statement of Cooperation to enhance endangered species protections while supporting sustainable agriculture. This agreement streamlines consultations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), helping ensure compliance while giving farmers more flexibility to use pest management tools like pesticides.

Key actions include improving efficiency in pesticide-related consultations, advancing species conservation under ESA section 7(a)(1), and implementing multi-chemical approaches like the Herbicide Strategy to minimize impacts on endangered species. Improving consultation efficiency increases flexibility for the agricultural community and keeps pest management tools in farmers’ hands, while protecting endangered species.

The Joint Statement of Cooperation was co-signed by Ed Messina, EPA’s Director of the Office of Pesticide Programs and Jake Li, Assistant Director of Ecological Services for USFWS.

[Read the EPA’s section 7\(a\)\(1\)/7\(a\)\(2\) Plan \(pdf\)](#) (596.23 KB)

[Read the Joint Statement of Cooperation \(pdf\)](#) (407.53 KB)

USFWS Lists Petitions to Add 7 New Species and Remove 1 Species From ESA List

On January 19, 2025, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced 90-day findings on seven petitions to add species to, and one petition to remove a species from the Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Based on USFWS's review, they petition to list the Amargosa toad (*Anaxyrus nelsoni*), Carson Valley monkeyflower (*Erythranthe carsonensis*), large marble butterfly (*Euchloe ausonides*) (including the large marble butterfly type subspecies (*Euchloe ausonides ausonides*), Mohave ground squirrel (*Xerospermophilus mohavensis*), Morrison bumble bee (*Bombus morrisoni*), Oasis Valley population of Amargosa speckled dace (*Rhinichthys nevadensis nevadensis*), Tennessee bottlebrush crayfish (*Barbicambarus simmonsii*), and one petition to delist the golden-cheeked warbler (*Setophaga chrysoparia*).

If you have new scientific or commercial data or other information concerning the status of, or threats to these species, please contact the USFWS

<u>Common name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Docket#</u>
Amargosa toad	Southern Nevada	FWS-R8-ES-2024-0176
Carson Valley monkeyflower.....	Reno, NV	FWS-R8-ES-2024-0100
Large marble butterfly.....	Sacramento, CA	FWS-R8-ES-2024-0097
Mohave ground squirrel	Carlsbad, NM	FWS-R8-ES-2024-0098
Morrison bumble bee	New Mexico	FWS-R2-ES-2024-0099
Oasis Valley speckled dace	Southern Nevada	FWS-R8-ES-2024-0177
Tennessee bottlebrush crayfish ..	Alabama	FWS-R4-ES-2024-0101
Golden-cheeked warbler	Austin, TX (delist)	FWS-R2-ES-2024-0179

Congress Punts Farm Bill into 2025.

- The 2023 Farm Bill extension expired on Sep. 30, 2024. That was the second 1-year extension of the Farm Bill. Federal agricultural policy has not been updated since 2018.
- On December 21, 2024, the U.S. Senate passed a continuing resolution by a vote of 85 to 11, extending FY 2024 funding levels for three months, authorizing a one-year farm bill extension to Sep. 30, 2025, and securing farm and disaster aid.
- The 119th session of Congress began on Jan. 3, 2025 with a Republican House, Senate and Administration.

The New House and Senate Agriculture Committee Members for the 119th Congress

Rep. GT Thompson (PA), Chair

Rep. Frank Lucas (OK)
Rep. Austin Scott (GA)
Rep. Rick Crawford (AR)
Rep. Michael Bost (IL)
Rep. Scott DesJarlais (TN)
Rep. Doug LaMalfa (CA)
Rep. David Rouzer (NC)
Rep. Trent Kelly (MS)
Rep. Don Bacon (NE)
Rep. Dusty Johnson (SD)
Rep. Jim Baird (IN)
Rep. Tracey Mann (KS)
Rep. Randy Feenstra (IA)
Rep. Mary Miller (IL)
Rep. Barry Moore (AL)
Rep. Kat Cammack (FL)
Rep. Brad Finstad (MN)
Rep. Monica De La Cruz (TX)
Rep. Ronny Jackson (TX)
Rep. John Rose (TN)
Rep. Zach Nunn (IA)
Rep. Derrick Van Orden (WI)
Rep. Dan Newhouse (WA)
Rep. Tony Wied (WI)
Rep. Rob Bresnahan (PA)
Rep. Mark Harris (NC)
Rep. Mark Messmer (IN)
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EPA Updates Process for Developing Maps to Protect Endangered Species

On December 19, 2024, the EPA took another step to reduce potential impacts to farmers from implementing endangered species protections while continuing to protect endangered species by publishing a process (<https://www.epa.gov/endangered-species/process-epa-uses-develop-core-maps-pesticide-use-limitation-areas>) that it will use to develop maps for protecting species designated as threatened or endangered (listed) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and their designated critical habitats. These maps allow EPA to protect listed species from the use of pesticides through **geographically specific** mitigations. The process identifies areas where listed species are likely to be located and areas where they are not, which ensures that additional measures to protect listed species are only required in these areas.

A huge amount of credit for this improvement goes to **Dr. Stanley Culpepper and Dr. Taylor Randell-Singleton** at the University of Georgia for their work on refining habitat maps for two endangered salamander species in their state. When the Enlist Duo label was published in 2022 for ESA mitigations, almost one million acres in 11 Georgia counties were restricted due to two endangered salamanders' habitat. They worked through a process that defined actual salamander habitat. After refining the maps and identifying actual salamander habitat, they found that only 0.37% of the area (i.e. 3,700 acres out of 1,000,000) should be restricted due to salamander habitat.

As EPA assesses pesticide impacts on listed species, the agency may find that some mitigations are only needed to protect listed species. In those cases, EPA will only apply those mitigations where appropriate and necessary in geographically specific areas (referred to as Pesticide Use Limitation Areas or PULAs). PULAs are areas where pesticide exposures are likely to impact the continued existence of a listed species, which may include a reduction in survival or recovery of the species.

When developing a PULA for a specific species, EPA starts by developing a "core map." A core map identifies areas that are important to a species, which could be a refined range map. In cases where range maps are broad and include areas where a species is no longer thought to live, then core maps would only include areas within the species range where the species likely currently lives. The process released on December 19 is intended to identify such areas and exclude areas from EPA's core map where the species is not likely to live. After developing a core map for a species, EPA develops a PULA that accounts for pesticide movement from a use site (e.g., spray drift and run-off) by adding adjacent areas to the core map. Developing a core map or PULA does not alter FWS' range map.

EPA's goal is to develop core maps for all FWS listed species that may require protections with respect to pesticide exposures. The agency is focusing first on creating core maps for listed species identified in its Vulnerable Species Action Plan (VSAP), released in September 2024. This provides a framework for EPA to adopt early, meaningful protections to address potential impacts for listed species that the Agency identifies as particularly "vulnerable" to pesticides. EPA has developed core maps for several VSAP species, which can be found on the agency's website, and will be developing core maps for the remaining VSAP and other listed species and making them publicly available as they are completed. EPA has also prioritized a subset of listed species for core map development.

Additional information can be found in the core map development process document. Visit EPA's website to learn more about how EPA's pesticide program is protecting endangered species.

11 State Attorney Generals Petition EPA on Rule Regarding Misbranded Pesticides

The EPA is seeking public comment on a petition received from the Attorneys General of the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Carolina, and South Dakota requesting that EPA initiate rulemaking to amend the existing regulations under FIFRA.

The Attorneys General believe that EPA should modify its requirements such that any state labeling requirements which are inconsistent with EPA's findings and conclusions from its human health risk assessments would constitute misbranding.

As an example, in 2017, California decided to require a Prop 65 label on glyphosate sold in their state, despite EPA repeatedly finding that glyphosate is unlikely to be a human carcinogen and that there are no risks of concern to human health when glyphosate is used in accordance with its label.

Comments must be received by March 24, 2025. Details at: <https://www.regulations.gov/document/EPA-HQ-OPP-2024-0562-0001>

Federal Court Judge Vacates APHIS Rule on Genetically Engineered Organisms

On December 2, the federal district court for the northern district of California threw out streamlined regulations of bioengineered crops, creating uncertainty in ag biotech laboratories across the country. In 2020, USDA APHIS finalized a rule that simplified reviews of genetically engineered plants such as herbicide tolerant soybeans and Bt-cotton.

The rule also exempted from regulation crops made by editing the species own genes, on condition the gene-editing produces a trait that conventional crossbreeding could have created. In a lawsuit filed in 2023 by the National Family Farm Coalition, Friends of the Earth, Pesticide Action Network, Center for Environmental Health, Center for Biological Diversity, and Center for Food Safety, they argued that USDA had not followed procedures required when agencies create new regulations.

The court agreed with plaintiffs that it was arbitrary and capricious for APHIS not to incorporate its noxious weed authority in its final rule, and to exempt from regulatory review GE plants with changes that could have been achieved through conventional breeding techniques without adequate substantiation for these positions in the final rule record. The court vacated the rule as of December 2, 2024 and ordered the parties to meet on outstanding issues in the case. USDA may revert to its prior rules until the case is fully resolved, which could take years.

Bonanno Honored with the IR-4 Project SOAR Award

The SOAR Award honors external partners of the USDA IR-4 Project who exemplify the areas of Service, Outreach, Altruism and Research (SOAR), while supporting specialty crop growers and the mission of The IR-4 Project.



Rich Bonanno, is currently the Executive Director of the Association of Southern Region Extension Directors (ASRED). He has also served in the roles of former Associate Dean of NC State CALS, Director of NC State Cooperative Extension, and Vice Provost for Outreach and Engagement at NC State. Dr. Bonanno has been a long time member of the weed science societies and served as chair of WSSA's Science Policy Committee for many years.

Dr. Bonanno's legendary career and dedication to the land-grant mission has benefited countless growers and research units, including IR-4. As a specialty crop grower himself, Bonanno has a deep understanding of fellow growers' needs. Bonanno also has a long history of collaboration with IR-4; he was a charter member of IR-4's Commodity Liaison Committee (CLC) beginning in 1992, and chaired this committee from 2014-2016 (until he began his influential time at NC State). More recently, Bonanno played a pivotal role in advocating for and supporting IR-4's move from Rutgers University to NC State. As Dr. Bonanno transitions from NC State to an influential new role with ASRED, the IR Project celebrates his commitment to the growers and researchers of our region and thank him for being an exceptional ally to IR-4.

Lee Van Wychen, Ph.D.
Executive Director of Science Policy
Weed Science Society of America
5720 Glenmullen Pl, Alexandria, VA 22303
Cell: 202-746-4686