



Southern Weed Science Society

Note From the President:

I hope this newsletter finds you well and you are having a safe and productive last few weeks of summer. This summer has really flown by for me. With harvest starting and football season right around the corner, it is a reminder that winter meetings will be here soon. The SWSS Board met at the Sheraton Music City Hotel on July 22nd and 23rd. We were able to cover society business, tour the hotel meeting space, and begin planning for the upcoming meeting. After visiting the hotel, I am excited about the meeting. This hotel is located near the airport and also a short distance away from Downtown Nashville entertainment. It also has a nice layout with meeting space all on one level. Dr. Shawn Askew is working hard to put together a great program for the meeting and is working with Dr. Larry Steckel the local arrangements chair to ensure everything comes together in January. As a reminder, the meeting dates are January 25-29, 2026, at the Sheraton Music City Hotel, Nashville, TN.



Information on registration and title submission dates and deadlines should be communicated in the coming weeks. You will notice a change in program we are using for the registration and title/presentation submission this year. Due to all of the issues experienced with Confex, all of the weed science societies including SWSS decided to switch from Confex to Four Waves this year. So far, the technical support and user experience with Four Waves has been much better compared to last year. In addition to the registration information, be on the lookout for the ballot containing the new slate of SWSS candidates for election. This ballot will also have some proposed changes to the SWSS constitution and by-laws for consideration and these are further explained by Carroll Johnson in this newsletter.

I was able to attend the SWSS Weed Contest on August 8th hosted by Drs. Bob Scott, Tom Barber, and Hannah Wright-Smith at the University of Arkansas Jackson County Extension Center near Newport, AR. The event went really well and was well organized to handle the 105 students that participated in the contest. I would like to say “Thank You!” to the University of Arkansas staff and all of the volunteers that gave their time to make this year’s contest a success.

Finally, I would like to thank the society for allowing me to serve as your President this year. It has truly been one of the highlights of my career. I look forward to seeing everyone in Nashville in January!

Eric Palmer
SWSS President 2025

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2025 Weed Contest Winners

Overview: The Southern Weed Science Competition was held in Newport, Arkansas on August 7th. This years competition was hosted by the University of Arkansas with local arrangements being handled by Drs. Bob Scott, Tom Barber, and Hannah Wright-Smith. There were 10 universities represented from across SWSS and record participants of 105 total students!

SWSS Contest Participation:

Year	Universities	Contest Participants		Total Participants
		Graduate	Undergrad	
2025	10	94	11	105
2024	10	75	11	79
2023	10	52	7	59

Student Contest Overview

The contest followed the official rules in place for the SWSS Weed Contest. Students competed in weed identification, calibration, identification of unknown herbicides, crop/weed problem identification an recommendations and a mystery event. Awards were given for individual and team contest winners.

Awards

Graduate Individual

Top Individual Graduate Students		
Place	Name	School
1 st	Gavin Sparks	LSU
2 nd	Noah Chandler	University of Arkansas
3 rd	Cade Holbrook	University of Arkansas
4 th	Jacob Dodd	Mississippi State
5 th	Aidan Ross	University of Arkansas
6 th	Cory Ketchum	University of Arkansas
7 th	Tanner King	Mississippi State
8 th	Ben Stoker	LSU
9 th	Cole Woolard	Texas Tech
10 th	Hunter Lipsey	Mississippi State

1 st Place by Contest		
Contest	Name	School
Weed Identification	Gavin Sparks	LSU
Unknown Herbicide Identification	Ben Stoker	LSU
Farmer Problem	Jacob Dodd	Mississippi State
Individual Calibration	Aidan Ross	University of Arkansas

Graduate Team

Team Calibration Results		
Place	Names	School
1 st	Diego Rodriguez, Aidan Ross, Juan Velasquez	Arkansas; Team 2
2 nd	Cory Ketchum, Cade Holbrook, Rhet Baxley, Noah Chandler	Arkansas; Team 1
3 rd	Gurwinder Singh, Joseph Burch, Andrew Ahlersmeyer, Nisith Nishak Purohit	Auburn; Team 3

Top Overall Teams		
Place	Names	School
1 st	Cory Ketchum, Cade Holbrook, Rhet Baxley, Noah Chandler	University of Arkansas; Team 1
2 nd	Diego Rodriguez, Aidan Ross, Juan Velasquez	University of Arkansas; Team 2
3 rd	Tanner King, Jacob Dodd, Dalton Whitt, Hunter Lipsey, Alyssa Miller (Alt.)	Mississippi State; Team 1

Undergraduate Individual

Top Individual Undergraduate Students		
Place	Name	School
1 st	Haydon Houser	University of Arkansas
2 nd	Avery McMillin	LSU
3 rd	Paige Patel	Texas A&M

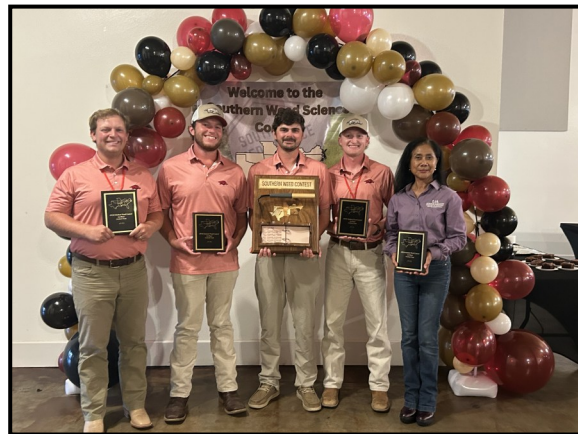
1 st Place by Contest		
Contest	Name	School
Weed Identification	Avery McMillin	LSU
Unknown Herbicide Identification	Haydon Houser	University of Arkansas
Farmer Problem	Colton Conrady	Oklahoma State
Individual Calibration	Haydon Houser	University of Arkansas

Undergraduate Team

Team Calibration Results		
Place	Names	School
1 st	Noel Leprore, Aliya Abdul-Razzaq, Hunter Kern, Ayden Castillo (alternate)	Texas A&M

Top Overall Team		
Place	Names	School
1 st	Noel Leprore, Aliya Abdul-Razzaq, Hunter Kern, Ayden Castillo (alternate)	Texas A&M

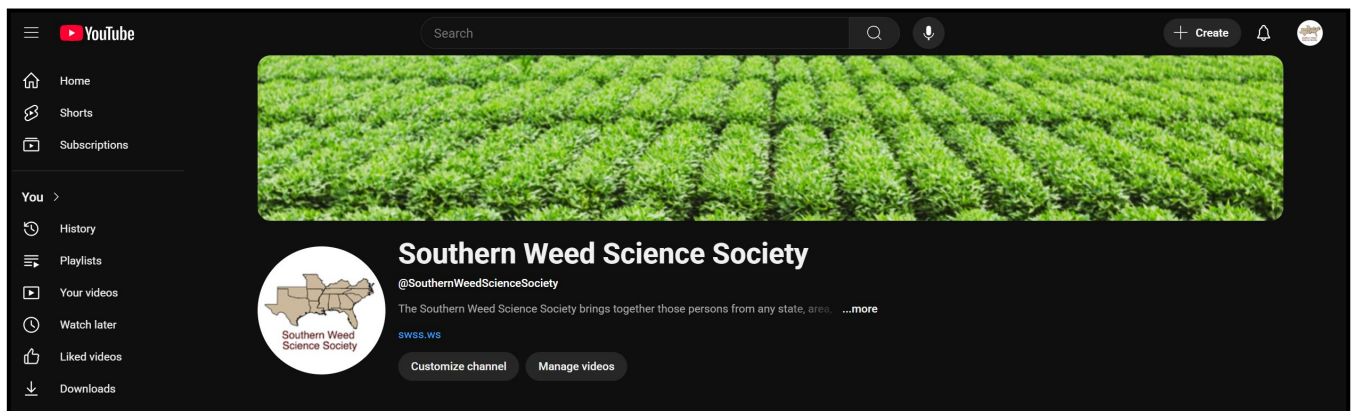
Congratulations to all of those who placed!



Updates

New Social Media Content Coming!

At the Summer board meeting in Nashville, the SWSS BOD voted to start an initiative for the society to become more active on social media platforms. SWSS is already active on X, but more accounts and outreach will be coming soon. Check out the new YouTube channel here! [Southern Weed Science Society - YouTube](#) If you have video content you would like to submit to highlight your work on the society's YouTube channel, contact Justin Calhoun, SWSS Director of Communications at communications@swss.ws.



Annual Meeting 2026 in Nashville, TN Info

Call for Symposia The Southern Weed Science Society (SWSS) invites proposals for symposia at our 2026 Annual Meeting, to be held January 26-29 at the Sheraton Music City in Nashville, Tennessee. The tentative theme will be “Cultivating Tomorrow: Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture and Education.” There will likely be a symposium on how artificial intelligence will influence weed control from robotic sprayers to bioinformatics and a workshop on using chatbots in research, teaching, and extension. If you would like to present in one of these venues or know of qualified persons, contact the program chair to seek an invitation. We are also open to other symposium topics and encourage submissions that address innovative topics in weed science, foster engaging discussions, and appeal to a diverse audience of researchers, educators, and industry professionals. Proposals should include clear justification, target audience, proposed agenda, and any other aspects, such as publication in WSSA journals. Please submit your symposium proposal by September 15, 2025, to Shawn Askew, SWSS Program Chair (saskew@vt.edu). Join us in shaping a dynamic program that advances weed science and builds professional connections.

Call for Paper Titles The Southern Weed Science Society (SWSS) will soon be accepting paper title and abstract submissions for the 2026 Annual Meeting, scheduled for January 26-29 at the Sheraton Music City in Nashville, Tennessee. We welcome presentations and posters on the latest research, technologies, and management strategies in weed science. Detailed submission instructions will soon be available at www.swss.ws. Key dates are as follows:

- Sept 1: Title submission opens
- Oct 1: Titles are due
- Jan 10: Abstracts due
- Jan 18: Presentation uploads due (including posters for student contest)

Contribute your expertise to an engaging and impactful program in Nashville.

Retirement Announcement

Dear Valued Customers and Friends,

Owners of Bellspray Inc. dba R&D Sprayers, Linzay and Bernadine Nezat have made the decision to retire. We would like to personally thank everyone for their business, support, and confidence in our products and services.

It has been a privilege and honor to work with and serve such a vital industry over the last 35 years.

It is now time to pass our experience and knowledge on to the next generation. We plan to remain available for as long as needed to ensure a smooth and positive transition.

The new company name, Bellspray LLC dba R&D Sprayers which is owned and operated by Garret Breard. He has a background in engineering and operations and is eager to continue the tradition of quality and service you've come to expect from R&D Sprayers. He is excited to collaborate with all of you and ensure a seamless transition moving forward.

Thanks again for your business.

God Bless,

Linzay and Bernadine Nezat

Possible Changes in SWSS Constitution and Bylaws

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

Changes to the SWSS Constitution and By Laws require a vote of approval by the general membership. Such a vote is preceded by an announcement in the Newsletter. That is the purpose of this discussion.

The first item is related to adding an additional ex-officio member to the SWSS Executive Board as a representative of the SWSS Endowment Foundation. The intent is to strengthen linkages, coordinate efforts, and improve communication between SWSS Executive Board actions and the Endowment Foundation to enhance programming. An ex-officio member of the SWSS Executive Board is an appointed position with specific duties and full voting privileges.

To add a member to the Executive Board, the SWSS Constitution and By Laws need to be modified. The upcoming vote will address the necessary changes to both documents.

The second item requiring a vote of the entire membership is a compilation of several small edits, updates, and corrections to both the Constitution and By Laws. One example is the renaming of the Newsletter Editor to Director of Communications. A second example is to remove a By Laws statement (paraphrased): Proceedings Editor provide camera-ready copy of the proceedings to the Business Manager for publication in the form of mailing compact disks. That is obviously an outdated task that is no longer

being used. These corrections may sound trivial but are necessary to keep both the Constitution and By Laws current and technically correct.

The vote on these changes will be included with the ballot for SWSS officers that will be accessible for voting members later in the autumn. For the items outlined above, there will be a detailed bullet list on the ballot.

What is outlined above is strictly a generalized summary.

If you have any questions about the upcoming vote, please contact any of the SWSS officers and board members.

In Memoriam

Dr. Sam Atwell



Samuel Dale Atwell, 80, passed away peacefully on July 31, 2025 surrounded by his family at his home in Poplar Bluff, MO. He was born August 18, 1944 at the family home in Naylor, MO to Nathaniel and Earline (Parrish) Atwell. He was a proud Tiger Alumni graduating from Neelyville High School in 1962. He lettered in basketball and baseball and served as President of FFA. He was selected to play centerfield for the Minor League Baseball team, Bryan Brothers Packers and he continued to play college baseball for Arkansas State Red Wolves until he was hit by a car. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Agronomy from Arkansas State in 1966, he went on to earn his Master of Science degree in Plant Physiology from Mississippi State in 1969 then pursued his PHD in Agronomy - Weed Science at University of Missouri. He began and ended his career working for University of MO Extension Center in New Madrid. His dream job was as an Agronomist working for

BASF and AgriQuest for 34 years. He had over 40 years of experience in applied research, sales and technical education with modern Agronomy, Entomology, Plant Pathology, Plant Regulators and Weed Science. He established PIX Plant Growth Regulator in cotton which is now essential of optimum cotton production. He researched, introduced and established the use of Narrow Row Cotton (30 inch rows) in the Mid-South and Ultra Narrow Row Cotton (15 inch or less rows) Production System nationwide. He was on a team that established the first Overtop Selective Herbicide Technology for crops, as well as establishing the Ultra Narrow Row Spacing for soybeans and NO-Till using overtop selective chemical weed control techniques. He had a true passion for the American farmer emphasizing in cotton, rice, soybeans, corn and wheat. He formally retired at age 76 but farmers from all corners of the United States continued to call him long after his retirement. They trusted him in his old school wisdom and leaned on his experience, expertise and longevity in agronomy.

On September 23, 2006, Sam married Frances D. Harrison and they were loyal faithful members of Independence Missionary Baptist Church of Neelyville where he was the adult Sunday School teacher. Fran preceded him in death May 24, 2024. Also preceded in death were his parents, Nathaniel and Earline Atwell, his older brother, Johnny Atwell all of Neelyville and older sister, Annette Epps of Poplar Bluff. He is survived by his youngest sister, Sandra Graham of Hertford, NC. Also surviving are his children, Kevin (Jenni) Atwell of Galesburg, IL, Samantha (Brian) Crisp of Poplar Bluff, Trevor (Carol) Atwell of Saratoga, NC, Angel (Clay) Neal of Olive Branch, MS and Rhonda Brooks of Conway, AR, 2 step-children, Tommy (Alisa) Hancock of Knobel, AR and Melessia (Mike) Woods of Biggers, AR. He was so very proud of his 11 grandchildren, Savannah Crisp (Bob), Joshua (Madi) Crisp, Dalton (Kaitlyn) Crisp, Nathaniel Atwell II, Connor Atwell, Katie Brynn Atwell, Bethany (Ashby) Taylor, Cooper (Leah) Neal, Julianne (James) Neal, Shelby Brooks, John Andrew Brooks, 2 step-grandchildren, Shane (Alex) Woods and Tiffany (Chris) Reinhold. He was also blessed with 7 great-grandchildren, one step-great grandson and a loving extended family of nieces and nephews especially, Debbie (Gary) Parish, for whom he was deeply grateful.

2026 SWSS Award Nominations

SWSS is seeking nominations for 2026 awards. The Awards Committee consist of a Parent Awards Committee with the Immediate Past President (Todd Baughman) as chairperson and five Awards Subcommittees: (1) Fellow Award, (2) Outstanding Educator Award, (3) Outstanding Young Weed Scientist Award, (4) Outstanding Graduate Student Awards, and (5) Excellence in Regulatory Stewardship Award. If you, as an SWSS member, wish to nominate a colleague for an award, please fill out the SWSS Award Nomination form on the SWSS website (Awards - Southern Weed Science Society) and return to Todd Baughman (todd.baughman@ag.tamu.edu) by October 20th. No person shall be eligible to receive the same award a second time.

Descriptions of Awards:

There are five major awards presented by the SWSS at each annual meeting, their descriptions are below:

SWSS Fellow: The Fellow award is the highest honor the Society presents. The purpose of this award is to recognize those members who have made significant contributions to the Southern Weed Science Society and advances in the discipline of weed science in the SWSS region.

The potential recipient must have been an active member of the SWSS for >20 years, 2) Be at least 50 years of age at the time of the annual meeting, 3) Have made significant contributions of service to the SWSS (including but not limited to: serving on committees or being an officer, hosting the SWSS Weed Contest, judging at the paper/poster contest, etc.), 4) Contributed substantially to the success of his/her company, university, and/or government agency and to advance the discipline of Weed Science in the SWSS region. Whereas the Fellow Award has been renamed to envelope both the Distinguished Service and the Weed Scientist of the Year Awards, previous recipients of these awards are not eligible for the SWSS Fellow Award. The maximum number of Fellow awards per year is set at two (2), with no distinction between those from academia or industry.

Outstanding Educator Award: This award of \$1,000 cash and a certificate or plaque (sponsored by Corteva) will be presented annually to a weed scientist in recognition of outstanding contributions to the Society and Weed Science through education. The Award is to be given in recognition of a broad range of activities including formal classroom teaching; outreach and public service or extension including workshops, seminars, short courses, or other means of communication; mentoring undergraduate and graduate students; publication of scholarly work in journals, books, or reviews.

Recipients must be a voting member of SWSS in the year of nomination. 2) Must be an active member of SWSS during the last five (5) years.

Outstanding Young Weed Scientist Award: These awards of \$1,000 cash and a certificate or plaque to be presented annually to a young weed scientist one from academia (teaching, research, extension) to be sponsored by BASF and one from Industry to be sponsored by the SWSS in recognition of outstanding service to weed science.

Recipients (1 from academia, 1 from industry): Recipients must have been a voting member of the Society for

at least three of the last five (5) years and must be a voting member of the Society in the year that the person is nominated for the award. 2) Must be 40 years of age or younger on January 31 of the year she or he receives the award. 3) Must have completed at least five (5) years' work in weed science other than that related to academic studies. Previous recipients of this award will be ineligible for re-nomination.

Outstanding Graduate Student Awards: (one each for students at the MS level and the PhD level) - These awards are sponsored by the SWSS Endowment Foundation and consist of a \$400 cash award and a plaque for MS level and \$400 cash award and plaque for PhD level. The awards are given annually to a graduate student (one at the MS level and one at the PhD level) who has demonstrated outstanding performance in graduate studies and related weed science activities. Winners at the MS level are not eligible for this award at the PhD level. Students must have received the degree for which they are nominated since the previous SWSS Annual Meeting.

(1 each from the MS level and the PhD level) Must be enrolled as a graduate student in the degree program for which she/he is nominated within the calendar year for which the nomination is made and has actively participated in SWSS sponsored activities such as the annual meeting, weed contest, student paper contest, or committee work during the past two years including the year nominated and the previous year.

Excellence in Regulatory Stewardship Award: This award is sponsored by Bayer CropScience and awarded yearly for five years beginning in 2023. This award is for specific collaborations in the emerging applications of science and technology that require regulatory and stewardship protocols. This award recognizes scientists that demonstrate great interaction and collaboration between public and private institutions, establish multiyear outreach and support of the new technologies, and provide nonbiased feedback while extending research findings to the scientific and farming communities through publications and extension activities. The selected program will be awarded a plaque and monetary awards to be allocated as follows: Principal Investigator, \$2000, and remainder of the graduate team (\$250 each), to a maximum total award of \$3,000 unless extenuating circumstances. The graduate students should be the primary researchers and does not include technicians. Team members should be named during the nomination process. If a project has two lead PI's they should be awarded and the primary funds divided evenly. Graduate students providing minimal assistance should not be nominated.

Eligible nominees should be active members of the SWSS; and include industry personnel, primary research/extension project leaders, and primary graduate students actively involved in conducting the research.

Silent Auction Items Needed for Endowment

SWSS is seeking donations for items to include a silent auction. Each year the auction is held at the SWSS annual meeting to raise money for the SWSS Endowment Foundation. Have something you would like to donate? Please contact Gary Schwarzlose (gary.schwarzlose@bayer.com).



Election Details

It's SWSS Officer Election Time! Please take the time to review the submitted bios for the candidates. **Voting will open soon through the SWSS website in the Members Only tab.**

Member at Large – Academia

Scott Nolte - Texas A&M

Connor Webster - LSU

Member at Large – Industry

John Peppers - Envu

Cody Gray - UPL

Vice President

Tom Barber - University of Arkansas

Jay McCurdy - Mississippi State

Endowment Foundation

Randy Ratliff - Syngenta (retired)

Hunter Perry - Corteva

Secretary-Treasurer

Charlie Cahoon - NC State

Mike Lovelace

Editor

Hannah Wright-Smith - U of A

Aniruddha Maity -

WSSA Representative

Peter Dotray - Texas A&M

Ryan Bryant -



Member-at-Large—Academia

Scott Nolte



Scott Nolte was raised on a small row-crop and livestock farm near Salem, Illinois. At Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, IL, he earned his B.S. degree in Plant and Soil Science in 1997, M.S. degree in Weed Science in 2001, and Ph.D. in biotechnology and weed science in 2009. Scott worked in the weed science program at SIU as a research technician while pursuing his Ph.D. under Dr. Bryan Young.

In the fall of 2009, Dr. Nolte went to work for Monsanto where he held roles in Regulatory Science for 5 years and Technology Development for 3 years. He then joined the Department of Soil and Crop Sciences at Texas A&M University in the Fall of 2017 as the State Extension Weed Specialist. His position is a 100% extension appointment with responsibility for providing statewide leadership in effective, profitable, and sustainable weed management in cotton, corn, sorghum, soybean, pastures, and hayfields in Texas. His research is focused on weed management systems that deal with difficult to control weeds in these crops. Dr. Nolte has also focused on research related to managing off-target movement of herbicides. He has developed and delivered educational programs such as auxin applicator training, herbicide resistance management, and weed ID & herbicide mode of action training to county agents, department of ag inspectors, pesticide applicators, and producers across Texas. In 2020, he received the Texas Plant Protection Association (TPPA) Academic/Agency Award and in 2023, he received the Texas A&M Soil and Crop Sciences Department/Extension Faculty Award.

Dr. Nolte has been active in professional organizations throughout his career, including the Southern Weed Science Society, the North Central Weed Science Society, and the Weed Science Society of America. He has served as the chair of multiple WSSA and SWSS conference sections and currently serves as a member of the WSSA extension committee.

Connor Webster



Dr. Connor Webster joined Louisiana State University as an Assistant Professor and Statewide Extension Rice Weed Specialist in February of 2022. He received a B.S. in Agronomy and Soils from Auburn University in 2017, where he served as the President of the Agronomy and Soils Club. Connor then went on to earn an M.S. in Weed Science from LSU in 2019 and a Ph.D. in Weed Science from LSU in 2022.

Connor has been an active member of the WSSA, SWSS, and the Rice Technical Working Group (RTWG) since 2017. He was recognized for several accomplishments across these societies throughout his graduate career. He placed first place in the student oral competition at the RTWG meeting in 2018, placed second place in the Ph.D. oral competition at the SWSS meeting in 2020, and placed second in the student poster competition at the RTWG meeting in 2020. Connor was also a member of the third place LSU weed team in both 2018 and 2021, and in 2021 he finished as the fourth-place individual overall and first-place in the weed identification section of the contest.

Connor is an author of nine peer-reviewed journal articles and serves as an Associate Editor for Weed Technology. He is currently serving on the SWSS Endowment Foundation Board as well as the WSSA W11 Extension Committee. He also serves on the editorial board for the Louisiana Agriculture magazine that is distributed by the LSU AgCenter. He is an author on 95 abstracts, 11 invited international presentations, and gives numerous extension presentations at winter grower meetings, field days, etc. each year. Connor also served as the Student Contest Chair and the Weed Control Chair for the International Temperate Rice Conference, which was held in June of 2024 in New Orleans. Connor also served as the Weed Control and Growth Regulation Chair at the most recent RTWG meeting.

He serves as the coach of the LSU weed team and teaches Weed Biology and Ecology as well as Plant-Herbicide Physiology. Connor is currently advising 3 MS students, 2 PhD students, and serving as a co-advisor for several other students. Connor served as the Local Arrangements Chair for the SWSS meeting in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 2023 and continues to be a very active member of the Southern Weed Science Society. In his spare time, Connor enjoys spending time with his family, hunting, and shooting competitive sporting clays. Connor resides in Zachary, Louisiana with his wife Reagen, daughter Annie, and son Lou.

Member-at-Large—Industry

John Peppers



John Peppers grew up in a small rural town in northern Alabama on his family's beef and poultry farm. John received his BS in Agronomy and Soils from Auburn University in 2017 and his MS in Weed Science under Dr. Scott McElroy in 2019. He received his PhD from Virginia Tech under Dr. Shawn Askew in 2023. Throughout his graduate studies, he authored or co-authored 20 peer-reviewed journal articles. Following graduation, he accepted the role of Herbicide Early Development Manager for Envu (formerly Bayer Environmental Sciences), where he leads global early development efforts for the turf and ornamental market.

John has been involved in the SWSS since 2018, as both a graduate student and industry representative. While in graduate school, he served as the SWSS Graduate Student Organization President from 2021-2022 and regularly participated in SWSS student competitions throughout his graduate studies. He is serving as the turf and ornamentals Section Chair for the 2026 annual meeting. He is an active member of numerous professional organizations including WSSA, GCSAA, and CSSA. John currently resides outside of Raleigh, North Carolina with his wife, Cynthia, and their daughter, Jenny, and their border collie, Poa.

Cody Gray



Cody was raised on his grandfather's dairy farm near Ralston, OK. He received his Bachelor's degree in chemistry at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in 1998. He received his M.S. at Oklahoma State University in Weed Science in 2001. In 2005, Cody completed his graduate education with a Ph.D. in Weed Science at Mississippi State University. After completing his graduate education, he accepted an Assistant Professor position with the University of Florida at the Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center located in Fort Lauderdale, FL where his appointment included research on invasive aquatic plants, aquatic extension specialist for the southern half of Florida and taught a pesticide application course. Cody joined United Phosphorus Inc. (UPI) as a Field Development Representative, in which, he oversaw all aquatic herbicide and algaecide technical service and research trials conducted in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Additionally, Cody was responsible for all UPI product development, including herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, miticides and fumigants, for the following states: Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska until the Arysta LifeScience acquisition in April 2019. At that time, Cody became the UPL NA Inc. US Technical Development Manager - Herbicides until September 2021 when he became the Technical Development Lead - US. In April 2024, Cody was promoted to UPL North America Research and Technical Development Head.

Cody has served in multiple society roles throughout his career including: SWSS Graduate Student Rep, WSSA Graduate Student Rep, WSSA Liaison to the Aquatic Plant Management Society (APMS), APMS Past-President and former Director, Western APMS Past-President and former Director.

Vice President

Tom Barber



Dr. Tom Barber was born and raised on a small cattle and row-crop farm near Texarkana in Southwest Arkansas. He received his B.S. in Agronomy (1998) and M.S. in Weed Science (2000) from the University of Arkansas under the leadership of Dr. Dick Oliver. In 2001 he transitioned to Mississippi State University where he obtained a PhD in Weed Science (2004) under the direction of Dr. Dan Reynolds. Tom returned to Arkansas in 2007 and currently holds the position of Professor/Extension Weed Scientist and Director of the Jackson County Extension Center with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. Dr. Barber currently conducts applied weed control research in corn, cotton, grain sorghum, peanut, soybean and rice to provide accurate recommendations to farmers, consultants and other members of the Arkansas Agricultural Industry. Over his career he is listed as author or co-author of 88 peer reviewed journal articles, 174 peer-reviewed research series, 142 extension publications and 386 meeting abstracts. He has also received many awards, most recently the WSSA Outstanding Extension Award and SWSS Outstanding Educator, both in 2024.

Tom has always had a passion to serve both the agricultural industry and various support organizations. Among others, Tom has served on the Board of Directors and as President of the Arkansas Crop Protection Association, Section Chair and Steering Committee for Beltwide Cotton Conferences, Associate Editor for the Journal of Cotton Science, and WSSA Herbicide Resistant Plants Committee. Tom has been an active member of SWSS since 1998, and he began serving the society as President of the Graduate Student Organization in 2003. Over the last 25 years, Tom has volunteered to judge the student paper and poster contests and serve as section chair over numerous poster and paper sessions. In addition, he has served on various committee assignments including Sales Coordination, Sustaining Membership, Continuing Education, and Finance. This summer he volunteered to co-host the SWSS Weed Contest at Newport, AR. Tom recently rotated off the SWSS Board of Directors where he served as Member-at-Large for academia.

Jay McCurdy



Dr. James D. "Jay" McCurdy is a Professor and Turfgrass Extension Specialist in the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences at Mississippi State University. Since joining MSU in 2014, Dr. McCurdy has built a nationally recognized Extension and research program focused on sustainable turfgrass and landscape systems. His work emphasizes integrated weed management, precision herbicide application, and the development of environmentally responsible alternatives for turf and ornamental systems.

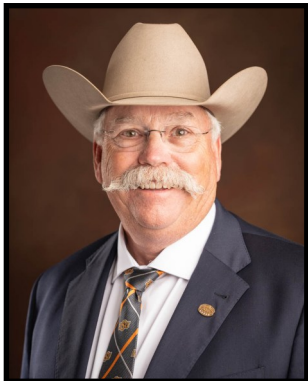
Dr. McCurdy has secured almost \$2 million in competitive research funding, including USDA-NIFA and USDA-AFRI grants, and has published extensively on herbicide resistance, alternative lawns, and the ecological integration of pollinator habitats in turf systems. He plays a central role in stakeholder engagement across the Southeast, coordinating educational programs such as the Mississippi State University Turfgrass Research

Field Day, Deep South Turf Expo, and Golf Course Management Workshops. His leadership bridges research, education, and industry collaboration.

An active member of SWSS for nearly two decades, Dr. McCurdy has served the society in various capacities, including presenter, reviewer, and committee member. He also contributes to the broader weed science community through editorial roles, student mentorship, and interdisciplinary collaboration. His vision for SWSS emphasizes industry engagement, student development, and a continued commitment to scientific excellence.

Endowment Foundation

Randy Ratliff



Ratliff received his Ph.D. from Oklahoma State University and recently retired after 38 years with Syngenta, where he held numerous positions including Research Station Manager, R&D Regional Manager, Director of Herbicide Research for North America, Director of US Field Biological R&D, Customer Resource Center, Head and Head of Customer Service. Ratliff served in several positions on agriscience boards, such as the Southern Weed Science Society, where he received a distinguished service award; Weed Science Society of America where he received the Industry Award and the Mississippi Weed Science Society where he received another distinguished service award. He served numerous terms on the Syngenta Political Action Committee at Syngenta. Randy and his wife, Susan have two adult children; Thomas who resides in Winston-Salem, NC with his wife, Becky and

sons Roan and Olson and daughter Lauren of Chicago, IL. He is an avid pilot and aircraft builder. He is currently an adjunct faculty member at Oklahoma State University teaching a class in the Plant and Soil Science department.

Hunter Perry



Hunter is currently a Field Scientist for Corteva agriscience encompassing a Mississippi and Louisiana territory. Hunter is a native of Greenville, MS where his earliest agricultural research experiences were achieved through working at local crop protection and seed research stations. He earned his B.S. and M.S from Mississippi State university in Golf and Sports Turf Management (2005) and Plant Pathology (2007), respectively. He earned his Ph.D. in Weed Science from Auburn University in 2011, before joining Dow AgroSciences that same year. His current responsibilities include pesticide development from proof of concept through launch and he supports the Midsouth sales district.

Hunter has been actively involved in the SWSS since 2008, both as a student as an industry professional. During his time with the SWSS, he has served two terms as Secretary/Treasurer and as Chair and Vice Chair of the graduate student paper and poster contests multiple times. He served as an Endowment Trustee for three years where he worked with other members of the Endowment Committee to ensure the group accomplished its educational objectives. Hunter organized the SWSS Annual Golf Tournament from 2014 – 2020 and with the help of other members has helped raise >\$30,000 to benefit the Endowment. Hunter regularly

Secretary-Treasurer

Charlie Cahoon



Charlie Cahoon is an Associate Professor and Extension Weed Specialist in the Crop and Soil Sciences Department at North Carolina State University. Charlie was born and raised in the blacklands of eastern North Carolina (Swan Quarter) where he worked on his family's row crop, vegetable, and hog farm. Charlie attended Mattamuskeet High School where he was an active member of FFA, 4-H, and lettered in baseball and football. He graduated Summa Cum Laude from North Carolina State University with a BS in Agronomy-Soil Science in 2011. While still an undergraduate, Charlie stumbled into a summer job working for the legendary Extension Weed Specialist, Dr. Alan York. Following that summer, Charlie knew he had found his calling and commenced his graduate education in Weed Science under the direction of Drs. York and David Jordan. He received his PhD

in 2015 and later that year began his career as an Extension Weed Specialist at Virginia Tech. Based at the Eastern Shore AREC in Painter, Virginia, Charlie had sole responsibilities for weed management in cotton, peanuts, and vegetables and split grain responsibilities with Dr. Michael Flessner. In 2018, Charlie was fortunate to replace his mentor at North Carolina State University as the Extension Weed Specialist for corn and cotton. In addition to his extension and research duties, Charlie teaches a cross-listed undergraduate/graduate introductory Weed Science course and guest lectures in various other classes. Charlie has authored or co-authored 34 peer-reviewed papers, 39 peer-reviewed extension publications, and 74 meeting abstracts. He has mentored 7 MS and 1 PhD students and served as a committee member for 14 additional students.

Charlie has served on several Southern Weed Science Society, Northeastern Weed Science Society, and Weed Science Society of America committees. In service to the Southern Weed Science Society, Charlie serves annually as a judge or moderator for the graduate student oral contest. From 2017 to 2019, Charlie served on the Southern Weed Science Society Student Contest Committee that culminated as committee chair for the 2019 annual meeting in Oklahoma City. As chair of the committee, Charlie organized the 2019 Graduate Student Contest that included 72 participants and 45 judges across nine separate contest sections. He has also chaired the Outstanding Educator Subcommittee and has been a member of the Continuing Education Unit Committee. Additionally, Charlie is an active member of the Weed Science Society of North Carolina, having served as President in 2024. Charlie is a Deacon at Wendell Baptist Church where he also serves on the Administrative Team, Security Team, and is a substitute Sunday school teacher. In his spare time, he enjoys traveling, farming/gardening, hunting/fishing, reading, playing cards, cheering on the Wolfpack (and Hokies), and spending time with his wife and two children.

Mike Lovelace



Mike Lovelace received his B.S. degree in Agronomy from Oklahoma State University in 1997. During his undergraduate studies, he was highly active in departmental activities serving as President of the Agronomy Club, competing on the soils, crops, and weed judging teams, and working as an undergraduate research assistant under Dr. Tom Peeper. As a senior, Mike won the undergraduate division of the NCWSS Weed Contest in Monmouth, IL. He continued his education at the University of Arkansas, earning his M.S. in Weed Science under Dr. Dick Oliver in 2000 and his Ph.D. under Dr. Ron Talbert in 2003. While at Arkansas, Mike served as President of the Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences Graduate Student Club and became actively involved with the SWSS and the WSSA. He was a member of three consecutive SWSS Weed Contest championship teams and be-

came only the second graduate student in SWSS history to win the weed contest, oral presentation, and poster contests.

Mike began his professional career in the seed industry, where he spent a decade in various roles in the USDA and Dow Agrosciences before returning to his weed science roots. For the past 13 years, he has served as a Field Scientist with Dow Agrosciences/Corteva Agriscience, covering Texas, Oklahoma, eastern New Mexico, and southwest Kansas. In this role, Mike conducts early-stage to pre-commercial field research across a wide range of crops, including cotton, wheat, grain sorghum, corn, soybeans, alfalfa, peanuts, and various vegetables and other minor crops. Mike has played a key role in the characterization, development, and launch of several major crop protection technologies, including Enlist® cotton and related Enlist® herbicides and the active ingredients Isoclast™, Arylex™, and Rinskor™. He has also initiated many projects to identify new uses for existing Corteva products, designing and executing proof-of-concept trials and building strong business cases that led to label expansions and special-use approvals. In addition to his research responsibilities, Mike provides technical support to sales teams, coordinates field days, and trains commercial staff on new technologies. In recognition of his professional accomplishments, Mike was honored by the University of Arkansas with the Outstanding Ph.D. Alumni Award.

Mike has remained active in SWSS throughout his career. He has chaired the Endowment Committee and regularly serves as a judge for the student oral and poster competitions. Grateful for the opportunities and growth the society has provided him, Mike is eager to continue giving back to the weed science community.

Editor

Hannah Wright-Smith



Hannah Wright-Smith is an Assistant Professor in the Horticulture Department at the University of Arkansas, where she has responsibilities in turf, forages, and specialty crops. In October Hannah will join the Department of Plant Sciences at the University of Tennessee as an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist for forage and horticulture crop weed control. She attended Mississippi State University, earning her B.S. degree in Agribusiness 2016. After completing her undergraduate degree, Hannah attended the University of Arkansas and began working on her M.S. degree (2020) as a student of Dr. Jason Norsworthy. Hannah went on to join Dr. Stanley Culpepper's program at the University of Georgia and completed her Ph.D. in 2022. Throughout her graduate and professional career, Hannah has worked with over forty crops or crop production systems, including row and specialty crops, turf, and forages. She has authored or coauthored 12 peer-

reviewed publications, 33 meeting abstracts, 30 Extension publications, and given 50 Extension presentations and 4 invited presentations.

As a student Hannah was active in the SWSS and has continued this involvement in her professional career. Most recently she served as Chair of the SWSS Student Contest Committee and co-host of the Weed Contest. In her free time Hannah loves cooking with her husband, Tyler, cuddling with their dog, Doug, and crocheting or knitting.

Aniruddha Maity



Aniruddha Maity is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences at Auburn University. Maity's Weed Bionomics Lab focuses on biology, ecology, and integrated management of weeds and invasive species in managed and natural ecosystems. Relying on inter-disciplinary and collaborative approaches, his program includes a basic component that increases fundamental knowledge on the evolution and ecological importance of weed species and an applied component that addresses practical issues. His potential areas of research include statewide herbicide resistance monitoring, understanding the influences of biotic and abiotic agents on herbicide resistance, weed's response to interactions between herbicides and soil amendments such as biochar and poultry litter, exploring alternative use of weeds such as bioherbicide, aerial identification and management of weeds, developing herbicidal and non-herbicide-based weed management concepts and practices that take advantage of improved understanding of management impacts on weed biology.

WSSA Representative

Peter Dotray



Peter Dotray is the Rockwell Chair of Weed Science and Extension Weed Specialist with Texas Tech University, Texas A&M AgriLife Research, and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service - Lubbock. He is a native of Minneapolis, Minnesota. He received his B.S. degree from the University of Minnesota, M.S. degree from Washington State University (advisor Dr. Frank Young), and Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota (advisor Dr. Don Wyse). He started his three-way appointment in Lubbock in 1993. Peter teaches Principles of Weed Science and Mode and Mechanism of Herbicide to undergraduate and graduate students. These courses are taught on-campus and online to students off-campus. He conducts weed control research in several crops including cotton, peanut, grain sorghum, corn, and sesame. He has secured \$6 million dollars in external research support. Peter serves as an Extension Weed Specialist in an area that is planted to 3.5 million acres of cotton on the Texas Southern High Plains.

Peter has served as the major advisor or co-advisor to 50 graduate students and has served on 43 graduate committees. He has authored or coauthored 104 journal articles, nine book chapters, 581 abstracts and proceedings, 216 technical publications and popular articles, and has given over 100 presentations at professional meetings and 950 presentations at grower meetings. For the Southern Weed Science Society, he served as Proceedings Editor, CAST Rep, Member-At-Large, Vice President, President Elect, President, and Past President, and numerous other committees. Peter served as President for the American Peanut Research and Education Society, American Society of Agronomy-Texas Chapter, West Texas Agricultural Chemicals Institute, and Gamma Sigma Delta-Texas Tech University Chapter. He is a Fellow of the American Peanut Research and Education Society and the Southern Weed Science Society.

Ryan Bryant



Ryan Bryant-Schlobohm grew up in Goodwell, OK. He received his B.S. in Biological Science with minors in Chemistry and Agronomy from Oklahoma Panhandle State University (OPSU) in 2015. Following his time at OPSU, he attended Oklahoma State University where he received his M.S. (2016) and Ph.D. (2020). Upon graduation, he began working for UPL as a Technical Services Manager where he provided pre- and post-commercialization technical support for a large herbicide, insecticide, fungicide, miticide, and biological portfolio across a variety of crops. Over the course of this role, he covered multiple states, including OK, TX, NM, CO, KS, AR, LA, MO, and TN. In 2024, he transitioned into his current role at UPL as a Technical Development Manager for Herbicides. In this role, he is responsible for the early-stage product development of herbicide projects across UPL's wheat, rice, cotton, TNV (tree, nut, and vine), and L-glufosinate platforms. Ryan currently lives in Amarillo, TX with wife Jennifer and their 2-year old daughter, Eleanor. In his free time, he enjoys travelling with his family, fly fishing, and playing basketball.

Washington Report

August 2024
Lee Van Wychen

Meet the 2025-2026 Science Policy Fellows

Aleah Butler-Jones is a fourth year PhD candidate at Cornell University studying under the supervision of Dr. Lynn Sosnoskie. Aleah's dissertation research focuses on investigating the impact of electrical weed control (EWC) on weed and soil biological communities in addition to EWC's integration into specialty crop production systems. She received her B.S. in Agricultural Sciences at Cornell University. During this time, she worked as an undergraduate research assistant to Dr. Toni DiTommaso, Dr. Thomas Björkman, and the Cornell Small Farms Program. She was first exposed to weed science through competing at the 2017 Northeastern Weed Science Society (NEWSS) Weed Contest as part of Cornell's team. Aleah earned her M.S. in Horticultural Biology from Cornell University. Her thesis focused on the confirmation of glyphosate-resistant Palmer amaranth populations in NY and their responses to alternative chemistries and elevated temperatures. Through her work, Aleah strives to develop and assess novel integrated weed management tactics and their impact on the agroecosystem. She is thrilled to be a Science Policy Fellow and looks forward to developing a greater understanding of science policy and its relation to agricultural research. Most of all, Aleah is grateful to the WSSA for the opportunity to contribute to the society's endeavor to provide science-based information to policymakers and the broader public and advocate research, education, and outreach.



Matthew "Cole" Woolard is a second-year Ph.D. student at Texas Tech University under the advisement of Dr. Peter Dotray. Cole's dissertation research focuses on the utilization of topramezone and L-glufosinate in the Axant™ Flex Cotton System. He received his B.S. in Crop Science and Agriculture Business from the University of Arkansas. While working on his undergraduate degree, Cole was introduced to weed science through an internship with Corteva Agriscience under the direction of Dr. Drew Ellis. Upon completing his B.S. degree, Cole joined Dr. Jason Norsworthy's program to pursue a M.S. degree. In May of 2024, Cole successfully defended his thesis titled "Evaluation of a Diflufenican : Metribuzin : Flufenacet Premixture for Soybean Tolerance and Weed Control." Through his work, Cole aims to develop weed management strategies to assist producers who adopt the new Axant Flex Cotton System. He is looking forward to learning about and contributing to issues that



concern policy and agriculture. Cole would like to thank the WSSA and the Science Policy Committee for providing students with the opportunity to serve as Science Policy Fellows.

Weed Science Society Presidents Advocate for Ag Research Priorities in Washington DC

During the week of May 5, the National and Regional Weed Science Society Presidents traveled to Washington DC for Congressional and stakeholder visits. We began the week by attending the National Coalition for Food and Agriculture Research (NCFAR) Annual Meeting and fly-in. There were about 40 NCFAR members in attendance representing a broad array of agricultural research stakeholders. We had a good discussion about the many issues facing the USDA Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission area. Concerns were raised about splitting up the Farm Bill and how that would impact the smaller titles in the Farm Bill such as the Research Title (7). Could a “skinny” Farm Bill get enough votes to pass Congress without the Commodity Title or Nutrition Title?

We also had a good dialogue with the USDA REE Chief of Staff Ricki Schroeder, followed by Congressional Visits in the afternoon and then an evening reception in the House Ag Committee Hearing room and balcony. Rep. Frank Lucas (R-OK) joined us at the reception and provided remarks on how to move forward in this political environment. Rep. Lucas is currently Chair of the House Science Committee and is the longest serving member of the House Ag Committee where he served as Chair from 2011 to 2015 and oversaw the passage of the 2014 Farm Bill.

Over the next two days, the Weed Science Society Presidents visited their local Senators and Representatives to discuss funding priorities such as the Crop Protection and Pest Management (CPPM) program, the IR-4 Program and capacity programs such as Hatch and Smith-Lever.

This year, we also delivered a [WSSA Policy Priorities one-pager](#) to offices that the President’s developed in preparation for the fly-in. A special thanks to Dawn Refsell, Ian Burke and Hilary Sandler for their time and effort in developing this. The Policy Priorities one-pager focuses on four main areas: 1) Extension and Research funding; 2) Enhancing Integrated Weed Management; 3) Ensuring Crop Productivity & American Resources for Generations; and 4) Workforce Competency. In addition, select Congressional offices received a free Weed Bingo! Game (available at the [WSSA Bookstore](#)). Between the NCFAR Congressional Visits where the Presidents divided up and attended visits with other ag research stakeholders and the more focused weed science visits to our local Congressional offices during the next couple of days, our group **visited over 30 offices**.

The Weed Science Society Presidents also met with the American Soybean Association, the American Farm Bureau Federation, the Entomological Society of America and CropLife America for in-depth discussions on their policy priorities and how our organizations can work together for the common good of ensuring a safe, secure, and reliable food and fiber supply.



Above: from Left to Right: Ian Burke - WSSA President-Elect; Dawn Refsell - WSSA Vice President; Hilary Sandler – WSSA President; Thierry Besancon – NEWSS President; Lee Van Wychen – Executive Director of Science Policy; Eric Palmer – SWSS President; and Carl Coburn – WSSW President



Above: from Left to Right: Ian Burke - WSSA President-Elect; Thierry Besancon – NEWSS President; Hilary Sandler – WSSA President; Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA), Senate Agriculture Committee; Dawn Refsell - WSSA Vice President; Carl Coburn – WSSW President; and Eric Palmer – SWSS President.



Above: from Left to Right: Ian Burke - WSSA President-Elect; Dawn Refsell - WSSA Vice President; Hilary Sandler – WSSA President; Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) Sen. Agriculture Committee Ranking Member; Lee Van Wychen – WSSA Executive Director of Science Policy; Thierry Besancon – NEWSS President; and Rebecca Haynie – Director of Science Policy, CropLife America.



Above: From Left to Right: Hilary Sandler – WSSA President; Rep. Frank Lucas (R-OK) Chair of the House Science Committee; Eric Palmer – SWSS President; Thierry Besancon – NEWSS President; Carl Coburn – WSSW President; and Lee Van Wychen – WSSA Executive Director of Science Policy



Above: From Left to Right: Eric Palmer – SWSS President; Lee Van Wychen – WSSA Executive Director of Science Policy; Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Chair of the powerful House Rules Committee; and Thierry Besancon – NEWSS President.

Our meeting with Rep. Foxx would not have happened without Eric’s local connection to the Congresswoman! In addition, we came to realize that she and her husband Tom established and ran a successful nursery and landscaping business in the High Country for more than three decades, which is now operated by their daughter. Rep. Foxx let us know that she was very familiar with glyphosate and how to use it!

Both House and Senate Ag Appropriators Reject President’s “Skinny” Budget

The House Appropriations Committee passed their agriculture spending bill on June 30 by a vote of 35 to 27 and the Senate passed their ag spending bill on July 10 by a 27 to 0 vote. Thankfully, both spending bills rejected most of the Administration's proposed deep cuts to agricultural research.

The biggest area of concern in the **President’s Budget Request (PBR)** for FY 2026 was for USDA NIFA. The FY2025 estimated funding for NIFA is \$1.686 billion, while the PBR was \$1.044 billion, a 38% cut. The House Ag Appropriators marked up their bill at \$1.654 billion, which is a 1.9% cut, but the Senate marked up their bill at \$1.69 billion, a 0.3% increase.

Within the NIFA “Research and Education” account, the FY26 PBR had eliminated \$265 million in funding for the **Hatch Act**, which funds our agricultural experiment stations. However, thankfully, both the House and Senate Ag Appropriators restored the \$265 million in full.

The **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)** was proposed to be cut by \$50 million in the PBR for FY 2026, but the House Ag Appropriators kept the funding at FY 2025 levels at \$445 million, while the Senate bumped it up by \$200 K. The same can be said for the **IR-4 Program** being held level at \$15 million for FY 2026. The sentiment on the Hill this year is that flat funding is considered a victory.

Within the NIFA “Extension” account, the FY 2026 PBR would have cut **Smith Lever 3(b) & 3(c)** extension funding from \$325 million to \$175 million, a 46% cut. However, both the House and Senate Ag Appropriators rejected that cut and kept funding at FY 2025 levels at \$325 million.

Within the NIFA “Integrated” account, the FY 2026 PBR eliminated every program in the account. The NIFA Integrated account requires funded projects to incorporate a 1) research component, 2) an education component, and 3) extension activities to address critical issues in agriculture. However, the House and Senate Ag Appropriators restored funding at FY 2025 levels. This includes the **Crop Protection and Pest Management (CPPM)** program at \$21 million and the Organic Transitions Program at \$7.5 million. The Methyl Bromide Transitions program was reduced from \$2 million to \$1 million in the House, but Senate kept it level at \$2 million.

	FY 23 Final	FY 24 Final	FY 25 Estimate	FY 26 President	FY 26 House	FY 26 Senate
USDA Research Program	----- \$ Millions -----					
USDA- ARS	1,744	1,788	1,788	1,700	1,791	1,827
USDA- NIFA	1,701	1,679	1,687	1,044	1,654	1,692
Hatch Act: Ag Exp. Stations	259	259	265	0	265	265
Smith-Lever 3(b) and 3(c): Extension	325	325	325	175	325	325
AFRI: Ag & Food Research Initiative	455	445	445	405	445	445.2
IR-4 Program: Minor crop use	15	15	15	15	15	15
CPPM: Crop Prot. & Pest Mang't	21	21	21	0	21	21

Ag research funding for FY 23, FY 24, and FY 25 for select programs. The proposed funding for FY 2026 by the President, House and Senate are in the three columns on the right. The colored numbers indicate *increases* (green) or *decreases* (red) compared to the FY 2025 appropriation.

Finally, the House Ag Appropriators provided \$1.79 billion for the **Agricultural Research Service (ARS)**, which is \$2.5 million above the FY25 enacted program level, and includes increases for high-priority initiatives, addresses emerging pests and diseases, but eliminates funding for climate hubs. The FY26 PBR proposed a cut of \$88 million for USDA-ARS. The Senate Ag Appropriators provided an even greater increase to \$1.83 billion.

Appropriations for EPA – Mixed News

The EPA's enacted budget for FY 2025 budget was \$9.14 billion, but the proposed FY26 budget from the President requested only \$4.16 billion, a 54.5% reduction. This cut would significantly impact programs like state grants, water infrastructure funding, and enforcement. The EPA is funded under the Interior & Environment Appropriations Subcommittee in both the House and Senate. The House passed their version of the bill on July 22 by a partisan vote of 33 to 28. The Senate passed their version of the Interior & Environment appropriations bill on July 24 by a vote of 26 to 2. The House version proposes \$7.01 billion for EPA in FY 2026, a 23% reduction. The Senate version proposed a less drastic cut to \$8.64 billion, or a 5% reduction compared to FY 2025.

On the bright side, both the House and Senate bills maintained pesticide licensing, which was one of the few EPA programs spared. The Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) funding was held level at \$134 million, which is a definite win in this budget environment. Report language in the bill also calls for reducing the backlog and

timely completion of a third-party audit as required in PRIA 5.

Some Ag Research Funding included in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA)

Following approval by the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, OBBBA moved through congressional consideration, where the agriculture provisions originally introduced by those committees remained largely intact. On July 1, the Senate voted 51-50, with Vice President J.D. Vance casting the tie-breaking vote, to approve an amended OBBBA. On July 3, the House took up the Senate-amended version of OBBBA, voting 218-214 to approve the bill. On July 4, 2025, the president signed the OBBBA ([P.L. 119-21](#)) into law. Here are some details of ag research provisions in the OBBBA:

Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR): The OBBBA allocates \$37 million for FY 2026 to FFAR to promote public-private innovation partnerships that fund research addressing big food and agriculture challenges.

Specialty Crops Research Initiative (SCRI) The OBBBA significantly increases mandatory funding for the SCRI, scaling up funding from \$80 million in FY25 to \$175 million in FY26. This increase in funding for SCRI is only for FY26, and would revert to \$80 million in FY27 without a new farm bill or a second reconciliation package. The SCRI enhances research on pest control, crop breeding and mechanization for high-value crops.

Research Facilities Act. To modernize aging research infrastructure at the 1862, 1890 and 1994 land grant universities, the bill provides \$125 million in mandatory annual funding starting in 2026 and each fiscal year thereafter for grants under the Research Facilities Act. (7 U.S.C. 390d). This program has only been getting about \$1 million per year in discretionary funding, so this a major win for land grant universities.

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP). The OBBBA increases funding for the SCBGP from \$85 million to \$100 million in FY 2026. The SCBGP is a federal program that provides funding to states and territories to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. These crops receive support through locally-led projects. The program aims to boost the industry by funding projects that focus on research, marketing, and education.

Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention (PPDMDP). The OBBBA increases the funding for APHIS's PPDMDP from \$75 million in FY 2025 to \$90 million in FY 2026. APHIS administers this program with a focus on strengthening prevention, detection, and mitigation efforts on invasive plant pests and diseases. Projects are categorized under six goal areas, including enhancing pest/disease analysis and survey, targeting domestic inspections, strengthening pest identification, safeguarding nursery production, conducting outreach, and enhancing mitigation and rapid response.

Urban, Indoor, and Other Emerging Agricultural Production Research, Education, and Extension Initiative. The OBBBA provides \$2 million in mandatory funding for each of fiscal years 2024 through 2031. This program provides competitive grants to support research, education, and extension activities for the purposes of facilitating the development of urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural production, harvesting, transportation, aggregation, packaging, distribution, and markets, including determining and developing the best production management and integrated pest management practices.

Scholarships for Students at 1890 Institutions: The OBBBA will increase mandatory funding from \$40 million to \$60 million to remain available until expended. This program is considered a "stranded" program in the farm bill and has not been issued any new funding since September 2024.

What's Next

The policy changes included in the OBBBA are some of the most significant in Farm Bill history because of what's included *and* what's left out. For the first time in 50 years (and 10 Farm Bills) the OBBBA separates nutrition assistance from commodity subsidies and risk management insurance. There are questions of how, or even whether, future farm bills might pass Congress.

While a handful of ag research programs were authorized in OBBBA, the vast majority of ag research programs in Title VII still need to be reauthorized before the Sep. 30, 2025 deadline. It remains to be seen whether Congress can pass a “skinny” Farm Bill or Farm Bill 2.0 before then. Otherwise, Congress will have to pass a third extension of the 2018 Farm Bill to get us through 2026.

Hamby Appointed as Director of National Institute of Food and Agriculture



Dr. Jaye L. Hamby was appointed to serve as the Director of USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) on March 20, 2025. Prior to joining USDA NIFA, Dr. Hamby led and directed proprietary research efforts. Over the course of his career, he has directed hundreds of research efforts specializing in concept testing, product marketing, value driver analysis, and following market trends and strategies to support agricultural producers.

Dr. Hamby grew up on his family’s cow-calf operation in west Tennessee and developed a deep connection to agriculture through 4-H and FFA, eventually serving as a national FFA officer. He graduated from the University of Tennessee’s College of Agriculture with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Education and earned master’s and doctoral degrees in Agricultural Education with a specialization in Agricultural Economics from Oklahoma State University.

Congress Pushes Back on Presidents Deep Cuts to Interior

For the Department of the Interior FY 2026 funding, both the House and Senate proposed smaller cuts--and in some cases, increases--compared to the President's budget request.

In the House, considerably less severe funding cuts are proposed for the Bureau of Land Management (-8% vs. -32%), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (-6.5% vs. -32%), the U.S. Geological Survey (-5.6% vs. 39%), and the National Park Service (-6% vs. -37%) compared to the President's request. The USGS Ecosystems Mission Area, slated for termination in the President's proposal, would shrink by only 3% to \$290 million in the House bill.

The Senate has adopted a more generous approach: USGS is looking at a 2.4% increase, with its Ecosystems Mission Area slated for a nearly 3% boost to \$308 million, compared to the President’ proposed elimination of the program. The National Park Service is looking at a 2% cut, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is facing a 1% cut, and the Bureau of Land Management is slated for a nearly 3% cut.

The U.S. Forest Service, targeted for a 75% reduction in the President's proposal, would see nearly level funding in the House (-0.2%) and a 1% increase in the Senate.

Letter to USDA, EPA and HHS Regarding Science and Transparency in Initial MAHA Report

On June 16, the six National and Regional Weed Societies joined over 250 other agricultural organizations in a letter to the heads of USDA, EPA and HHS after the release of the draft Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) report. Our concerns were that many of the studies referenced to support erroneous claims significantly misrepresented their findings or in some cases are entirely nonexistent. In other instances, the report relies on a few select pieces of poor evidence and opinion articles to justify false claims, ignoring vast volumes of scientific evidence to the contrary. Since its inception, the MAHA Commission has operated without meaningful input from food and agricultural stakeholders. [The letter can be read here.](#)

WSSA Urges Public Comment Period After Release of the August 12 MAHA Report

On August 1, 2025, the WSSA joined 31 other national organizations in a letter to HHS Sec. Kennedy, USDA Sec. Rollins and EPA Administrator Zeldin urging them to seek public comment after the MAHA report is released on August 12. The letter and signatories are available [HERE](#).

A Review of the Role Played by Herbicides in the Success of Agriculture’s Foundational Conservation

and Environmental Objectives

In a [55 page report](#) released by the [Agricultural Nutrient Policy Council](#), they call on policymakers to fully recognize the indispensable role of diverse herbicide chemistries and modes of action in advancing national environmental goals. Limiting access to these tools risks reversing hard-won gains in conservation agriculture. Herbicides are essential to maintaining farm productivity and driving agriculture's environmental progress. Sound policy must reflect the full value of herbicides as a cornerstone of modern, responsible farming.

Corn Growers Survey: We Need Glyphosate and Atrazine

On July 31, 2025, the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) released survey results from over 1,000 corn growers that showed their concerns of possibly losing glyphosate and atrazine in the upcoming MAHA report due out August 12.

“Respondents indicated overwhelmingly -- 85% -- that weeds are the top pest plaguing their crops and that atrazine and glyphosate were their top two herbicides of choice. By a wide margin, glyphosate ranked as the most important herbicide used by corn growers.”

The [six pages of survey results](#) are quite informative.

Adam Telle is new Assistant Secretary of Army (ASA) - Civil Works (CW)



On May 13, 2025, Mr. Adam Telle was nominated to be the new Assistant Secretary of Army- Civil Works or ASA (CW). He has strong support from Sen. Bill Haggerty (R-TN), where he has served as his Chief of Staff for the past 4 years.

On Saturday night, August 2, Telle was confirmed by the Senate to be the new ASA(CW) on a 72-22 vote. Telle is a native of Northport, AL and a graduate of Mississippi State University. He has spent the last 20 years in DC, including 10 of those years working for Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS) who was a strong supporter of the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) in Vicksburg, MS.

As ASA(CW) Telle will carry out the administration's priorities relating to ports, waterways, and flood control infrastructure. Specifically, the ASA(CW) establishes policy direction and provides supervision of the Department of the Army for authorized civil functions pertaining to river and harbor, flood and storm damage reduction, shore protection, aquatic ecosystem restoration, and related efforts

The Army Corp's Aquatic Plant Control Program Facing an Uphill Battle for Research Funding

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Aquatic Plant Control (APC) program is the nation's only federally authorized program for research and development for effective, science-based strategies to manage invasive aquatic weed species. For over 60 years, the USACE has served as the lead agency for developing and sharing new and improved technologies to protect our nation's aquatic resources from aquatic invasive weeds. The APC program is authorized by **Section 104** of the **1958 River and Harbor Act** to provide:

a comprehensive program to provide for prevention, control, and progressive eradication of noxious aquatic plant growths and aquatic invasive species from the navigable waters of the U.S., in the combined interest of navigation, flood control, drainage, agriculture, fish and wildlife conservation, public health, and related purposes, including continued research for development of the most effective and economic control measures

The APC program funding for research has ranged from \$5 to \$7 million from FY 2018 to FY 2024, despite not being in a president's budget request since 1996. That research has returned its value hundreds of times over in the control of aquatic invasive weeds and plant growths and the restoration of our aquatic resources across the U.S.. Not having funding for the Aquatic Plant Control program in FY 2025 has jeopardized the continuation of ongoing research and development of new and improved technologies to protect our nation's aquatic resources.

For FY 2026, the APC program faces a similar scenario as in FY 2025 with \$0 in USACE Work Plan. While the House has provided \$3 million for APC research in its Energy and Water bill, we still don't know what the

Senate will do, but we are working with Aquatic Plant Management Society leaders to educate appropriators and USACE leaders of the importance of this \$5 to \$7 million in the USACE's overall \$10 billion budget.

Senate Confirms Brian Nesvik as New Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



On August 1, 2025, the U.S. Senate confirmed Brian Nesvik on a 54-43 vote to be the next Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Nesvik is a native of Caspar, WY and spent 30 years with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and served as the agency's director from 2019 until his retirement in 2024. He also served in the Army National Guard for 35 years.

Senator John Barrasso (R-WY), on behalf of the nominee, said "I look forward to working with Brian to restore science to conservation policies." Some organizations, like the Sierra Club, have opposed Nesvik's nomination to the position, citing his support for removing Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections for grizzly bears.

Others, like the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, welcomed his confirmation, citing their longstanding collaboration and expressing optimism about working together to conserve fish and wildlife habitats while enhancing hunting and fishing opportunities.

USDA to Relocate 2,600 DC Jobs from DC

On July 24, 2025, USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins announced a multi-year agency reorganization plan that will relocate more than half of its Washington, DC-based workforce to five regional hubs—Raleigh NC, Kansas City MO, Indianapolis IN, Fort Collins CO, and Salt Lake City UT. On August 1, Secretary Rollins announced a 30-day public comment period for stakeholders to provide feedback on the Department's reorganization plan, as outlined in the Secretary's [memorandum \(PDF, 2.6 MB\)](#) Please see below for more details.

The plan includes the phased closure of three or four of the 94 USDA ARS research facilities, including the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center and the George Washington Carver Center in Maryland--which houses the Agricultural Research Service ARS. The U.S. Forest Service conducts research currently in 5 regional stations. Those labs will be consolidated at a single station in Fort Collins, risking the loss of regional expertise and long-term forest experiments.

Of the approximately 4,600 USDA employees currently based in the Washington region, no more than 2,000 will remain after the reorganization is complete. The rest will be transferred to regional offices in an effort "to better serve rural communities and reduce operational costs". While no layoffs are planned, significant staff attrition is expected.

How to Submit Comments

All stakeholders, including USDA employees, members of Congress, and agricultural and nutrition partners, are encouraged to provide feedback by emailing reorganization@usda.gov. The comment period is open through **August 26, 2025**.

Congress Must Reaffirm EPA Authority Over Pesticide Labeling Laws

The six National and Regional Weed Science Societies, along with 350 plus other agricultural and pesticide stakeholders [sent a letter to House and Senate leaders](#) expressing our growing concerns that some states have begun to regulate pesticides in a manner contradicting decades of scientific guidance from EPA.

The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) establishes EPA as the authority for making decisions on how pesticides should be labeled and used. While states are permitted to regulate the sale and use of pesticides under FIFRA (sections 24(a) and 24(c)), they are preempted from creating additional labeling requirements or requiring different labels and packaging (FIFRA 24(b)).

A lot of this goes back to California and the decision in 2017 to require warning labels for glyphosate. California listed glyphosate as a known carcinogen despite the EPA (and the rest of major regulatory bodies in the world) concluding that it was not. To that end, we strongly urge Congress to enact the [Agricultural Labeling](#)

[Uniformity Act](#) (note- this was introduced in the last session of Congress as HR 4288. It has not been re-introduced yet in this Congress).

Regulatory Overhaul Needed to Advance Ag Technology, Lawmakers Told

On July 22, 2025, four panelists representing ag technology interests called on Congress to overhaul federal regulations to speed the approval of new ag technologies. Speaking before the House Agriculture Committee in a hearing titled “[Past Breakthroughs and Future Innovations in Crop Production](#)”, they pointed to long delays at the EPA that are stalling innovation in crop protection tools.

Don Cameron, vice president and general manager of Terranova Ranch in California’s Central Valley, said EPA staffing shortages are a major factor slowing the registration process. There simply aren’t enough EPA staff to keep up with the workload.

Terry Abbott, chairman of the Council of Producers and Distributors of Agrotechnology (CPDA), noted that more than \$500 million worth of member-developed products are currently stuck in the EPA’s regulatory backlog. He urged Congress to fully fund the agency’s Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) and to update the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act (PRIA) to strengthen transparency and predictability in the review process.

You can view the hearing, the witness list and their opening statements [HERE](#).

Comment Period Opens for Proposed New Rule on Drone Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS)

On August 5, 2025, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) released a [new proposed rule](#) that would eliminate the requirement for operators to view drones in their visual line of sight. By eliminating these requirements, the Department of Transportation (DOT) believes the proposal will significantly expand the use of drones in farming. For more information about the proposed rule, see the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAAs) [Beyond Visual Line of Sight \(BVLOS\) fact sheet](#). The comment period for the [new proposed rule](#) closes on **October 6, 2025**.

PERC Releases Unmanned Aerial System Task Force Recommendations for Pesticide Applicator Training Materials

On August 6, 2025, the [Pesticide Educational Resources Collaborative \(PERC\)](#) announced the release of the [Unmanned Aerial Systems \(UAS\) Task Force Recommendations Report](#), a comprehensive set of training content considerations designed to support states, tribes, and territories in the certification of pesticide applicators using UAS.

As drone use in agriculture expands, applicators and regulators face an important challenge: there are currently no standardized training materials to guide the safe and legal application of pesticides via UAS. Recognizing this urgent need, PERC convened a National Task Force of experts to review existing training resources, identify gaps, and then provide actionable insights and content recommendations that can inform the development of future training materials and certification exams.

Website that Lists Noxious Weeds in each US State and Canadian Province Now Available

Mohsen B. Mesgaran and his team at UC-Davis have launched a website that provides lists of noxious weeds for each U.S. state, as well as provinces and states in Canada and Australia: <https://regulatedplants.unu.edu/>

They are planning to expand the database to include other countries and add ecological information, management guidelines, and photos for each weed species in future releases. For the U.S. list, they have also conducted a quantitative analysis of noxious weed sales on Amazon and eBay, which will be out soon. Based on their analysis, over one-third of these noxious weeds are available for sale on Amazon and eBay!

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Meetings of the National and Regional Weed Science Societies

Dec 15-18, 2025 North Central Weed Science Society (NCWSS), Grand Rapids, MI www.ncwss.org
Jan. 5 - 8, 2026 Northeastern Weed Science Society (NEWSS), Hershey, PA www.newss.org
Jan. 26 - 29, 2026 Southern Weed Science Society (SWSS), Nashville, TN www.swss.ws
Feb. 9 - 12, 2026 Weed Science Society of America (WSSA), Raleigh, NC www.wssa.net
Mar 2 - 5, 2026 Western Society of Weed Science (WSWS), Tucson, AZ www.wsweedscience.org
Jul. 13 - 16, 2025 Aquatic Plant Management Society (APMS), Phoenix, AZ www.apms.org
