

National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week IV

organized by the Invasive Weed Awareness Coalition (IWAC) in Washington DC by Nelroy Jackson

More than one hundred people, representing twenty-eight states, registered and participated in several interactive sessions of NIWAW IV during the week of February 24-28, 2003 in Washington, DC. Representation covered Southeastern states, Midwestern states and most of the states west of the Mississippi River, as well as the Washington DC area, and included local, state, and federal government, academic, NGO's, industry personnel, private and public landowners and land managers.

The opening session offered a breadth of topics ranging from weed-free hay standards, electronic mapping techniques, status of some specific projects, Capitol Hill etiquette, and an update on the National Invasive Species Council (NISC) and the Invasive Species Advisory Committee (ISAC) highlighting progress on the crosscut budget (an analysis of the portion of federal agency budgets devoted to invasive species issues). Nineteen exhibits from a variety of agencies and organizations were displayed during the week at the U.S. Botanic Gardens. Many high-level managers from NISC departments and agencies attended the excellent reception at the Smithsonian Castle.

Something new this year was the presentation of awards to significant contributors who have increased the awareness of invasive plants. The award recipients were: Al Cofrancesco (individual); Fort Hunter Liggett, CA (for on-the-ground effort in controlling yellow starthistle); the National Wildlife Refuge Association (for public outreach and education); and the North Carolina Botanical Gardens. In addition, Randy Westbrooks received a joint IWAC - FICMNEW award for outstanding personal achievement.

The Briefing sessions at USDA featured two Undersecretaries, two deputy undersecretaries, and the administrators of CSREES, ARS, APHIS, and NRCS. The Briefing ses-

sion at the Department of Interior featured one Assistant Secretary and the administrators of FWS, BLM, BOR, NPS, USGS, and BIA. The Federal Interagency Committee for the Management of Noxious and Exotic Weeds (FICMNEW) meeting was highlighted by discussions of the proposed early detection and rapid response (EDRR) network, invasive plant management positions, and an update on Japanese stiltgrass. Feedback from the administrators indicated they were impressed by the large turnout during the meetings, showing the interest of stakeholders in the invasive weed issue.

Perhaps most importantly, participants from the several states had numerous visits with their senators and members of the House of Representatives. The majority of the Hill visits were to key members of both political parties on agriculture, resources, and environment committees.

The success of NIWAW was due to the planning by the Weed Science Society of America, Dow Chemical Company, Monsanto Company, BASF Corporation, and all the federal agency partners mentioned above. The large attendance was due to strong support from the Intermountain Noxious Weed Advisory Council (INWAC), Western Weed Coordinating Committee (WWCC), North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA) and the South Florida Water Management District. Representatives had more than 17 meetings with various NGO's and agencies to present and discuss their positions on several critical issues and concerns.

NIWAW-IV was highly successful and most comments by the participants were positive and favorable, with constructive critiques to improve future NIWAW events.

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