

Public Policy Update

APS Public Policy Board Helps Celebrate the APS Centennial Meeting and a History of APS Public Service, Outreach, and Policy Involvement

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The APS annual meeting was a welcome opportunity for the Public Policy Board (PPB) members to review progress on our major initiatives during the past year, as well as to visit with several APS committees and

boards, and APS Council. *We continue to invite guidance from council on the prioritization of initiatives and the percentage of effort to be placed in these areas.* At the PPB business meeting, we also met with colleagues from USDA ARS, APHIS, and CSREES who either are APS members themselves or were attending the Centennial Meeting in another capacity.

The occasion of APS's Centennial celebration also provided a wonderful opportunity to reflect and reminisce about the beginnings and the history of PPB, as well as its precursors, of which the National Plant Pathology Board (authorized by council in 1991) was only the most recent. Indeed, APS has a century of history in responding to national and international needs in the public arena, and these were highlighted in a Special Centennial Symposium, chaired by **James Cook**, that was presented not once but twice, premiering at the APS Centennial Meeting in Minneapolis and again the following month at the International Congress of Plant Pathology in Turin, Italy, where scientists from around the world recognized APS's special year.

Current PPB initiatives, their PPB "champions," and a brief summary of our 2007–2008 activities follow.

1. Education—**J. MacDonald**

- Assessed and articulated the need for broadly trained plant pathologists (extension, industry, biosecurity, plant breeding, diagnostics, international centers, etc.)
- An ad hoc APS committee, chaired by MacDonald, conducted a survey of needs and issues in plant pathology education from all sectors (academia, industry, and government)
- The committee is exploring creative new ways to share resources (faculty expertise, courses, internship opportunities, etc.) among land-grant universities as well as to identify new sources to address the multivariate parts of the education strategy

- MacDonald provided several *Phytopathology News* articles and presentations on survey results
 - Secured funding and content input from USDA CSREES and are working on additional funding for a national workshop on the future of education in plant pathology to be held in 2009
- ### 2. Genomics—**S. Hulbert, J. Leach, K. Eversole**
- Updated APS's pathogen priorities for sequencing; APS list was revised in 2007; need to update as pathogens are sequenced
 - Seeking continued funding programs within USDA and NSF for plant-associated microbes; addressing the closure of the NSF microbial genomics program (joint with USDA CSREES)
 - Address functional and comparative genomics, environmental issues and the metagenome, host-pathogen interactions, and opportunities resulting from new sequencing technologies; National workshop on these issues planned for 2009
- ### 3. Culture Collections—**S. Gold, K. Eversole**
- Working closely with **Jeff Jones**, chair of the APS ad hoc Culture Collections Committee
 - Assess the need to explore and define the nature of a culture resource for the future
 - Discussions with administrators from CSREES, ARS, APHIS, NSF, and numerous others on this topic
 - Planned a preliminary workshop to develop the concept of a national culture resource
 - Workshop proposal was funded by ARS and APHIS
 - The preliminary workshop was held in the fall of 2007
 - Planning a follow-up, larger workshop for January 2009
- ### 4. Food Safety—**J. Fletcher, T. Suslow, K. Webb**
- Discussions with Under Secretary **Gale Buchanan**, Office of Homeland Security Director **Sheryl Maddux**, and numerous others on the role of plant pathology in food safety
 - Formation of a Food Safety Interest Group within APS, which met in San Diego, CA

- Hosted symposium in San Diego with speakers from FDA, CDC, USDA Food Safety, and California Department of Agriculture
 - Cohosted, with Colorado State University, a national workshop on the interface between plant pathology and food safety in October 2008
 - Efforts to establish a relationship with FDA
- ### 5. Industry Issues—**B. Carroll, B. Dolezal, J. Mueller**
- Develop a stronger and more two-way relationship with EPA
 - Planning a roundtable discussion between industry leaders and EPA, fall 2008
 - Further explore the issues of greatest priority to APS members in industry
 - Eversole and Fletcher met with Office of Industry Relations (OIR) in San Diego, 2007, and in Minneapolis, 2008
 - Continue to engage OIR and the Industry Committee
- ### 6. Biosecurity—**J. Fletcher, K. Eversole**
- Continue partnerships and meet with USDA's Office of Homeland Security, National Plant Disease Recovery System, and the National Plant Diagnostic Network
 - Continue to respond to the emerging need for microbial forensics through interactions with the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI
 - Interact with the APS Threatening Pathogens Advisory Committee
 - Monitor legislative and regulatory activities
 - Interface with APS Threatening Pathogens Advisory Committee, chaired by **J. Sherwood**
- ### 7. Permitting—**J. Steadman**
- Relationships with APHIS continue to strengthen and grow, as evidenced by the invitations for APS involvement in new policy development pertaining to regulatory issues including permitting
 - APHIS had a significant presence in Minneapolis—a booth for e-Certification; APHIS scientists met with PPB
 - **Bob Martin** is a liaison for APS to APHIS Permitting Advisory Board
 - Continue current efforts to assist in rewriting APHIS regulations to improve risk-based permitting

- Petition for deregulation of pathogen and assistance with the widely prevalent pathogen lists

8. General Funding Support—K. Eversole, J. Fletcher

- This is a non-self-serving function that improves agriculture in general
- Often tied to other initiatives and addressed along with them
- Continue visits to Capitol Hill during PPB's spring meetings
- Ongoing efforts to increase agricultural research funding at USDA, NSF, DOE, and other agencies
- Determine feasibility of providing general support for international funding initiatives

9. Emerging/New Issues—K. Eversole, J. Fletcher

- Remain aware of general activities at key agencies
- Monitor legislative and regulatory initiatives
- Be a conduit for information to APS membership and to agency leaders and policy makers
- Be prepared to respond to emerging issues as appropriate or as directed by council

10. PPB Engages Early Career Plant Pathologists

- With generous donations, a PPB internship is now beginning its third year (2008–2009)
- Our first two interns were **Kimberly Webb** (USDA) and **Angela Records** (Ph.D. student, Texas A&M Univ.); our incoming intern is **Maritza Abril** (post-doctoral associate, Mississippi State University)
- Public policy orientation for PPB intern and new PPB members prior to spring meeting
- “Public Policy 101” workshop held at annual meeting, San Diego

11. APS OSTP Fellowship—K. Eversole

- Developed an APS Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) fellowship program with a 6-month tenure
- Discussed with APS Foundation and Council in Minneapolis
- Funding support for the first 6-month fellowship is being provided by APS Council, Office of Public Relations and Outreach, PPB, and individual contributions to a special account established by the APS Foundation ■



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