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Stewardship Alliance Making Strides NPSA 2001 Conference Launches Young Organization into Its Second Year

by Sally O'Neal Coates, Editor of Research Publications, WSU

The second National Pesticide Stewardship Alliance (NPSA) conference was held November 27 through 30, 2001. A diverse and enthusiastic group of educators, applicators, industrial representatives, and regulators gathered in Memphis, Tennessee, to exchange information and build a program to foster and enhance cooperative pesticide stewardship efforts throughout the United States and beyond. Organization president Roger Springman spoke for the entire group when he shared the vision of NPSA:

"Pesticide stewardship is more a cooperative venture than an independent one. A safer, better world through improved and enhanced stewardship is a dream we all share. Working together is not only wise, it is effective."

The fledgling NPSA had met for the first time just a year earlier, and conference organizers were justifiably proud of their accomplishments in the interim:

- By-laws and articles of incorporation had been developed.
 - An advisory council had been formed and had convened.
 - Sponsorship had been secured.
 - An office in Washington, DC had been opened.
 - Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program (PESP) status with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had been applied for and received.
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In his opening address to the attendees, Springman emphasized that the organization's primary objectives in the coming months would be to obtain and retain members and volunteers; to continue to build and strengthen ties between member groups; to identify priorities; to assemble task forces and subcommittees that would begin progress toward group goals; to secure funding to support an operating infrastructure.

As a conference attendee and first-hand, first-time observer of NPSA, I would have to say that "strength through diversity" is a theme of this organization. The perspectives shared throughout my three days at the conference showed a truly varied and dynamic organization united in the common goal of promoting cooperative pesticide stewardship programs.

Industry and Stewardship

James Borel, president of crop protection with DuPont Agriculture and Nutrition and chairman of the board for the American Crop Protection Association (ACPA), gave the Wednesday morning keynote address. Borel discussed the emerging involvement of industry in pesticide stewardship. He spoke of crop protection as a mature industry and of the need to turn resources and attention toward environmental stewardship. (This shift is reflected in ACPA's name change to CropLife America, effective January 1, 2002.) Although NPSA members need no reminding, Borel pointed out the challenge of providing food and fiber for a population approaching eight billion while meeting the public expectation of zero pesticide-related health incidents.

Those Pesky Labels

We all know that pesticide labels are our friends. These helpful little (and not-so-little) documents are the result of long hours of labor on the part of registrants and regulators, not to mention researchers. They are chock-full of everything we need to know about applying the specific pesticide, if we can but decipher them. Or are they?

The good, bad, and ugly aspects of pesticide labels reared their heads throughout the conference. Jane M. Thomas drew gales of laughter by poking fun at some of the more glaring examples of confusion and contradictory pesticide labels she comes in contact with as Pesticide Notification Network Coordinator for Washington State University. In keeping with her alter ego, the Queen Bee of Labels,¹ Thomas' presentation offered Royal Rules and Sovereign Suggestions for ways to improve label legibility. Not missing a beat, EPA's Amy L. Breedlove entered the fray with some unequivocally GOOD news about actual IMPROVEMENTS in labels. A labeling expert with EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs, she shared some of the recent successes and progress toward success in simplifying and clarifying label language, including the basic provisions of the Consumer Labeling Initiative (CLI), which we will expand upon in an upcoming issue of *AENews*. EPA's Jay Ellenberger, Associate Director of Field and External Affairs, detailed the proposed product labeling for spray and dust drift, which was released

¹ The character Thomas introduced in the May 2000 issue of *AENews* and reprised July, August, September, November, and December of 2000, June and August of 2001, and this month. See feature article "QBL Is Now a Tabloid Queen."),

August 22, 2001. Comments on the draft were due January 19, 2002. The goal of this document was to cover as many spray and dust uses and products as practical, from agricultural to horticultural to home and garden. In pursuit of clarity, basic terms including “drift” itself are defined, and both general and method-specific directives are specified. The document pertains to spray and dust products only, not to fumigants, granulars, or other formulations. The final guidance statement and implementation plan are targeted for release this summer or fall (2002), with new labeling statements due on most products by October 2003.

Tips and Resources for Would-Be Stewards

Between the formal conference sessions, the small but enthusiastic trade show, and informal conversations among conference participants, a wealth of assistance with environmental stewardship was available at the conference. Packets from the National Agriculture Compliance Center, for example, were distributed. Known as “Ag Center” for short, this resource was developed in 1995 by EPA’s Office of Compliance to help the ag community better understand environmental requirements so they might meet established standards. They can be reached toll-free at (888) 663-2155 or on-line at <http://www.epa.gov/oeca/ag> .



Crop Data Management Systems, Inc. (<http://www.cdms.net>) gave a presentation on their relational database and software for crop protection consultants, as well as their AgLabel.com product, which provides pesticide labels on compact disc, updatable annually via Internet download.

David Kammel from the University of Wisconsin at Madison offered some practical advice in his provocatively titled talk, “Rinsate Management: Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” Kammel’s slide show graphically illustrated the perils of improper rinsate management.² Unlike some dramatic presentations that are long on pointing out the problem but short on suggesting solutions, this presentation did a good job of explaining practical considerations for implementing rinsate management appropriate to various climates, soils, and operation sizes.

² Rinsate is the liquid (or solid) generated from the intentional or unintentional rinsing of something (e.g., container or equipment) that has come into direct contact with a pesticide, fertilizer, or other agrichemical.)

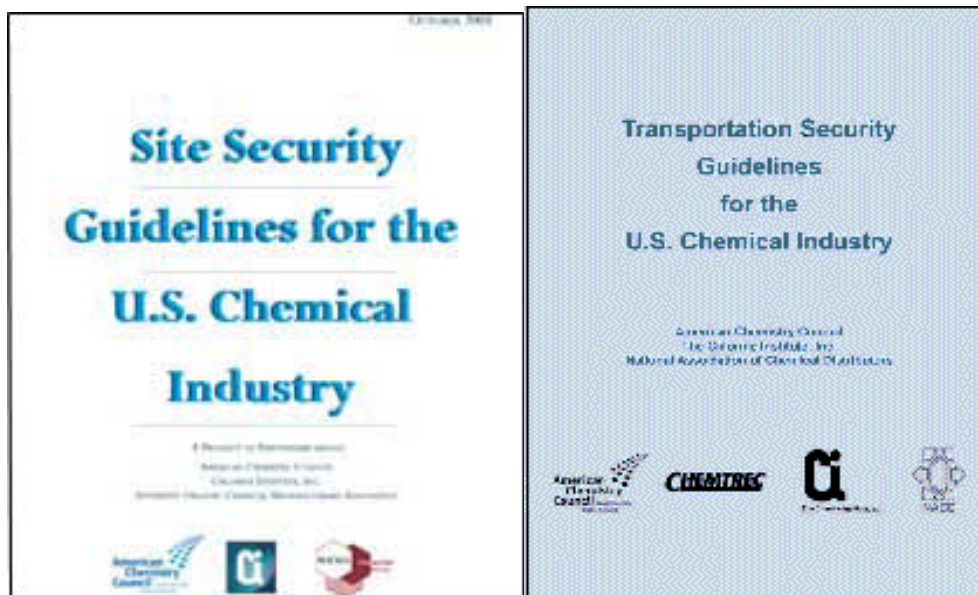
An entire session of tips and tidbits for pesticide safety educators was offered the second day of the conference. Patricia Hipkins from Virginia Tech demonstrated the visual impact of using fluorescent dyes to simulate pesticides in applicator training. Carol Ramsay from Washington State University shared some successes she has had implementing game-playing into training sessions (watch for her upcoming article on a *Jeopardy*[®]-style game format in the *Journal of Pesticide Safety Education*, <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JPSE/>). Susan Whitney from the University of Delaware detailed a case history of using focus group and survey data in pesticide applicator training. And I, your humble *AENews* editor, offered a few tips on matching your message and your media to the mindset of your audience.

Security is Everybody's Business

In the shadow of September 11, anti-terrorist activities were very much in the forefront of every American's mind. Conference organizers had responded to this by including a special session on chemical security. It may have been my imagination, but when former Federal Bureau of Investigation agent and current Director of Corporate Security for DuPont Chemical, Ray Mislock, spoke, everyone came to attention. Here was a man responsible for global security of an international chemical company in sixty-seven countries. Hearing his calm and measured delivery of DuPont's point-by-point response to the September 11 attacks made me realize that SURELY we can all lock our cabinets and warehouses and monitor access to our facilities.

Jay Ellenberger said a few words about EPA's pesticide security efforts, including some outside-the-box thinking about intentional misuse of pesticides and how to avoid it. One of EPA's many roles is that of chair for the Federal Emergency Response Team, comprising sixteen government agencies.

Both Mislock and Ellenberger echoed many of the conclusions we drew in the November 2001 Special Edition of *AENews* (No. 187, Focus on Agriculture and Food Terrorism), especially that threats most often come from within, therefore limiting access limits threats. Both speakers also pointed out that government and industry's attention to chemical security started long before September 11. The American Chemistry Council had formed a plant site security subcommittee in late 2000, releasing their *Site Security Guidelines for the U.S. Chemical Industry* October 1, 2001. A companion volume addressing transportation was also released in October. Both publications, which serve as tools for risk assessment and incident prevention, not as regulations, are available at the council's Web site, <http://www.americanchemistry.com> .



Lunchtime Luminaries

America's policy makers and enforcers were also present at the NPSA conference. Al Jennings from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Steve Johnson from EPA's Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances addressed the group during Wednesday's lunchtime session. Jennings outlined the history and purpose of his department, and emphasized the increasing importance of crop profiles and pest management strategic plans, and Johnson spoke of EPA's role in homeland security and continuing efforts toward stewardship.

Thursday, the group enjoyed a presentation by Cam Davreux, Vice President of CropLife Canada, a stewardship organization focusing on agrichemicals, biotechnology, and urban issues across Canada. Over the last twelve years, explained Davreux, seven major programs have evolved under the banner "Stewardship First," with the overall objective being to manage agrichemicals for the entire product life, from research and development to manufacturing, from safe storage and use through disposal and recycling.

Wide World of Waste

Collection of waste pesticides³ and recycling of used pesticide containers is a hot topic among NPSA members; many representatives of state waste collection programs and partner

³ A "waste pesticide" is any pesticide you don't want to use, whether due to discontinuance, loss or unreadability of label, or replacement by another chemical.

industries were present. In a panel discussion moderated by Washington State Department of Agriculture's (WSDA's) Joe Hoffman, I learned that North Carolina was the first state to institute a coordinated program of waste pesticide collection, in 1980. Washington's program began in 1988 with \$239,000 in funding and an initial collection of twenty-one tons of waste pesticide in a single day. To streamline collection events, today's participants must sign up with WSDA in advance and submit an inventory. (See WSDA waste disposal article in this month's issue.) There is no charge for the disposal service, and WSDA becomes the owner and official "generator" of the substances collected.

Representatives from several other states shared their program perspectives. Pennsylvania's program differs from Washington's in that: 1) collection takes place at the grower's business (under supervision of a department of agriculture inspector) rather than at a central collection point; 2) a waste contractor performs the collection service and becomes the "generator;" and 3) the funding comes from a specific pesticide-related fund, as opposed to a state general fund. Virginia's program is similar, doing the "milk-run" (door-to-door) approach, using a contractor for collection and disposal, and requiring advance paperwork. The Texas program is coordinated by the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission and involves a range of state and county recycling and disposal programs. Funding comes from emissions permits and no advance inventory is required. Wisconsin takes county involvement a step further, in that primary funding is county-based voluntary grants and the counties are the waste "generators." The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (WDA) performs more of an oversight function, coordinating the counties with the private firm hired by WDA to do the collection. Wisconsin's state funding comes from registration fees, a fixed amount of which is set aside each year for chemical collection.

Other sessions pertaining to waste management and recycling included case histories of specific container recycling programs; novel and alternative practices such as incorporating organic absorption, biological degradation and other non-incineration techniques; marketplace and technical recycling considerations; and international disposal and recycling.

But...Are We Making Progress?

Without a doubt, the work of the individuals present at the conference is making a difference in improving environmental stewardship with respect to pesticides. In addition to more than a dozen presentations on waste management, sessions discussing buffer zones (implementation, pros and cons, incentives for establishment), integrated pest management, outreach efforts, public relations, and interagency cooperation were productive and encouraging. But this is no time to rest on our laurels. Kathleen A. Thuner, Agricultural Commissioner of San Diego County, California, illustrated both the vastness of the worker protection problem and some practical steps toward a solution in her Friday morning presentation on the Field Worker Protection Initiative. The project began with a confidential survey of field workers in San Diego County that revealed some alarming statistics, including:

Thirty-two percent of male field workers surveyed had never visited a doctor.

The majority of fieldworkers, if they become ill, return to Mexico, which means that these illnesses are not reported in U.S. statistics.

The language and culture of most Spanish-speaking field workers causes them to view pesticides as far less dangerous than their U.S. English-speaking counterparts view them.

The Field Worker Protection survey led to the formation of a monthly workgroup in January 2000. This group now includes twenty-eight participants from a wide range of perspectives including health care organizations, regulatory agencies, and worker representatives. Some of the areas identified and targeted for change include:

Improved housing (as opposed to makeshift shacks and tents without laundry and sanitation facilities).

Physician and health-care worker training in recognizing pesticide-related illness (the average U.S. physician receives four hours total training in this area).

Community outreach (such as providing health and sanitation tools and information in non-traditional settings such as swap meets and sending trained and trusted bilingual women into the community to educate other women one-on-one).

Looking Ahead: Strengths, Challenges

The debriefing session held on Friday morning pointed out the strengths and challenges of this young, vital organization, both of which stem from its diversity. While some favored using the organization and its conference as a vehicle for sharing progress on research, others felt the main job was to influence policy. Still others felt that hands-on stewardship projects (disposal, reclamation, recycling) should be the primary if not the only focus. Workgroups are being formed to deal with these and other thorny questions in the year ahead.

The 2002 NPSA conference is just around the corner. Coming to the Pacific Northwest this time, NPSA members will gather at the Renaissance Madison Hotel in Seattle August 25 through 28. For information on the conference as it develops or on how you can be a part of the National Pesticide Stewardship Alliance, see their Web site at <http://www.npsalliance.org> .

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