

## **SFIREG Report for Region 4**

**(Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee)**

**Submitted by Tim Drake, Region 4 SFIREG Representative**

**November 28, 2017**

The Region 4 Pre-SFIREG meeting was held in Decatur, GA on October 24-25, 2017. It was hosted by the Georgia Department of Agriculture. It was well attended, and all states in the region had several representatives in attendance (24 from SLAs). Region 4 EPA also was well represented, with leadership and many regional staff (12 persons) in attendance. Patricia Livingston (Region 4 EPA) did an outstanding job in setting up the agenda and securing speakers on topics of importance. Rick Hayes (GDA) is to be commended for again setting up a great meeting space, meals, and accommodations.

### **Regional Issues from the States:**

The meeting opened with a states-only forum, wherein each state reported on major issues along with regional regulatory concerns. In this meeting, issues related to Dicamba drift cases were the primary topic of discussion.

Tennessee had the most dicamba-related cases in the region (133 complaints of problems on over 400,000 acres), and Kathy Booker stated that it has been an all-consuming task to keep up with the workload associated with investigating these incidents. Mississippi also had a large number of cases related to dicamba. Several states in the region implemented required dicamba-specific training last year, and credit this with a reduction of incidents in their states (NC, GA, AL). This training had been required by 24c labels put into place by those states.

North Carolina officials still have concern over sensitivity of tobacco, but were happy that it is listed as a sensitive crop on the new label. North Carolina also would like to see sweet potatoes listed as a sensitive crop on the label, and questions the use of the term “neighboring” on the label without a specific distance being defined.

There was an in-depth discussion related to dicamba training in the states. States plan to handle this in different ways, according to resources and time constraints. Some states have developed, or plan to develop, trainings internally (SLA, Cooperative Extension, etc.). Other states plan to rely heavily upon training given by the product registrants. Some states plan to allow a combination of both internal and external training. However, the Region 4 states agreed that all trainings accepted in their state must get prior approval from their SLA.

There was some concern from two states that the new EPA Endangered Species bulletins are not specific enough. They received the bulletins and did not know exactly what to do with them because they are very broad, and controlled species are not specified (burrowing rodent?). The exact species that is intended for protection also is not mentioned. Use limitations related to a general-use product can be a

problem, and the states questioned exactly what can be done as far as enforcement is concerned. This point was clarified to some extent later in the meeting by Region 4 EPA staff.

There still is a great deal of confusion over which WPS Rule should be enforced within the states. States are handling this issue differently. Some are enforcing the old rule; some are in a compliance assistance mode in accepting the new rule, and some are enforcing the new rule. There is little consistency across states within the region with regard to implementation of the new WPS rule. One major concern is that the new Rule went into effect, and now changes are being discussed / made. There is uncertainty over what the final product will be.

Several states still are experiencing problems with credentialing requirements for federal credentials. The Inspector WIKI has given problems. In general, states feel that the process of keeping federal credentials up-to-date is very burdensome. Regional EPA staff plan to have one-on-one trainings with each SLA field supervisor to rectify this issue in the coming year.

Several states that participated in the EPA bed bug webinar were very dissatisfied with the organization and execution of the webinar. Some stated that it was a complete failure, and hope the next time a webinar of this type is sponsored by the EPA, better measures will be in place to ensure a smooth delivery to the attendees. The main issue was a failure in the Adobe Connect system. Hopefully, this will not be an issue in future webinars of this type.

North Carolina licensed its first pilot to use drones to apply pesticides. These applications will be to control *Phragmites australis* (Common Reed) along seashore areas within the state. It anticipates other requests for licenses to use drones in a similar manner in other areas.

Several states had concerns over the time it takes to close cases done under federal credentials and asked if there is some way the process can be expedited. Kimberly Bingham (EPA Region 4) stated that she will work with each state to determine the best to speed up the process.

There still are problems with 25b interpretations by the EPA with regard to what registrants can and cannot do. These exemptions are being interpreted differently in different states.

There was some discussion on the feral hog bait KAPUT. None of the states in Region 4 have registered it, or have any intent of registering it under the current label as a general-use product. The greatest points of concern still are the likelihood that non-target species (black bears, etc.) will be able to gain access to the bait. Also, there is concern over the requirement to collect the dead hogs when this requirement is nearly impossible in the habitats hogs utilize in the southern states. Feral swine have a fairly large range, and do not remain on the property of the landowner who may be required to collect the carcass on land to which he/she has no legal access. There also is concern about the secondary feeding by other animals on the carcasses and the possible contamination of water sources with hogs that die in or next to water in inaccessible locations.

There also was some concern over funding for the pre-SFIREG meetings. With a drastic increase in the cost of accommodations, food, meeting space, etc., the amount allocated to these meetings is becoming

less than sufficient to host a two-day meeting. Georgia had a difficult time negotiating with a hotel in a desirable location for this meeting while remaining within the cost constraints.

### **EPA Updates:**

An update on activities in the Region 4 office and an overview of the new EPA strategic plan were given by Carol Kemker. She also announced that Region 4 has a new Regional Administrator, Mr. Trey Glenn.

Richard Pont (EPA) provided updates on the new WPS Rule and C&T Rule. This update clarified some of the questions states were asking about the implementation of the new WPS Rule.

Dawn Taylor (Region 4, Office Science and Policy) presented an update on Office of Research and Development funding opportunities.

Seema Rao and Stuart Perry (Region 4) gave a regional grants update.

Kelly Engle (EPA, OPP) gave a report on the 2017 and 2018 PIRT courses.

Patricia Livingston (Region 4) and Rick Hayes (GA) gave an update on PREP for 2017 and 2018, along with an update on regional trainings.

Kanoe Ho (Region 4) gave an update on the endangered species bulletins. Of regional significance, a new Gopher Tortoise bulletin has been issued in two Region 4 states (AL, MS).

Nichole Zinn (EPA, OPP) gave a presentation on industrial hemp. This is a topic that has become one of concern in Region 4 because several states in the region have passed legislation to allow the production of hemp.

### **Other Discussion Topics and Presentations:**

*-WPS Resources Availability*, Kaci Buhl (Oregon State University)

*-Understanding the Science Behind Dicamba and Its Challenges*, Dr. Stanley Culpepper (University of Georgia)

*-RNA Inhibitors*, Dr. Greg Watson (Monsanto)

*-Natural Disasters, How to Respond / Your Responsibilities*, Dr. Kelly Friend (Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services)

*-How Colorado Has Dealt With the Regulation of Cannabis*, John Scott (Colorado Department of Agriculture)

**Follow-up Action Items:**

Tony Cofer (AL) will send out a survey to all Region 4 states to determine what dicamba-specific trainings will be acceptable in each state, and how each state lead agency is going to handle development and administration of the trainings.

Tony Cofer also will send out a survey to states in the region to determine how SLAs are dealing with implementation of the new WPS Rule.

The next Region 4 Pre-SFIREG meeting will be hosted by the Alabama Department of Agriculture. It will be held in Alabama (most likely Montgomery) in the spring (April) of 2018.