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## **History of GP(A)C-14 and its effect on leafy spurge control**

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Coordination of regional leafy spurge control efforts began with the Leafy Spurge Symposium, June 26 to 27, 1979, in Bismarck, ND. This was followed by the Northern Regional Leafy Spurge Conference, December 17 to 18, 1979, in Billings, MT. A coordinating committee of directors of the state Agricultural Experiment Stations (AES) and USDA-ARS was formed at these ad hoc meetings to assure that an effective research and extension program would be established by the key states. The greatest initial interest was in North Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming, with supporting interest from Nebraska and South Dakota.

Several ad hoc group efforts occurred prior to approval of the GPC-14 Research Committee by the Great Plains Agricultural Council (GPAC). First, the coordinating committee of administrators appointed the Regional Leafy Spurge Working Committee (ad hoc) of research and extension scientists to form a coordinating structure; the committee was chaired by Russ Lorenz, USDA-ARS, Mandan, ND. Second, a newsletter, “*Leafy Spurge News*”, was started in 1980 by the Montana AES. The newsletter continues today with Russ Lorenz as editor. Third, a five-state research project was submitted to the Old West Regional Commission and was funded from March 1981 to February 1982. North Dakota was the lead state and the project included Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

The leafy spurge effort moved from ad hoc to recognized status when the GPAC approved Research Committee GPC-14 Leafy Spurge Control in the Great Plains in June 1981. Don Anderson, Associate Director of the North Dakota AES, was named administrative advisor and continues in that role. The first meeting was held June 29 to 30, 1981, in Fargo, ND.

The objectives of GPC-14 established in 1981 were: a) to develop and evaluate techniques for weed control and land management to control leafy spurge in the field; b) to demonstrate through extension and other educational efforts the methods of leafy spurge control and land management to improve the productivity of agricultural and public lands; c) to increase the knowledge of leafy spurge biology and physiology through basic

and applied research; and d) to coordinate the leafy spurge research and extension program efforts of the cooperating agencies.

Meetings of GPC-14 have been held annually in late June or July since the organizational meeting. The meetings always have included presentations of the latest research and extension information with some time devoted to field tours. The meeting objectives are focused on leaders in research, extension, and land management organizations (e.g., U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management), although local weed control officers and some producers regularly attend. Annual attendance has been 60 to 120.

The GPAC was reorganized administratively in 1986 into major topic committees. The GPC-14 Research Committee then became a Task Force under the Crops and Soils Committee. The GPAC asked that objectives become more specific for all task forces.

The current objectives, presented through the administrative advisor and approved by GPAC in 1991, are to: a) provide an economic analysis of present and future losses caused by leafy spurge and cost benefit analysis of biocontrol program; b) determine the status of leafy spurge weed problems and biological control work already in progress; c) select and set up specific sites in each state for establishment of field insectaries and future redistribution sites; d) collection of biocontrol agents for distribution to insectary sites; e) evaluate colonization of biocontrol organisms at release sites from previous years; f) development of predictive model for determining optimum collection times for field-insectary-reared biological control organisms; g) develop laboratory and greenhouse mass production of biocontrol organisms of leafy spurge; h) development of a leafy spurge training manual and instructional material; i) preparation of an information packet, audio visual material, and press releases for documentation and education of the public; and j) collect, maintain, and propagate a collection of native species of *Euphorbia* for use by researchers to screen new potential biological control agents. These objectives emphasize activities in biological control research, but under-represent the integrated control efforts that are continuing such as use of herbicides and cultural control including competitive forage species and grazing management of goat, sheep, and cattle.

GPAC-14 has been an effective task force for coordinating leafy spurge research and information exchange programs in North America. Although this committee can't dictate programs and activities in specific states, the regular information exchange has minimized duplication of effort and has resulted in more rapid evaluation of progress than occurs in normal scientific channels. Probably no other widespread weed research program in North America has as much coordination of activities as this leafy spurge control effort.