
EPA Region 4 SFIREG Report

Derrick Lastinger (GA), Region 4 SFIREG Representative

The Region 4 Fall Pre-SFIREG Meeting was held October 29-30 2024 in Lexington, Kentucky. This in person meeting also provided a virtual link for those who wished to attend virtually. All states in the Region (AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN) were in attendance including 30 SLA officials and 5 PSEPs, and EPA regional leadership staff were in attendance as well. This meeting also included a separate PSEP session.

Primary State Issues

- QMP/QAPP – combined into one document after submitted separately. Slow and minimal feedback and state to state consistency. Reviews taking 12 months or more.
- C&T Plan Revisions pending the issuance of EPA Guidance
- Hurricane Helene’s impact to the region and staff involved in emergency response and recovery activities. Assessments are ongoing and concern with pesticide disposal/cleanup needs. Enormous damage to agriculture and infrastructure. Need for PPE supplies in NC.
- Deadlines issued to SLAs are not always consistent from R4.
- The training of non-certified applicators is expected to be a significant burden in some states.
- Ecommerce activities not reported on 5700 Report and should be included on the workplan narrative while effort has been prioritized to move away from narrative reporting with CDX template.
- Hydrochloric Acid Generator including UV Lights – what is the status of the 2019 Device Issue Paper?
- Need to update the Pesticide Label Manual with respiratory protection. Language on the labels has not been updated in 30 years and unable to take regulatory action.
- SLA vacancies, recruitment and paygrades with future budget uncertainty.

SLA/EPA-Only Session: Ethylene Oxide

Eric Miederhoff, EPA OPP; Jessie Bailey Chemical Review Manager for Ethylene Oxide

- Minutes from this session are available to the States/EPA attendees in a separate document. There were concerns from EPA R4 about who would conduct the inspections.

EPA Region 4 Land, Chemicals, and Redevelopment Division Update

Gracy R. Danois, Sara Janovitz, & David Champagne, EPA Region 4

Grants Updates

Richard Corbett, EPA Region 4

- The election year makes funding more tenuous, and it becomes more difficult to predict allocations. Currently under a continuing resolution until December. R4 has been working to push disbursements as funds become available.

- Moving from a 3-year to a 5-year grant cycle was discussed. States took a vote as all states did not support moving to a 5-year cycle, states will maintain the current 3-year cycle.
- C&T Program Update - currently all region 4 state plans have been approved and are currently in the implementation phase.
- A tracking tool for plan implementation progress is in development for use at semi-annual reviews.
- FY 25 allocation should be coming by the end of the year, likely sometime in December. This is being expedited but nothing is guaranteed.

EPA Region 4 Enforcement and Compliance Assurance Division Update

Kimberly Bingham & Kimberly Tonkovich, EPA Region 4

- Laurel Stanko provided the presentation on the Training & Capacity Building section
- Lunch & Learns have just finished their second season. Nice to see how numbers have evolved. The First Supervisors Only Forum is also coming up.

EPA Lunch & Learn Sessions

2024 Season from February to October

February	Devices
March/April	Worker Protection Standards
May	Product Registration & Labeling
June/July	Evidence Gathering, Investigations, and Documents
August	Report Writing
September	Credentialing/FedTalent
November	Supervisor's Only Forum



Tonkovich, Kimberly

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

19

EPA Lunch & Learn Sessions

- 18 total training sessions held
- 496 State participants attended throughout
- 189 individual participants
- Close to ¾ of the participants were inspectors in the field (81%)



Highest Attended Topics

1. Devices
2. WPS
3. Credentialing
4. Product Registration & Labeling

Tonkovich, Kimberly

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

20

AEZ Final Rule

Ryne Yarger, EPA OPP

Certification & Training/PSEP Open Discussion

Richard Corbett, EPA Region 4 & Brett Bultemeier, University of Florida

- Discussed the legislative process and manual development. Noted that plan modification guidance is still not available.
- Potential types of changes: Substantial, Notable, Incidental
- The bimonthly conference calls will continue. The collaboration with the University of Florida, Mississippi State, and University of North Carolina is going well. Next bimonthly PSEP call is in December.
- The plan is to create a base template for the manuals that individual regions can then expand on and make more state specific as needed.
- For this project to be a success, SLAs must be willing to accept other states' manuals and divide up work. The workload must be divided to meet C&T implementation deadlines. Work should be given to those with the best resources to provide guidance on those topics.
- There is an issue with some states providing manuals for free and while others are charging a fee for the same manual. The goal is to make the material available to reduce the amount of work on the states while still allowing them to keep the flexibility to update for their own needs and not undercut very important manual sales that many states rely on for funding.
- Need to establish a method of prioritizing the manuals that need to be targeted next and designating those with the skills and talent region wide to accomplish the creation of these resources.
- 27 manuals need updating in the next two to three years.
- The importance of keeping PSEPs funded for these projects to be completed was discussed, noting that PSEPs do not have a voice in congress to lobby for funding.
- Most PSEPs have less than one full time equivalent, but still manage to accomplish a substantial amount of work despite adverse circumstances. They emphasized that they would like to continue their work, earn a seat at the table, and have a voice. In many cases PSEPs are the first line of defense in heading off issues for regulators.
- Detailed the success of the Forestry manual and the importance of not replicating work. There is a need to digitize and make materials available online. Considering utilizing a complement or appendix and integrating a digital tutoring aspect for each chapter. Sales could potentially be bundled with the manual.
- Emphasized the importance of providing different formats. A podcast style of a manual is more accessible for many.

- Pesticide Safety Educators are the ones most likely to have firsthand contact with applicators.
- Not being regulatory makes many applicators able to provide more honest feedback. Including PSEPs helps to close the feedback loop.
- States discussed what manuals to prioritize and current projects:
 - A Research Manual is in the works, coordinated with NC.
 - Jean is working on Drone Technology, which is of critical importance to the Aerial Manual.
 - Looking for someone in the southern region to work on Right of Ways.
 - A committee in SC is working on a Structural Manual
 - Plant Ag Manual is being developed by a PSEP in GA
 - Considering an ESA Mitigation Manual
- Discussed playing a video before exams as a stop gap in the interim.
- Encouraging PSEPs to bring in more SLAs and working with each other to build those relationships.

Day 1 Meeting Wrap-up & States-Only Session Report Out

Derrick Lastinger, GDA

- Key issues from the States-Only session included:
 - Hydrochloric Acid Generator - New respiratory language for the manual has not been updated.
 - C&T Plan Guidance
 - Recognition for ECAD and providing enforcement updates.
 - Deadlines are not being reciprocated.
 - Concerns about the QAPP/QMP review process.
 - North Carolina PPE needs
- EPA discussed disaster mitigation needs, in particular they are canvassing for needs that could be brought for consideration to FEMA. Most of the efforts comes funded as a mission assignment from FEMA.
- States asked if something could be provided in writing to take to our EMS department, however EPA suggested that those departments reach out directly.

R4 SFIREG Chair Position

- Kathy Booker (TN) was recognized for her service and upcoming retirement and expressed the meaningful and positive impact that she has made.
- Kristen Lashley was elected to serve as the new R4 chair to start serving in January. Nick Sumner (GA) was elected to serve as Co-Chair.

Pesticide Registration/ESA/Pollinators

Jenny Wren, EPA Region 4

WPS/Bilingual Labeling/Building Bridges Manual

Michelle Diaz Laboy, EPA Region 4, & Carmina Hanson, NCDACS

National & Regional Training Updates

Rick Hayes, GDA, John Pitcock, KDA, & Pat Jones, NCDACS

- Rick Hayes announced a Regional Training is being planned. This may be a mini regional PIRT type training to include more people and make the training longer. The deadline to schedule this training is Oct. 2025. Break out groups for structural vs ag. pesticides are being considered and this training may focus on newer inspectors. Additional funding from EPA may allow an extra 35 – 40 attendees.
- John Pitcock (KDA) provided an update on ASPRO Training. This training involves a 1-to-1.5-hour virtual training taken once per month. After a year students attend a conference where they take a practical to complete the training.
- Pat Jones (NCDACS) provided the update on PIRT
- The Pollinator PIRT was very successful, this training partnered new inspectors with experienced apiarists.
- The new PIRT structure is now up and running, hosted through NASDA. Tony and Pat are on the PIRT advisory committee along with EPA, AAPCO, Tribal representatives, and many others.
- For 2025 we have 4 courses planned. <https://www.nasda.org/nasda-foundation/nasda-foundation-epa-pirt/>
 - Basic Structural PIRT February in Atlanta
 - Grant Rapids Michigan
 - Tribal PIRT in Montana in July
 - Basic Inspector PIRT Course to finish

AAPCO Update

Kelly Friend, FDACS

- AAPCO is looking for a new chair for the Industry Relations workgroup.
- AAPCO is here to help elevate your issues, so please reach out if needed.

SFIREG/POM/EQI/ESI Update

Amy Brown & Harris Walters, FDACS

- POM Update (Pesticides Operations & Management Working Committee)



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- Feed and Pesticides Guidance
 - Not a new issue, but coming back up from 2019
 - Issues with products being identified as medicated (regulated by FDA) that are actually pesticides. This includes feed-through pesticides, which are incorporated in animal feed but pass through the animal essentially unchanged to be deposited in manure.
 - POM is working with AAFCO, FDA, and EPA reps to create guidance
 - POM requested EPA to allow SLAs to be part of the conversation
- A mobile application for BLT is needed. The current format is difficult to use on a mobile device. EPA’s response was that this is not feasible to be produced at this time due to a lack of funding and manpower.
- Improvements to the readability of current bulletins were requested. EPA’s response was that this was not achievable due to resource constraints.
- A way to pull a list of all active bulletins in state and pull historic bulletins for inspections was requested. EPA responded that this may be an available feature in future updates.
- Requested updates for search/filters and clearer visualizations on map, in particular to help solve an issue with overlays that are the same color.
- Regarding education and training needs, EPA has stated they are prioritizing basic use.
- ESI suggested soliciting input from State Partners and being provided with regular updates so work is not duplicated by either party. Would also like to see improved engagement with industry partners, noting that the “How to Apply Manual” that was released with the recent website update seemed to help.
- More communication with NRCS was also requested.
- The need for SLAs to have a quick way to get answers to technical questions was also highlighted.
- A notification process for updates/changes to PULAs is also needed.

- States discussed how implementation is possible with so many tools and resources unable to be provided. It was brought up that R4 has more endangered species than any other region. There has to be a solution to providing tools in spite of resource constraints.
- Concerns about how to enforce these policies and convince growers to adopt them if these pesticides are not RUPs were also discussed.
- There has been some discussion on opening the source code for private industry to edit and EPA is discussing this option with their legal team.
- **This topic will be brought as a statement from the region to include in the report for SFIREG.**

Spring 2024 Pre-SFIREG Update

Tony Cofer, ADAI

- Tentative dates for the Spring Pre-SFIREG are the first full week in May (5, 6, 7th) at the Embassy Suites in Montgomery, AL.
- Would like to do a pollinator type focus and invite State Apiary representatives.
- The Yellow-legged hornet response is also being considered as a topic.

ASPCRO Update

John Pitcock, KDA

- Midyear Board of Directors Meeting will be held in Colorado Springs April 21st – 22nd, 2025
- The 2025 Annual Conference will be held in Portland Maine, August 25th – 29th, 2025
- There are several committees you can join or participate in with topics including rodenticides, pest management in schools, inspector training, and so much more.

Issues for SFIREG (Round Robin)

Derrick Lastinger, GDA

- Derrick Lastinger provided an overview of issues that the SLAs would be bringing to SFIREG:
 - Check on Hydrochloric acid generator device issue paper response and respirator protection label updates
 - C&T Plan Guidance
 - Ethylene Oxide
 - BLT Issue Statement
 - PSEP's and Manual Writing
- Also noted North Carolina's PPE Needs – States will be reaching out

- Reminder that Gracy Danois requested feedback on any State Agricultural needs that can be brought to FEMA