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## **Pacific Northwest Pest Management Workgroup: Leveraging Partnerships Across Large Geographic Regions**

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**Abstract:** Faced with promoting integrated pest management (IPM) and coordinating scarce resources over an area of 1.04 million square miles, Pacific Northwest states chose to form a geographically based workgroup rather than the traditional discipline-based or single crop-based workgroup. By sharing resources, we have maximized expertise and minimized duplication of effort. Over a 6-year period, workgroup outcomes indicate that in similar circumstances this option can produce a strong and productive coalition serving Extension clientele.

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### **Background**

In 2001, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and Pesticide Coordinators in Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Utah received an initial grant to form the Pacific Northwest Pest Management Workgroup (Hirnyck, Coates, Jahns, & Daniels, 2004). The Pacific Northwest (PNW) and its neighboring states Montana and Utah produce a large portion of our nation's diverse food and feed products, including more than 250 different minor crops that contribute to a total annual value of agriculture approximating \$12.6 billion (NASS, 2006). Production issues such as agriculture's impact on human health, water quality, air quality, food safety, and endangered species affect growers in similar ways throughout this region. Land-grant universities in these states have had a history of collaborations to jointly supply necessary resources that support Extension programs. Based on a theme of common issues in agricultural pest management, it made sense to regionalize efforts and utilize a group problem solving approach.

The workgroup provides a regional platform for increased IPM education and research. Our charge is to simultaneously address needs identified both in the USDA IPM Roadmap (USDA-CSREES, 2004) as well as those identified by regional stakeholders. Yearly funding requests for annual renewal have been granted based on the workgroup's output. This regional effort allows us to maximize expertise and minimize

duplication of efforts in a 1.04 million square mile area (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

## Workgroup and Project Development

Grant funds are used to host several teleconferences and one face-to-face meeting each year. This format actively promotes collaboration and problem solving. A single workgroup coordinator sets agendas, manages meeting schedules, takes minutes, tracks progress reports, and submits annual grant proposals for workgroup funding. All workgroup members are expected to identify emerging pest management issues, assist in identifying and prioritizing pest management needs, submit suggestions for internal and external collaborations, share IPM information and practices, and discuss ongoing collaborative projects. The meeting format provides an opportunity for information sharing, coordination, and collaboration on regional IPM programming. In addition, new regional projects are identified, developed, and prioritized based upon needs and funding availability. Projects may include participants from outside the workgroup, and involve additional funding sources. The workgroup has successfully used regional collaboration to leverage additional funds for regional project development.

Disciplines represented in the workgroup include entomology, plant pathology, weed science, toxicology, and horticulture. The members' professional responsibilities include research, teaching, and Extension. Including a broad range of discipline areas across multiple states and land-grant institutions is a key tactic used by workgroup members to focus on regional issues that produce measurable results.

Because of their positions within Extension, workgroup members have direct access to growers, university researchers, and policy makers as well as knowledge about grant-giving entities and pertinent regulatory agencies. This access allows members to serve as team leaders who can form connections among local, state, and national participants. Such linkages have been used to bring stakeholders together to form ad-hoc groups that address specific short-term needs or to form self-sustaining groups that address longer-term issues.

## Outputs and Outcomes

Successful projects to date include:

- Crop profiles that identify pest management issues in PNW minor crops (USDA-CSREES, 1998)
- Pest Management Strategic Plans (PMSPs) that prioritize pest management issues (USDA-CSREES, 2000)
- A dedicated channel for communications on real-world pesticide use data as well as an adaptive feedback mechanism among regional IPM stakeholders and USDA/USEPA (Thomas & Daniels, 2008)
- Web sites that both disseminate and archive IPM information <<http://wsprs.wsu.edu/>> and <<http://www.ag.uidaho.edu/pmc/>>
- Coordination of PNW regional pest alerts

- Cooperative efforts and partnerships that address impacts to water quality and endangered species
- Ongoing collaborations that serve to coordinate content and delivery mechanisms for the PNW Weed, Disease, and Insect Management handbooks <[http://www.ipmnet.org/IPM\\_Handbooks.htm](http://www.ipmnet.org/IPM_Handbooks.htm)>
- Partnership with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to provide cost-share incentives for adopting IPM practices.

Project results include the following.

- PNW growers have increased their knowledge about IPM practices.
- PNW growers have increased adoption of IPM practices.
- PNW grower priorities are clearly recognized by regulatory agencies.
- USDA is able to be more supportive of minor crop issues.
- Multi-state university Extension and research programs are better positioned to systematically solve stakeholder-identified problems.
- Land-grant university personnel in other regions of the country have emulated the adaptive feedback mechanism.

## Conclusions

Due to the large size of western states, significant climatic and environmental differences, a wide variety of cropping systems, and decreasing numbers of university specialists, members chose the formation of a geographic workgroup. While member states and their associated land-grant universities have a long-standing tradition of collaboration and cooperative efforts in research and Extension systems, the geographic focus of this workgroup has increased capacity across the region. The workgroup concept has been highly successful in the Pacific Northwest by regionalizing IPM education and research that simultaneously addresses needs identified both in the IPM Roadmap as well as those identified by commodity groups and other stakeholders. Building upon our partnerships, we have increased our "voice" at the regional and national levels.

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