

NATIONAL TURFGRASS FEDERATION

Advancing Turfgrass Science for Society

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NATIONAL TURFGRASS FEDERATION BOARD MEETS IN DC

On October 17-18, 2007, turfgrass leaders, including the board of directors of the new National Turfgrass Federation, met in Washington, DC to discuss the turfgrass industry and funding for the National Turfgrass Research Initiative (NTRI). The National Turfgrass Research Initiative is an industry-sponsored effort to initiate 'basic' (i.e. long-term, fundamental) research within the USDA, ARS. Participating in these meetings were Dr. Mike Kenna, USGA Director of Research, Mr. Kirk Hunter, Executive Director of Turfgrass Producers International, Dr. Clark Throssell, GCSAA Director of Research, Dr. Brian Horgan, University of Minnesota, Mr. Chris Calcaterra, Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) and Mr. Kevin Morris, National Turfgrass Federation.

For the third straight year, the headline meeting was with the Acting Secretary of Agriculture, Chuck Connor, in the Secretary's office in Washington, DC. Also in attendance, at the Secretary of Agriculture's request, were Dr. Gale Buchanan, Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics and the Secretary's Chief of Staff, Dale Moore. Unfortunately, the Secretary was called to a meeting at the White House and had to leave early. However, the turfgrass representatives were able to visit briefly with Secretary Connor about the turf industry's research and funding needs. The meeting continued with the representatives providing information to the other participants on the size and scope of the turfgrass industry, issues facing the industry and funding for research needs. Industry leaders thanked the USDA for its recent commitment to the turf industry and emphasized the need for more turfgrass research funding within USDA, ARS.

Turfgrass leaders also met with West Higginbotham, Legislative Assistant for Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS). The turf industry has been working with Sen. Cochran to include NTRI in the 2007 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill, legislation that is rewritten, debated and passed once every five years, provides funding for farm subsidy programs, nutrition programs and other agriculture-related activities. The turf industry's interest is with the Research Title, of which they hope NTRI will be included as a significant program, thereby receiving consideration for new federal research funding. A specialty crops research initiative is also being considered in the Research Title, which would provide significant funding for research. The turf industry is working to ensure that turfgrass is considered a specialty crop in the Farm Bill, thereby qualifying for research and marketing grants.

Industry leaders also met with House and Senate Appropriations staff, staff members from the offices of Rep. Allen Boyd (D-FL) and Rep. Tim Mahoney (D-FL), as well as ARS officials. These meetings focused on present and future appropriations for turfgrass research funding within USDA, ARS.

The second day of meetings concentrated on discussing and ratifying documents related to the establishment of a new non-profit organization. This new organization, National Turfgrass Federation (NTF), is now legally recognized and will file for 501c(6) non-profit status from IRS. Other topics of discussions included future lobbying efforts and fundraising efforts for NTF. NTF will need to raise an additional \$80,000 within the next few months to continue the lobbying efforts in 2008.

For more information on the funding requests and the Turfgrass Research Initiative in general, visit www.turfresearch.org/initiative.htm. Please contact your senators and congresspersons asking for their support of USDA, ARS turfgrass research funding and the National Turfgrass Research Initiative!