

NATIONAL TURFGRASS FEDERATION

Advancing Turfgrass Science for Society

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TURFGRASS LEADERS AGAIN MEET WITH THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

On September 26-27, 2006, turfgrass leaders met with various government officials in Washington, DC to discuss the turfgrass industry and funding for the National Turfgrass Research Initiative (NTRI). 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, Mr. Tom Delaney, PLANET Director of Government Affairs, Dr. Bernd Leinauer, New Mexico State University, Dr. Brian Horgan, University of Minnesota, Dr. David Williams, University of Kentucky, Mr. Warren Bell, Biograss Sod Farms, Mr. Tom Kimmell, Senior Projects Director for the Irrigation Association and Mr. Kevin Morris, National Turfgrass Federation.

For the second year in a row, the headline meeting was with Mike Johanns, Secretary of Agriculture, in the Secretary's office in Washington, DC. Also in attendance, at the Secretary of Agriculture's request, were Dr. Ed Knipling, USDA, Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Administrator, Mr. Bruce Knight, USDA Under Secretary of Marketing and Regulatory Programs and Dr. Gale Buchanan, Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics. The turfgrass representatives provided information on the size and scope of the turfgrass industry, issues facing the industry and 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. Secretary Johanns acknowledged that turf is the number one or two crop in many states and that it deserves consideration for inclusion in the research component of the 2007 Farm Bill.

Turfgrass leaders also met with Hunter Moorhead, the President's Agriculture Advisor, White House Policy Office, Senate and House Agriculture Appropriations staff members, and ARS officials. These meetings focused on present and future appropriations for turfgrass research funding within USDA, ARS.

For Fiscal Year 2007, (FY07), both House and Senate Appropriations bills include significant funding for turfgrass research in the USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS). As of this writing, House and Senate versions provide anywhere from approximately \$1.4 million to \$1.8 million to hire ARS scientists and fund cooperative projects with university research programs. Final decisions on funding levels will be made by Congress later this year.

The National Turfgrass Research Initiative is an industry-sponsored effort to initiate 'basic' (i.e. long-term, fundamental) research within the USDA, ARS. 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!