

Name: Steve Shirliffe

Occupation: Professor University of Saskatchewan

Previous work and volunteer experience in Weed Science:

I did my PhD in weed science and have been working in it ever since. Previous volunteer work included running the field sprayer on our family farm. We had a John Deere G tractor (no cab) pulling a Versatile field sprayer. On hot days I wore just Adidas shorts and work boots so I could work on my tan (this was the late 70s). I remember the cooling effect of spray drift on my back when the wind was from behind the sprayer.

How did you become involved with CWSS and when?

I have been around since before the CWSS existed. I went to the first National meeting of the ECW (Expert Committee on Weeds) meeting in Montreal in 1995, that combined the East and West ECW meetings. Memories from this first meeting are a bit foggy but I remember flaming Sambucas as well as a symposium (in hind-sight misguided) on lowering herbicide rates to the minimum effective dose. I was on the local arrangements committee for the inaugural CWSS 2002 meeting in Saskatoon where I moderated a formal debate that considered the introduction of glyphosate tolerant wheat! Since then, I have been to almost every meeting.



What has the extent of your involvement been? (i.e. have you served on committees/executive?)

I served on the membership committee for many years, chaired other committees such as the integrated weed management committee, been on several local arrangement committees and I was a member at large on the executive for one term.

Favourite memory/experience in your weed science career to date?

I think this would be the people I have worked with. I have had some great mentors including Bruce Maxwell, Doug Derksen and Martin Entz that gave me the freedom and inspiration to pursue my own ideas. However, I can really credit a presentation by John O'Donovan that inspired me to change the topic of my PhD to weed science. On the other side I have been privileged to mentor some truly excellent graduate students whom I will not mention here as I don't want to take credit for their accomplishments.

What is your favourite weed and why?

There are three weeds that have defined my career and would all be considered favourites. I have had a long-term relationship with wild oat that begun with my PhD on its seed dispersal. I have been fascinated by its relationship with tame oat – as tame oat is essentially wild oat without seed dispersal and seed dormancy. Most of my academic career – and the topic to many graduate student theses - has been in the biology, ecology and control of volunteer canola. Volunteer canola is fascinating as it is essentially the opposite of tame oat – it is a crop

that still has some weedy characteristics such as seed dormancy and self dispersal. Recently I have begun a passionate affair with kochia. Kochia is the David Bowie of the weed world as it evolves at a very rapid pace so us in the weed science profession are always playing catch-up.

What are your career goals/future plans in weed science (if you are comfortable sharing)?

I want to move weed science into the digital agriculture age. We are using remote sensing with drones and satellites to identify kochia patches. For herbicide trials we are using plots without borders that are automatically deployed and evaluated on-farm to improve the efficiency and increase the precision of field experiments. We have done a bit of work with deep-learning to identify weeds in crops but are leaving this to the many start-up companies working in this area.