



NAFA DC Fly-In Builds on Recent Success

by *Beth Nelson, NAFA President*

The nation's capital was host to NAFA's 6th annual DC Fly-In on February 9-11. NAFA members built their case for continued funding for the Alfalfa Seed and Forage Systems Research Program (AFRP), enhanced funding for alfalfa research at USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS), an expansion of the current Forage Seeding Program, the development of a crop insurance program which protects alfalfa producers from losses in quality and revenue, and more.

AFRP was awarded \$1.35 million in fiscal years '14 and '15, and \$2 million in '16. Building upon this success, NAFA members focused on AFRP priorities, the long list of states receiving research funding, and the increasing inertia within the alfalfa research community, to build the case for increasing AFRP to \$3 million for 2017. While AFRP funding does not level the playing field in terms of research funding between the nation's third most valuable field crop and other program crops such as corn, soybeans, and wheat, it is a significant step forward in bringing parity to public research funding for alfalfa. NAFA representatives also stressed the need for better funding for alfalfa research at USDA-ARS.

The continued lack of an adequate safety net for alfalfa and forage producers was the focus of House and Senate Ag Committee member meetings. Due to the fact that alfalfa is not considered a Title I program crop, its producers are not able to take advantage of Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage available to program crops; this leads to lenders encouraging producers to plant commodities which have greater risk protection. Thus, it is critical the Risk Management Agency continue efforts to develop a quality and/or revenue program, and enhance and expand the forage seeding program.

In addition to Congressional meetings, NAFA met with: 1) EPA to maintain communication about crop protection tools for the industry; 2) USDA's Risk Management Agency to expand and improve its crop insurance programs for the alfalfa industry; and 3) USDA-ARS to discuss the need to increase its financial commitment to alfalfa and forage research.

"NAFA is continuing to make its presence known on Capitol Hill," said NAFA President Beth Nelson. "We've still got a lot of work to do, but the progress we've made since the very first DC Fly-In is evident. As alfalfa growers know – 'persistence' is a good thing."

Photos from the 6th Annual D.C. Fly-In - February 9-11, 2016

NAFA representatives attended more than 100 meetings to promote and educate Congressional members and agency officials on the issues important to the alfalfa/forage industry, and continue to build recognition for the nation's 3rd most valuable field crop.



NAFA Dir. Darrin Unruh & Ron Cornish, Beth Nelson, Rep. David Valadao (R-CA), CA Producer Tom Barcellos, NAFA Dir. Ray Smith



Morgan Tschida, NAFA Dir. Drex Gauntt, Rep. Bob Gibbs (R-OH), WY Producer David Hinman



NAFA Dir. Ron Cornish, Beth Nelson, NAFA Dir. Tom Barcellos, Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA), NAFA Dir. Ray Smith & Darrin Unruh



Rep. Kevin Yoder (R-KS), NAFA Dir. Darrin Unruh



NAFA Dir. Chris Pratt, Morgan Tschida, Sen. Michael Enzi (R-WY), WY Producer David Hinman, NAFA Dir. Leland Tiegs, NAFA Member Rodney VanOrman



NAFA Dir. Leland Tiegs, Sen. James Risch (R-ID), NAFA Dir. Chris Pratt



Rep. Tim Walz (D-MN), NAFA Dir. Dan Funke



Rep. Greg Walden (R-OR) standing, NAFA Member Mark Owens