

## 2024 WSPMA President's Year In Review

By Luke Rambo

It has been a whirlwind of a year! And also an absolute pleasure to represent WSPMA once again in the role of President.

Personally this year started off tumultuously as we neared the completion of the remodel at our new forever-home, dubbed "The Castle" which was a home originally built in 1929. Converting this building into a commercial office space was more time, money, hassle, and headache than I ever imagined, but it was totally worth it! In January of this year the permits were finally in-hand to complete the project, and together with our general contractor, there were seven different trades all working simultaneously on this property. We finally moved in in April and couldn't be happier with how it all came together. This was a long-term dream realized, and we are very proud to have achieved it!



That was a challenging time to step into the role of WSPMA President but fortunately the strong team of Board members and other advisors helped keep everything together. WSPMA hosted some amazing events this year. Our focus on education continues to elevate our entire industry. We started the year off with several education events, and added in some first-rate experiences later in the year. Some of these educational highlights for me were the Ant and Spider ID Labs. Both events offered in-depth and hands-on training at the WSU-Puyallup extension. The RAT Academy in Vancouver WA was three days of full of rodent-rific knowledge bombs!



The Pacific Northwest Pest Management Conference in Hood River, OR is always a blast! I highly encourage all WSPMA Members to attend this informative and important event. The networking alone is worth the cost to attend, but the Business and Management training sessions on Friday are always very beneficial and the CEU courses offered on Saturday are first-rate.



Shortly after Hood River came NPMA Legislative Day in Washington DC. This was my third time attending Legislative Day and each time I learn new things. Our Washington group, led by Larry Treleven and Billy Olesen, met with staffers of 6 different legislators, and advocated for including federal pesticide preemption into the Farm Bill. Legislative Day is also one of the two annual in-person events where many of the NPMA Councils have in-person meetings. I joined the PestVets meeting and shared our company's experience working with our first DOD SkillBridge applicant. SkillBridge is a program that pays for on-the-job-training for military members transitioning into the civilian workforce. NPMA did the legwork to open this program up to all member companies to become SkillBridge partners. It is a really great program, and one that we are proud to be a part of.



Larry always asks the best questions

Aside from education and networking there were plenty of other WSPMA Board-related action items. We had several legislative conversations taking place around topics such as neonicotinoids, fumigants, and advocating for a member of the structural pest management industry to be included on the Pesticide Advisory Board. To strengthen our presence and voice in Olympia we reinforced our connection with Washington Friends of Farms and Forests, and worked with NPMA's Public Policy folks on various legislative issues like advocating for federal pesticide preemption, and also provided feedback to EPA's Endangered Species Act – Biological Evaluation in which they reviewed the impacts of rodenticides on wildlife. WSPMA members also met with leaders from a number of state agencies at the annual Agricultural Crop Tour, which Sprague was kind enough to host for tour's first stop of the day.



Unethical door-to-door pest control sales practices was a topic that occupied much of our collective energy this summer as well. WSPMA has put together a customer reporting tool ([www.wspma.com/report](http://www.wspma.com/report)) which anybody can use. The idea is to collect real-world stories directly from the people who are experiencing these encounters. As we all know, there are plenty of decent folks selling products and services door-to-door. They are not what we are concerned about. The problem arises when unethical sales practices are exhibited by doorknockers who use fear, uncertainty, and doubt to motivate homeowners to sign up for long-term contracts with their companies. Clients often relay these stories to their current pest control provider and share some of the lies and exaggerations these salespeople offer. We highly encourage each of you to share the link to this client survey and WSPMA will be sending this feedback periodically to the Attorney General’s office to hopefully enact much needed regulations around this issue.

# WSPMA Consumer Feedback Form: Reporting Unethical Sales Practices

The Washington State Pest Management Association (WSPMA) is committed to protecting our members and upholding the highest standards. For many years, several out-of-state pest management companies have used door-to-door sales during peak months to grow their business, often employing unethical and immoral tactics at the expense of local, professional, quality companies. We encourage you to complete this form to help us collect data and give a strong voice to our community pest businesses.

Please provide as much detail as possible about your interaction.

1. Date of Interaction.

**WSPMA.com/Report**

2. City where the interaction occurred.

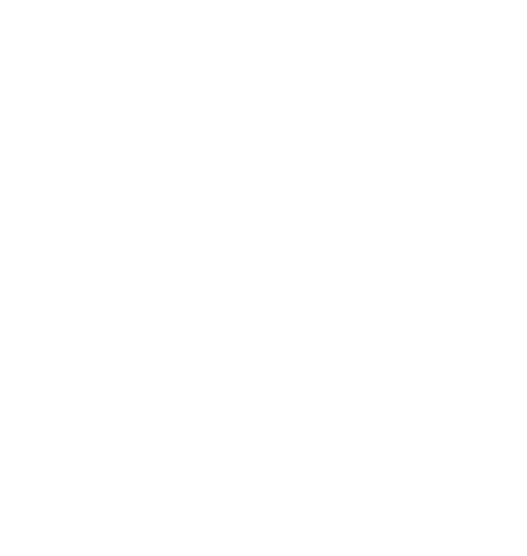
3. What company was the door-to-door salesperson representing?

4. Did you feel pressured or uncomfortable during the interaction?

Please clarify any pertinent details:

5. Duration of the Interaction

The WSPMA Summer Meeting was a huge hit! Summer Meeting was in Leavenworth this year, where we golfed, rode horses and the mountain coaster, floated the river, networked with vendors and industry partners, held meetings, and soaked in some engaging subject matter from world-class experts in their fields. If you were not there in 2024, be sure to sign up for 2025. Always with an eye toward the future, and with an interest in saving the WSPMA some dollars where she can, Samantha negotiated favorable rates to with two resorts to allow us to alternate each year between Icicle Village in Leavenworth and Skamania Lodge in Stevenson through 2030. This alternating schedule allows us to better serve our members who live in different parts of the state, and keeps the events from getting stale.









NPMA Pest World was in Denver this year and it did not disappoint. Pest World is always an amazing experience, and this year was no different. I got to experience a concert at Red Rocks, tour Mile High Stadium in my Seahawks gear, we watched a John Denver tribute band in opening ceremonies, heard inspirational stories from former NFL Running back Justin Forsett, attended a myriad of different classes on everything from employee development and company culture, to exclusion and ladder safety. The various national committee and council meetings and other networking events are open to all and full of like-minded people. Pest World is a must-see experience if you have not been.



Another action item completed by the WSPMA Board this year was adding two At-Large positions to the Board. Each of these positions is a two-year commitment. Traditionally the Board positions are a four-year terms which can sometimes be too long for some people to commit to. We are hoping that a shorter-term commitment will allow for more flexibility and a larger pool of Association Members to join in. As part of this effort, the Board refined and defined the roles for each of the Board positions. This will help as we officially expand with these two new seats starting in 2025.

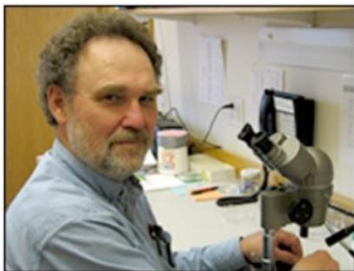
Our Interest Groups continued to grow and reach new heights. PWIPM meets regularly and hosts some very inspirational speakers during the monthly zoom meetings. There were several in-person events as well including a 5K and a Tacoma Rainiers game. WA PestVets hosted their first coat drive and it was very successful! We collected around 500 coats. United Pest Solutions won first prize with 178 coats collected!

Not everything is sunshine and rainbows as a WSPMA Board member. We also adopted a Code of Conduct for our members to follow while attending WSPMA industry events and worked closely with

WSDA following their year-long investigation of a state pesticide license exam cheating issue they uncovered. This issue brought up many concerns and issues, but in the end, we are confident that these problems are resolved. WSDA will of course continue to monitor exam results for unrealistic trends and improper activities.

If you have not heard, WSDA now offers computer-based testing!! I take particular pride in saying that I was the WSPMA President when this huge improvement came into being for our state. This comes after over a decade of effort by myself and other WSPMA Members, collaborating with WSDA and advocating for this positive change to come to fruition. Numerous roadblocks were in the way preventing this from taking place years ago, but through our partnership with the leadership team at WSDA, and massive internal efforts on their part, the necessary legislative actions took place and the roadblocks were moved. With this wonderful change, test-takers can now schedule their exams online within just a few days of their application, rather than the 8 to 10 weeks it used to be.

As we look toward the future, it also helps to look toward the past. We do not want to lose sight of the many men and women who have helped to position this Association as one of the highest performing and successfully organized state pest management associations in our country. Terry Whitworth and Tim Baker are two of these people. Terry was kind enough to offer some words of reflection for a recent newsletter earlier this year, and he continues to generously donate his time and money toward the Dr. Laurel Hansen Fund at WSU. Tim Baker, our Director Emeritus, has had significant health challenges this year, but he continues to be a resource of knowledge and perspective for the Board, and especially his daughter and our current Executive Director Samantha Malone. We owe a sizable debt of gratitude to these two leaders, and the countless others who have helped us to get where we are today.



#### Pest Control Over the Last 50 Years

Terry Whitworth reflects on the evolution of pest control. Starting in 1975, he joined the industry, initially focusing on termites. Concerns about pesticide toxicity in the 1970s and 1980s led to a diagnostic approach. Whitworth highlights collaboration, education, and the use of study guides. He expresses optimism about the future of pest control in the northwest.

[Read More...](#)



Following my term as President we will welcome Mark Lee back into the fold. Mark was the fortunate or unfortunate person to have his previous tenure as President take place during the Covid-19 pandemic year of 2020. Mark is old-school-cool, but also very smart as it pertains to running a successful business in the modern world. He's a kind and gentle man who genuinely cares about each of the people he works with, including all of us in the Washington State Pest Management Association, and I look forward to watching him step into the role of President.

Rest assured WSPMA, we are going from one studious and engaged President to another

...as long as he has some Diet Coke nearby. 😊

