**Time on EPA’s Side?**

**DIRECTOR OF PESTICIDE PROGRAMS SAYS AGENCY HAS SPED UP REGISTRATION PROCESS**

*By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief*

Remember the old Tom Petty song, “The Waiting” (Is the Hardest Part)? Pesticide manufacturers do. In fact, they know the tune’s every lyric. Pesticide manufacturers can’t sell their products until the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) licenses them. In the past they were accustomed to waiting and waiting for the EPA to approve their proposals. It was the hardest part, all right.

But that was then, said Jim Jones, the director of EPA’s Office of Pesticide Programs. It’s not now. Jones, who spoke recently to the trade media during a Media Summit in Washington organized by BASF, said when he first came to the EPA’s pesticide program 12 years ago, he often heard critics say the agency took too long to license products.

“But we have made huge progress in that area,” Jones says, referring to the Pesticide Registration Improvement (PRI) Act, which became effective in 2004. “When a new chemical comes to the EPA for approval or review, we’re making our decisions within two years for those compounds. Ten years ago the average time was more than four years. Some [decisions] took longer than six years.”

The PRI Act established service fees from manufacturers for pesticide registration. According to the EPA, “The goal is to create a more predictable evaluation process for affected pesticide decisions, and couple the collection of individual fees with specific decision review periods.”

Jones said the EPA “has made a fair amount of progress” under the PRI Act, which established time frames under which the agency to work. With more money coming in because of the service fees, the EPA has been able to hire more people to work on registrations and speed up the process. A service fee pays about 25 percent to 30 percent of the EPA’s fee to register a product.

“We’re meeting 99.9 percent of the time frames that the statute mandates . . . without compromising our responsibilities,” Jones said.